



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

This thesis has been submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a postgraduate degree (e.g. PhD, MPhil, DClinPsychol) at the University of Edinburgh. Please note the following terms and conditions of use:

This work is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, which are retained by the thesis author, unless otherwise stated.

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author.

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author.

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given.

***“A Place in the Mind”:
The Anatomy of Space in the Works of Maeve
Brennan***

Edward O’Rourke

**PhD English Literature
The University of Edinburgh
2022**

Abstract

This thesis anatomises the elements of space in the works of Irish-American author Maeve Brennan, using four key spatial paradigms. It considers the effects of space – physical and conceptual – within Brennan’s body of literature, from the non-fiction ‘Long-Winded Lady’ epistles that she produced for *The New Yorker*’s “Talk of the Town,” to the forty-odd works of short fiction that appeared over two decades in the same illustrious magazine, beginning in the early 1950s. Neglected in her later life, Brennan’s writing is now classed amongst the most important of women’s voices in twentieth-century Irish fiction, having undergone a significant reclamation and reappraisal in the thirty years since her death. As a transnational Irish woman writer with regular access to an audience that numbered in the millions, Brennan’s work was uniquely liminal. Single and childfree, she eschewed the securities of family and home, experiencing an ‘otherness’ that she shared with her fellow New Yorkers, many of them left hanging on, she wrote, to a city half-capsized; “most of them still able to laugh as they cling to the island that is their life’s predicament”.

Appraising the four spatial elements – Urban Space, Diaspora Space, Manic Space, and Feminine Space – this thesis traces Brennan’s experience of the city as a single woman at a time of degenerative urban renewal; of mental illness, as a casualty of the psychosocial dispossession suffered by the doubly-subjugated Irishwoman; and of the very notions of home and identity, which, for Brennan, could never be fashioned by absolutes.

Notwithstanding the recent renewal of scholarly interest, this dissertation seeks to begin to address an obvious lacuna in the critical study of Brennan’s oeuvre. It does so by assessing what Henri LeFebvre saw as modernity’s “devastated” spaces of “emptiness,” which in the tapestry of Brennan’s writing, are carefully, consciously, explored. In a 1974 letter to friend and confidante Howard Moss, Brennan wrote: “One thing is certain, it is all a dream.” It is a suitably ambiguous expression for a writer who cultivated an interstitial existence, whose stories inhere within an oneiric cycle of reiterative pasts, and whose works, I argue, naturally become the in-between space of radical Irish fiction.

Lay Summary

This thesis looks at the social, emotional, and environmental factors that contribute to a better understanding of Maeve Brennan’s stories. It does this by attempting to break down such ‘spatial’ factors into four individual categories, which are nevertheless related to one another. The four categories – Urban Space, Diaspora Space, Manic Space, and Feminine Space – examine Brennan’s fiction and non-fiction writing, looking in particular at her experiences of single, child-free life in the city, and how that experience shaped the short essays that she wrote for *The New Yorker* between 1954 and 1981 under the pen name the ‘Long-Winded Lady’. It also takes into consideration her childhood growing up in Dublin at the time of the Irish Civil War and, afterwards, in the newly created independent state of Ireland. The thesis attempts to prove that the traumas she endured in childhood and young adulthood in Ireland stayed with her throughout her life, affecting the stories she wrote about Ireland in profound ways, long into her adulthood. Furthermore, it proposes that those same traumatic experiences contributed to very particular examples of madness that emerged in her writing. Finally, it questions Brennan’s attitudes to gender, specifically to being an (Irish) woman, and how, by carefully reading her stories of Dublin, we can identify a complex relationship with femininity through

her depictions of the suburban middle-class home, the housewife who governed it, and the famil(ies) that inhabited it, just as she and her family had once inhabited the same home in the 1920s and '30s. When Brennan wrote "One thing is certain, it is all a dream," it was, I argue, a fitting reflection of her writing, which has a dream-like relationship with memory. This and a great many other qualities besides, help to place Brennan's work amongst the most groundbreaking of Irish writing in the twentieth century.

Acknowledgements

The journey to writing this dissertation has been a long and, in many ways, a circuitous one. I first considered a PhD in 2007, having just finished up my master's at UCD. That didn't happen, life moved on, and I moved on with it. But in 2016, at the ubiquitous crossroads, I decided that the time was right to try again. A chance visit to Edinburgh for the festival the following summer gave me the impetus I needed, and after dusting off a few old essays, I got to writing the thesis proposal, which, I am glad to say, bears little to no relationship to the final thesis that follows this preamble. And here is as good a place as any to begin my thanks to those who, in overlooking the many shortcomings of that proposal (and its maladroit author), helped to make this thesis a reality.

My eternal thanks to Aaron Kelly, my dispassionate supervisor, whose kindness, wisdom, and forbearance have been a comfort and a (necessary) impetus to me over the past three and a half years. Special thanks go to Declan Kiberd, without whose encouragement and sound advice I am certain this thesis would never have materialised. Thanks to Alex Lawrie for her insightful contributions along the way. Others who helped, in one form or another, to bring this little ambition of mine to fruition (in no particular order) include Paul Muldoon, David Norris, Aidan and Roberto Connolly, Angela Bourke, Carole Jones, Michael Pierse, Fergal Hardiman, Emer Nolan, and Conor McCarthy. Closer to home, friends and colleagues who helped in ways great and small, include Juan-Carlos Peña Plascencia, Vivienne Meade, Deirdre Finneran, Sinead Walsh, Trish Lynch, Alison McKeown, Liadain O'Donovan, and Michael Steinman. Thanks to Richard Elliot for his support and welcome feedback, to George and Julia Hannah for their generosity and friendship, and to Breda and Fran McCabe for a lifetime of generosity.

To Angelos, I owe a debt of gratitude that can, I am sure, never be repaid. Amongst the many forms you have taken, inspiration is not the least of them. Thank you.

To my beloved aunt Anne Walding, this PhD is a testament to her belief in me.

My thanks, too, to my invaluable 'telephone' supports, Shane Corbett, Sean Munsanje, Emily Finnegan, Andrea Porter, and Tammy O'Rourke.

And my family. What can I say about them, but that they are love, pure, imperfect, the best and most generous love, which, as Maeve wrote, "gives life and strength to memory".

My thanks to Niamh, my supporter, who was the first to 'tell me' to do a PhD. To Declan, who remains a steadfast inspiration. To Tammy, my wise and generous confidante. To Rusty and Wednesday, my furry friends.

§

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Declan and Marian, who walk beside me always.

Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	7
<i>Urban Space</i>	32
Urban Reconfiguration.....	34
‘The Long-Winded Lady’.....	36
Single Women in the City.....	45
Whiter-than-white Suburbia.....	50
Domesticity	55
Flâneuse	59
Decline.....	72
Conclusion	74
<i>Diaspora Space</i>	82
Introduction.....	82
The Home That Wasn’t There.....	83
Shadows of Remembrance	87
<i>Fairy Stories</i>	97
Devouring Mothers	106
Power and Incest	118
Conclusion	124
<i>Manic Space</i>	129
Introduction.....	129
Manic Antecedents.....	132
The Poor, Natural Mouth.....	137

Famil(iar) Walls	147
Stories of Africa.....	151
Conclusion	155
<i>Feminine Space.....</i>	<i>162</i>
Introduction.....	162
Affective Space	164
Waking the Witch	173
Irish Identity.....	183
Terminal Thresholds	186
The Visitor	191
Conclusion	196
<i>Conclusion.....</i>	<i>204</i>
Introduction.....	204
Research Findings.....	205
Further Research Opportunities	207
Conclusion	209
<i>List of Abbreviations.....</i>	<i>212</i>
<i>List of Works Cited.....</i>	<i>213</i>

Introduction

“As you see, I am still in Never Never Land, by the sea,
but gradually working my way out of it.”
– Letter from Maeve Brennan to William Shawn (early 1970s)¹

“The problem is that any search for space in literary texts
will find it everywhere and in every guise:
enclosed, described, projected, dreamt of, speculated about.”
– Henri LeFebvre, *The Production of Space* (1991)²

“I have shaken off the time and space shock and am fine”
– Letter from Maeve Brennan to Howard Moss (Oct 1973)³

Introduction

In the early 1970s, Maeve Brennan was living alone at the Van Cortland Hotel on Fortyninth Street, between Sixth and Seventh Avenues. She described it in a series of letters to William Shawn, then editor of *The New Yorker*, and one of a few devoted friends and colleagues who would find themselves cast aside in the course of Brennan’s long, chaotic, and by now well-documented, decline. There had been a fire in the building, and she wrote to Shawn that her ceiling had caved in, and her clothes had been destroyed by water. The place was “a firetrap,” she wrote, but in spite of its obvious failings, she was “hanging in there for the view” (Brennan, n.d.-a). The view was such that she would “never get over the loss of [it]”; and in a more decisive tone—and in another letter—Brennan goes on to stake a very definite claim, not merely to the private space of the hotel itself—“I would like to take out a patent on that hotel” (Brennan, n.d.-c)—but to a whole tract of public, city space that was so familiar to her, and so eagerly coveted by her, that she archly observes, “48th St and 49th Streets (*sic*) bet[ween] 6th and Seventh, both sides of the street in those 2 blocks belong to me, also 7th

¹ Letter from Maeve Brennan to William Shawn (from the Van Cortland Hotel) (Brennan, n.d.-b).

² (LeFebvre, 1991, p. 15).

³ Letter from Maeve Brennan to Howard Moss (Brennan, 1973).

Avenue between 48th and 49th and all views from all windows in those blocks” (n.d.-c). Notwithstanding the obvious badinage, Brennan’s assertion is a significant one, for it approaches something of the distinction drawn by Avtar Brah, “between ‘feeling at home’ and staking claim to a place as one’s own” (2005, p. 190). Having already suffered at least one hospitalisation, Brennan’s mental health was especially precarious at the time. Within a few short years, she would find herself lost in a painful, public fragmentation from which she would never fully recover.

“Dublin is a spectacle to me now,” she wrote to friend and colleague Howard Moss, after a final, failed attempt to establish herself in Ireland—a full four decades after her initial emigration to the United States. Now, it was “not home, not anything” (Brennan, 1972). Indeed, she would memorably profess, “No place is home,” a statement that antithetically appears to doubly subvert the “imperial,” gendered mapping of power in the urban sphere (Higonnet & Templeton, 1994, p. 5). It does so by rejecting the “culturally masculine [...] need for the security of boundaries,” and embracing the unbounded public space of the (reputedly) masculine city; its “maze of indirect relationships [and] complex mutual dependencies,” a component of effective civic order (Adorno *et al.*, 2007, p. 96). Moreover, as the (de-)colonised ‘Other,’ the “doubly displaced” subaltern woman effectuates a re-appropriation of the feminine body (Higonnet & Templeton, 1994, p. 12)—that is, the embodied feminine space of the civilised urban sphere, and the “vestmentary envelope” of the feminine body itself (p. 6), which, as a woman possessed of no (physical) property of her own, must count as her sole spatial belonging (p. 6). Yet, Brennan’s spirits here are defiant. She makes the audacious claim to a feminised urban space, even as she is at her most necessitous⁴. In this way, she embodies the paradox of the city—the same which, as the ‘Long-Winded Lady,’ she would characteristically eulogise—which, in spite of her professions to possess it, retained the capacity to elevate or eliminate the (white) single woman, through a dialectic of urban visibility/anonymity, often effecting both at one and the same time by means of “the geograph[ies]” of gender and racial division (Blunt & Rose, 1994, p. 4). In other words,

⁴ Brennan’s finances – notably, her taxes – were in such disarray by the end of the 1960s, that her formal contract with *The New Yorker* had had to be terminated in 1968 (although she would continue to contribute, mostly unsigned copy, to the magazine for another decade and more, presumably on a free-lance basis). Soon after declaring her interest in the area surrounding The Van Cortlandt Hotel in her letter to William Shawn, Brennan would leave the city for extended periods, taking up residence in exurban localities such as Raheny, Dublin, and Wellfleet, Massachusetts. She would never quite return to New York City in the sense in which she had known and inhabited it over the previous thirty years (Bernstein, 1968; Bourke, 2004).

Brennan's attitude to the city could be, and often was, as ambiguous as the city itself was ambiguous to women—notably, single women—in the age of rapid, regressive urban renewal. Maeve Brennan's life—and much of her best work—was steeped in urban space; arguably, a natural, even an obvious, starting point for a sustained scholarly assessment of her work. What is less obvious, perhaps, is the gradational approach to space that I propose herein, beginning with *Urban Space*, as the most conspicuous, and—because empirical—uncontested, of spatial constructs; and ending with what I hope to establish as the still-more-distinct, if less quotidian, paradigm of *Feminine Space*; a space that assimilates, and repositions our understanding of, urban space, in addition to those of the two intermediary spaces—*Diaspora Space*, and the theoretical, though no less urgent, *Manic Space*. Discrete spatial categories in and of themselves, *Diaspora Space*, and the immanent *Manic Space*, nevertheless share a simultaneity, in that they inhere within a psychospacial synthesis which, in the case of Brennan's writing, often finds expression in the cognate, interstitial space of the feminised city-sphere. Thus, by means of an incremental, structured analysis of space, a picture slowly begins to emerge of a multiple and multivalent space, that equals, and at once elucidates, the ambiguous and often liminal nature of both author and oeuvre.

Yet, a dissertation that takes as its premise the nature of space, multiple or otherwise, in the work of an as-yet underappreciated writer, behoves, in the first instance, an elemental excursus on the nature of space as it pertains to the four spatial paradigms considered at length in this thesis; and in the second, in light of the fact that Brennan's work has in fact been continually overlooked (amidst the panoply of overlooked Irish women writers), I have judged it prudent to include a parenthetical discussion of the author's life and writing, to the extent that it may better contextualise the discussions that follow in the main body of the thesis.

Space

It is not within the compass, nor is it the aim, of this dissertation to undertake an exposition of space as a physicotemporal phenomenon; Neither, for that matter, does it concern itself with the science of elemental space—although in that respect, I concur with Doreen Massey's assertion that, “space by itself [is] doomed to fade away into mere shadows,” to be replaced inevitably by the “dynamic simultaneity” of ‘space-time’ (1994, p. 3)⁵. Rather, this

⁵ Notwithstanding the fact that “real time-space and fictional time-space belong to different ontologies” (Grishakova, 2006, p. 40), Massey's observations roughly accord with those of Ruth Ronen, who professed that

study limits itself to the production of space, such as that described by Henri LeFebvre (1991), which is to say not merely the sociological factors that give discernible shape and definition (or meaning) to space—in the case of *Urban Space*, the buildings, roads, houses, and traffic lights; or in the case of *Diaspora Space*, the intangible, empirical concepts of home and identity—but also the *product* of space, or that which space itself produces—the socio-spatial outcomes of alienation, *anomie*, happiness, and unhappiness.

LeFebvre protested that, within spatial theory, the manifestations of “plastic” space were inordinately varied: “We are forever hearing about the space of this and/or the space of that; about literary space, ideological spaces, the space of the dream, psychoanalytic topologies, and so on and so forth” (1991, p. 3). In the field of literature, the number of applications is more overwhelming still—“any search for space in literary texts,” he wrote, “will find it everywhere and in every guise” (p. 15). Faced with this ubiquity of representational spaces, then, it is not difficult to see the challenge of distinguishing those “special” cases, worthy of analysis, from the babel of competing models (p. 15), except that LeFebvre himself supplies the preferred criterion—from a critical-theory perspective, at least—which is to say that he foregrounds those “eminent” spaces that reveal the social relations underlying the objects (material and immaterial) of the space-place (Adorno *et al.*, 2007, p. 79). In selecting the four foundational spaces for this disquisition on the literature of Maeve Brennan, then, I am conscious of the axiomatic truth that,

“When no heed is paid to the relations that inhere in social facts, knowledge misses its target; our understanding is reduced to a confirmation of the undefined and indefinable multiplicity of things, and gets lost in classifications, descriptions and segmentations” (LeFebvre, 1991, p. 81).

Crucially, I argue that Brennan shared in this nuanced perspective of space, skilfully “reveal[ing] the relations between appearance and essence” by means of her literary and urban explorations (Adorno *et al.*, 2007, p. 24). Brennan explored the multiple identities of space as a woman continually “colliding with language and tradition that [were] distinctly not her own” (Higgonet & Templeton, 1994, p. 102); She sought to “recast,” or reappropriate, a (feminised) literary space in two significant ways (p. 102): by walking the streets—a “Wandersmanner”

“[t]he domains of space and time should likely be constructed according to the logic of parallelism” (2010, p. 197); Indeed, Massey’s description of the “participants in social life [...] mov[ing] relative to one another, each thinking of themselves at rest, and each therefore 'slicing the space-time continuum,'” is of particular relevance to Brennan’s observations of urban life in mid-twentieth-century New York (1994, pp. 3-4).

(de Certeau, 1998, p. 93), or *flâneuse*—and by means of a persistent, even a compulsive, interrogation of what might usefully be called the *homespace*; that is, the space of home and garden, and the praxis of domestic-family life therein.

Brennan’s writing probed the geographies of spatial division with the melancholy language of the outsider (Blunt & Rose, 1994, p. 4). Indeed, it was often her very alterity that lay beneath the subtle yet powerful iconoclasm of her prose. Single for the great majority of her life, she understood the risks of living that life disconnected from the sanctified institutions of marriage and motherhood⁶. She was a writer possessed of a profound awareness of space, both in its haptic and psychosocial forms, for the narrative space of Brennan’s literature is filled with the lived truth of Blaise Pascale’s avowal: “*le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis m’effraie*” (quoted in O’Connor, 2004, p. 19)⁷. Indeed, if space is “a writerly problem,” as Higgonet and Templeton profess it to be (1994, p. 13), it is arguably its very deictic multiplicity, the plurality of spatial orders, that enriches the “spoken language” of what de Certeau termed the “spatial story” (1988, p. 130)—the “linguistic system that distributes places,” by the very “act of practicing it” (p. 130). Brennan inscribed such ‘spatial stories’ within her literature, as indeed her very movements within the city-sphere—her *flâneuserie*—would inscribe urban space, transposing it onto the “virginal space of the empty page”—the “exploited” feminine body of the page (Higgonet & Templeton, 1994, pp. 90, 5). In this way, she engaged in a subversive *pas de deux* with an urban space that persistently inscribes the feminine body—marks, that is, grades within a hierarchy of normative femininity—even as it submits (itself) to a simultaneous transcription within an aspirant, feminised narrative space.

LeFebvre wrote that, “It seems to be well established that physical space has no ‘reality’ without the energy that is deployed within it” (1991, p. 13). On the face of it, it appears to be true that, for example, the space of the kitchen can be designated ‘feminine,’ by virtue of the normative (patriarchal) feminine industry conducted there. Whole cities can be designated masculine; home itself is conceivably metonymic with diaspora; and the space of the mind—if not the social space of a fragmentary, discriminatory society—becomes a *maddening* or ‘manic’ space. Yet, Lefebvre held, too, that the “indefinite multitude of spaces” can be imagined as a stratified whole; a system of spaces, each “piled upon, or perhaps contained within” the other (p. 8)—a sort of ‘*spiegel-im-spiegel*’ complex of spaces reflected in, and in

⁶ Brennan’s marriage to St. Clair McKelway lasted only a few short years in the mid-1950s (Bourke, 2004, pp. 215-217).

⁷ (Translation) “The eternal silence of these infinite spaces terrifies me” (Lejeune, 2001, p. 93).

some cases magnified by, one another. The image is instructive, for it better approaches the subtly imbricated space(s) of Brennan's prose, where the kitchen—contiguous with the hallway—becomes an interjacent space; where the city (Dublin) is masculine, but the nation (Ireland) is wholly emasculated and emasculating; where home can be described as “No place” (Brennan, 1972); and where diasporic space is synonymic with the space of madness.

As stated earlier, my conceptualisation of space is one inexorably paralleled with time (Massey, 1994, p. 3; Ronen, 2010, p. 197). “This new round of time—space (*sic*) compression,” writes Massey, “has produced a feeling of disorientation, a sense of the fragmentation of local cultures and a loss, in its deepest meaning, of a sense of place” (1994, p. 162). Brennan herself was subject to that same process of fragmentation, the “*decoupage* and *montage*” that LeFebvre saw as the fragmentariness of the modern image—“images [...] are themselves fragments of space” (1991, p. 97). Indeed, it arguably emerges in the formal qualities of Brennan's writing, for she was practically unique amongst twentieth-century Irish women writers in her singular devotion to the short-story form⁸. Many of those stories themselves belong to one of a number of narrative cycles, or sequences, which, considered collectively, appear to be novelistic in length and scope, yet which emerge as a deliberate concatenation of fragments—moments in time and space; discrete, interrelated, but resisting narrational cohesion at every turn. Massey's view of the fragmentation of cultures and place reflects what Frank O'Connor saw as the short story's formal response to the nineteenth-century stylistic “normalcy” embodied in the novel (2004, p. 9). “[I]s it not reasonable,” he writes,

“to see writers of the twentieth century, with the disintegration of tribe, nation, family, and church [...] turn their affections [away from the novel] toward a form that ‘remains by its very nature remote from the community – romantic, individualistic, intransigent?’” (O'Connor, 2004, p. 9).

In contrast to the generative, nation-building novel of the past, the modern short story is positioned within a “countergenre” (Pratt, 1981, p. 182)—a space as interstitial as the narrative itself, prescribed, abbreviated, enclosed within the ambit of the page(s). Indeed, the effect here

⁸ Bourke contends that Brennan spent years in the application of writing a novel based upon the protagonist Charles Runyon from her cycle of ‘Herbert's Retreat’ stories published in the mid-1950s (2004, p. 182). Notwithstanding that ultimately fruitless endeavour, her entire output consists of scores of short stories and a single, posthumously discovered, novella – *The Visitor* (2000). Mary Lavin is perhaps the only other contemporary Irish woman writer who devoted her craft so exclusively to the short story.

is two-fold, since women have a shared history “of reading and writing in the interstices of masculine culture” (Blunt & Rose, 1994, p. 15); the more so, given Brennan’s (questionably) subalternate identity. Moreover, Pratt cites the short story’s usage in “introduc[ing] new regions or groups into an established national literature, or into an emerging national literature in the process of decolonization” (1981, p. 187). “In the establishment of a modern national literature in Ireland,” she continues, “the short story emerge[d] as the central prose fiction genre, through which Joyce, O’Flaherty, O’Faolain, O’Connor, Moore, Lavin and so many others first document[ed] modern Irish life” (p. 187).

If, as O’Connor averred, the short story was (is) the formal essence of literary modernity (2004, p. 32), then it follows that it must equally typify the “disillusion” of its “devastated,” hollowed-out spaces—of which the image of the modern metropolis was a conspicuous reflection (de Certeau, 1988, p. 97; Frisby, 2001, p. 4). This “vigorous compression” of ‘time-space’ gave rise to a porosity of boundaries, reified in the “simultaneity of proximity and distance [...] of inside and outside” (Frisby, 2001, p. 16). Gone, wrote LeFebvre, were the “[f]ormal boundaries [...] between centre and periphery, between [...] happiness and unhappiness, for that matter (1991, p. 97). The economics of ‘creative destruction’ that demolished and reconstituted New York City in the mid-twentieth century—a part of Walter Benjamin’s “eternal return of the same” (1999, p. 546)—concretised the physicotemporal compression not merely of the inanimate artefacts of the city-sphere, but of the microcosmic spheres of home, and the body itself (Nash, 1994, p. 236)—a *matryoshka*-like progression of spaces that typified the “dialectical links between growth and decay” (Adorno *et al.*, 2007, p. 10). Brennan’s fragmentary fiction, the “moments of kindness, moments of recognition” that engendered her most ephemeral of human portraits *LWL 3*, articulated something of that centrifugal slippage—that *dis*-integration of monadic cohesion—even as it purported to resist it. Her stories gave voice to the “intense awareness of human loneliness,” which was, according to O’Connor, a signal distinction between the short story and the novel (2004, p. 19)⁹. Indeed, Brennan’s incessant (progressively manic) act of remembering and reinscribing the past, betokened a kind of resistance to “the gradual slipping away of the world” (Abensour, 2013, p. 213), by recording what Liliane Abensour cites as the “here-and-now ‘actual-ness’” of the fleeting moment upon

⁹ O’Connor maintained that the lengthier novel could not sustain such an awareness, which determined the short story at its most characteristic (2004, p. 19).

the transitory space of the page (2013, p. 213; LeFebvre, 1994, p. 97)¹⁰. This ‘manic’ writing accords with Massey’s conception of space as that which is “always in the process of becoming” (1999, pp. 283-284)—“[It] can never be that completed simultaneity,” she writes, “in which all interconnections have been established, in which everywhere is already [...] linked to everywhere else” (p. 284). And yet, as a writer of short fiction, Brennan’s “frame of reference” was a strictly delimited one: it could never comprise what O’Connor described as, “the totality of a human life” (2004, p. 8). A dis-placed, dis-located subject (Nash, 1994, p. 238), Brennan engaged in a gradual (re-)mapping of the imagined geographies of home and place, exploiting the “language” of fragments in the life she observed around her—the “buildings, human gestures [and] spatial arrangements” (Buck-Morss, 1991, p. 27)—to glimpse a conceptual, if inevitably evanescent, whole; For in the text of the fragment, “one can deduce things about the whole [of] life” (Pratt, 1981, p. 183). It is a sentiment evocatively expressed in Brennan’s short story “Family Walls”: When Hubert Derdon looks through the window of his Dublin home and catches a glimpse of his wife tending a flowerbed, we read: “Hubert saw her wrist and her elbow, and in that fragment of her he saw all of Rose, as the crescent moon recalls the full moon to anyone who has watched her at the height of her power” *SA 191*.

In the “network” of such “intersecting writings,” then, Brennan leaves a record, a “manifold story” (de Certeau, 1988, p. 93), of what Benjamin saw as “the essentially fleeting character of modern history” (Buck-Morss, 1991, p. 96)—“shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces” (de Certeau, 1988, p. 93)—salvaged from the wastes of time.

Profile

Maeve Brennan was born in Dublin in 1917, the daughter of Robert (Bob) Brennan, a captain of the Irish Republican Army, and Una Brennan, herself a revolutionary with the exceptional distinction of having been one of only two women inducted into the Irish

¹⁰ Pratt perspicaciously identifies the “planned [...] obsolescence” of the short fiction that dominated middle- and low-brow magazine culture for much of the twentieth century. “Unlike books,” she wrote, “the text [of the magazine] actually becomes garbage after a reading” (2013, p. 213). Writing for *The New Yorker*, Brennan’s fiction was unequivocally part of that middle-brow magazine culture, which – typically “surrounded by the propaganda of consumerism” as it was – arguably constituted a “conspicuous example of the supposed horrors of mass culture” (p. 213). In this sense, the short story’s (temporal) brevity further aligns it with fragmented space, by burlesquing the qualities of the ruin – one of Benjamin’s four central elements in the aesthetics of modernity (Buci-Glucksmann, 1994, pp. 7-8). For more on *The New Yorker’s* commercial advertisements, see chapter one of this thesis, “Urban Space,” pp. 65-66.

Republican Brotherhood¹¹. In 1921, when Maeve was four years old, the Brennans purchased a small, terraced house in the recently-expanded middle-class suburb of Ranelagh. The house—number 48 Cherryfield Avenue—was a ‘two-up two-down,’ stucco-fronted dwelling, with a small patch of garden front and rear. It would become the setting of almost half of the forty-odd short stories Brennan published in her lifetime, remembered and reconstituted with fanatical exactness—from the smell of the freshly-oiled linoleum, to the wallpaper in the back bedroom, that was “cream-coloured and covered with miniature garlands of small blue flowers” *SA* 242. Particular attention was given to the plants and animals, too, as part of a written record of the small, commonplace transactions of family life, enshrined within these stories. Indeed, at the centre of her terse, domestic narratives, Brennan’s family home—and significant elements of her family history—becomes a metonymy for “the small dark psychodramas” of the middle-class Dublin suburbs of the 1920s and ’30s (Scheper-Hughes, 2001, p. 30).

Yet, if her childhood, growing up in Ranelagh, was marked by relative material comfort, it was contrarily impacted by the decade of conflict that led to and succeeded the Irish War of Independence (1919-’21), in which Robert Brennan—a close ally to Eamon de Valera—was a committed actor¹². At the time of Maeve’s birth, her father was interned at Lewes Prison in Sussex for his involvement in the Easter Rising (Bourke, 2004, p. 44). It was to foreshadow the years of civil strife that followed, a great deal of which Robert spent on the run, sleeping in safe-houses, and suffering long periods of absence from his wife and young family. Indeed, he would make something of a shadowy, ghost-like presence in the semi-fictionalised accounts of Brennan’s childhood that appeared in *The New Yorker* from the early-1950s¹³. Ailbhe

¹¹ The Irish Republican Brotherhood (1858-1924) was a “secret cadre organisation committed to the violent overthrow of British rule in Ireland and the establishment of an independent Irish republic” (Nelson, 2012, p. 187). Bourke avers that Una was “sworn in” on Robert’s insistence (2004, p. 34). Both took part in the Wexford mounting of the 1916 Easter Rising; Robert as captain, Una raising the tricolour of the nascent Irish Republic over the Wexford Athenaeum (p. 39).

For a detailed history of the IRB, see Ó’Broin (1976).

¹² Yvonne Jerrold (Maeve Brennan’s niece) has alleged that Maeve and her siblings had “grown up in poverty” (quoted in Bolick, 2016, p. 270) – an improbable contention for several reasons: Notwithstanding Jerrold’s conceivably skewed perception of Irish poverty in the 1910s and ’20s, Bourke provides a painstaking account of the Brennans’ purchase of the Cherryfield Avenue house and its furnishings in October 1921 (2004, pp. 60-64). In February of that year, Robert had been appointed Under-secretary for Foreign Affairs by Eamon de Valera, President of the newly-established Irish Free State (de Valera, 1921). These facts alone would seem to indicate that the family were not poor – certainly not by contemporary Irish standards – but that, on the contrary, they enjoyed at least an adequate standard of living.

¹³ Brennan produced seven such works of short fiction, first published in *The New Yorker* between 1953 and 1955 *LWL* 357. Broadly autobiographical, they recount the experiences of the young protagonist – also called Maeve – whose home and family life is just like that of the author’s. Editor Christopher Carduff arranged them

McDaid sees Robert Brennan’s “faint presence” *within* the household in these stories, as a token of the psychosocial malaise that was then persisting *without* it—a symptom, she writes, of “early twentieth-century anxiety around the mental health of Irish people [...] during civil and violent unrest” (2019, pp. 86-87, 83-84). In Robert’s absence, Una and the children were forced to endure repeated raids on the family home, later memorialised by the adult Maeve in the short story “The Day We Got Our Own Back”¹⁴. Here, the narrator’s terse, almost indifferent, expression does little to alleviate the aura of tension that permeates the narrative, amplified, indeed, by the mother’s manic laughter in response to the evident savagery of the armed trespassers—including, at one point, having a revolver “raised against her” as she moves to attend to her youngest child upstairs SA 39.

Whilst Bourke situates Brennan’s childhood amongst “the most densely inscribed periods of Irish history” (2004, p. 44), Brennan’s niece Yvonne Jerold attests to the immediate hardships suffered by Maeve and her siblings, principally owing to their father’s insurgent activities. “I’ll tell you one thing that people have not picked up on,” she declares,

“Maeve grew up with more knowledge of the Irish troubles than my mother did, but all the family had mental scars from the violence of the time [...] Every now and then their father was dragged off to yet another prison. They grew up frightened. And they turned against politics” (*quoted in* Bolick, 2016, p. 270).

That Brennan did later turn ‘against politics’ is loosely supported by anecdotal evidence of her aversion to “nationalists ‘licking old wounds’” (Bourke, 2004, p. 148). Yet, Jerold’s contention is complicated by opinions expressed in a letter to William Shawn, recently uncovered at the archives of Emory University¹⁵. Although the context of the discourse is now largely obscured, Brennan appears to be writing in response to a review by a colleague (unnamed), about a text (unspecified), that plainly concerns the Irish conflict. In spite of her protestations to the contrary—“I am much harder on the Irish than most people are” (Brennan, 1968a); her opening salvo—Brennan’s patriotism is openly inflamed by what she terms the “prejudice” of the reviewer (1968a). The point of contention here—that “some native Irish were torturing to death a man,” who, she forthrightly proclaims, “in the eyes of the Irish

into a discrete sequence, as part of the larger collection of Dublin stories published (in the wake of Brennan’s death) as *The Springs of Affection* (1997).

¹⁴ For a close reading of this story, see chapter two of this thesis, “Diaspora Space,” pp. 93-96.

¹⁵ The letter is part of a dossier – acquired by Emory University, GA, in 2011 – of Brennan’s correspondence with William Shawn, covering the period 1960-1976. The typewritten, single-page letter carries a pencil inscription of the year ‘1960’ at the top of the page; the only indicator of its (potential) date.

Republican Army and in my eyes, had no right to be there anyway in the position he held” (1968a)—elicits an emotional response quite at odds with that of the phlegmatic narrator in “The Day We Got Our Own Back”. The tone is unambiguous, the language impenitently jaundiced. Yet, one cannot escape the impression, here, of a need for justification; that, in responding to what Brennan calls the reviewer’s “slick little note” (1968a), she is actually responding to a need (imagined or otherwise) to justify both the acts condemned in the now-lost review, notionally carried out by contemporaries—conceivably, even comrades—of her father’s; and her own complicity, as one who, by simply upholding the defensibility of resistance in the face of a violently retentionist British empire, falls (persistently, the tone suggests) under suspicion. “The Irish struggle,” she explains,

“went on too long. If they had stopped fighting several hundred years ago, as they were expected to do, they would now be obliterated as a people instead of being as they are ineffectual, sometimes amusing and a little bit foolish in their pretensions to nationality, and in their determination to recover the quarter of their country that was stolen from them in negotiation and that was the direct cause of the Irish Civil war (*sic*), which was tragic and wasteful but not senseless” (Brennan, 1968a).

It is a salutary defence, replete with the antinomies that would characterise much of her writing, notably those of her short stories that probed the excesses of the pietistic Irish society that emerged in the wake of Independence. Indeed, her invocation of the ‘stage Irishman’—suggested, here, not least of all, by the use of “foolish [...] pretensions to nationality” (Brennan, 1968a)—is clearly derisory; notably so, given Brennan’s mordant disposal of the comparably-stereotypical Vincent Lace, in the short story “The Joker”¹⁶. Yet, still more telling, perhaps, is Brennan’s description of the British military personnel’s “usual pastime” of “terrorizing women and children and torturing young boys” (1968a). Almost forty years after the events that inspired “The Day We Got Our Own Back,” the memories of those troubled years, it seems, are just as odious. Time and tide have done little to abate the force of her resentment—either

¹⁶ “The Joker” (1953), Brennan’s first fiction proper to be published by *The New Yorker*, concerns just such an Irishman. “[I]neffectual,” “amusing,” and “foolish” (Brennan, 1968a), Vincent Lace accords with Declan Kiberd’s description of the “stage Irishman” as possessing the qualities of “garrulity, pugnacity and a rather unfocused ethnic pride” that renders him “touchy on questions of identity” (1996, p. 13). The protagonist Isobel Bailey – herself an archetype of sorts – resists outright renunciation of the man who was once esteemed by her sentimental father, yet shows through her hard-headed indifference to his (rom)antics that she regards him as an anachronism – a “seedy, imploring” hangover of a hackneyed cliché RG 58. For a synoptic reading of “The Joker,” see chapter one of this thesis, “Urban Space,” pp. 55-56.

for the personal traumas she suffered, or for those collectively (and continuingly) endured by the country to which she avows an enduringly ambiguous allegiance.

Yet, if anything, the letter is misleading; for in spite of its frankness—and what is quite possibly the only explicit endorsement of her father’s (anti-Treatyite) politics—Brennan’s fiction typically eschews political, and even historical, conditioning; rather, occurring in what Anne Fogarty sees as “the obdurately ahistorical space of private [feminine] reflection” (2002, p. 93)¹⁷. Brennan’s Irish fiction—largely undated and, in a sense, un-datable—clearly occurs in the past. Yet, without the fetters of time, or historical context, it appears to float free in a kind of queer temporality, the same to which her own adult life arguably conformed¹⁸.

In 1934, aged seventeen, Brennan left Ireland for good¹⁹. On board the ocean liner *Manhattan*, in the company of her mother and three siblings, she sailed to the United States, where her father, Robert Brennan, had lately taken up his post as Irish Free State Ambassador to Washington D.C. (Bourke, 2004, p. 126). Prior to her (reluctant) departure, however, Brennan had been immersed in the artistic milieu of the resurgent Irish (Gaelic) culture—in particular, its theatrical and linguistic elements—thanks in no small part to her father’s considerable

¹⁷ The Anglo-Irish Treaty (1921) – reached by a delegation of first- and second-Dáil parliamentarians (headed by Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins), after three years of intensive armed struggle – would give “Ireland the trappings of self-government,” notwithstanding the loss of the six Ulster counties, dissevered under the ‘Articles of Agreement’ for retention by the British (Knirck, 2006, pp. 1-2). The Treaty, writes Knirck, “met with a tumultuous reception back in Ireland” (p. 1), resulting in a schism between those in support – “many of whom were ambivalent about the blood-letting of the past two years” (p. 1) – and those opposed, the ‘anti-Treatyites’. Brennan herself essays a reduction of the conflict in “The Day We Got Our Own Back”: “Those Irish who were in favour of the treaty,” she writes, “the Free Staters, were governing the country. Those who had held out for a republic, like my father, were in revolt” SA 37.

¹⁸ By definition, the ‘queering’ of linear time is taken to mean the process by which, “specific models of temporality [...] emerge within postmodernism once one leaves the temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance” (Halberstam, 2005, p. 6). Specifically, I employ a notion of queer temporality in relation to Brennan’s life and work, that broadly comprises “new ways of understanding the nonnormative behaviors that have clear but not essential relations to gay and lesbian subjects” (p. 6). This allows for the possibility of non-normative behaviour that transcends sexual alterity; thereby assimilating a model of queerness identified by J. Halberstam in their disquisition on queer failure (2011), as those (feminine) actions, “relieved of the pressure to measure up to patriarchal ideals” (Halberstam, 2011, 4) – “[N]ot succeeding at womanhood,” the thinking goes, “can offer unexpected pleasures” (p. 4). Moreover, this concept of radical, anomalous time encompasses the theory of ‘chronobiopolitics,’ described by Elizabeth Freeman as, “the state and other institutions, including representational apparatuses, [that] link properly temporalized bodies to narratives of movement and change. These are teleological schemes of events or strategies for living such as marriage, accumulation of health and wealth for the future, reproduction [and] childrearing” (2010, p. 4).

¹⁹ Although she would desultorily express an interest in moving home to Ireland – going so far as to engage a Dublin realtor as late as 1974 to scout for suitable long-term accommodations – Brennan never spent more than a few months at any one time in Ireland after her initial departure (Bourke, 2004). For more on Brennan’s (Irish) cultural initiation, see chapter two of this thesis “Diaspora Space” pp. 108-110.

literary achievements²⁰. Yet, within a few short years of her arrival, Brennan had adopted an assuredly new, altogether more liberal *Weltanschauung*, so much at odds with that of her youth, that even decades after her departure, on habitual visits home to Ireland, she would strike her relatives as “impossibly exotic” (p. 263)²¹. Yet, if the New York City to which she arrived in the years of the Second World War—now in her mid-twenties and living away from home—could be seen as a place of social and artistic dynamism, Brennan doubtlessly experienced a newfound liberation in the women-led institution of *Harper’s Bazaar*, which was entirely antithetical to that experienced by the women—friends and correspondents—she had left behind, encumbered as they were by the obscurantist agenda of a regressive, outwardly misogynist Irish government²². Although her literary contributions remained few during her six-year tenure at *Harper’s*, it was at some point in those first untrammelled years of single, city living that Brennan produced her earliest(-known) fiction proper, a collection of drafts that would later be known as *The Visitor*. Published as a stand-alone novella in the years immediately following her death, it is not a great deal longer than some of the short stories Brennan published in her lifetime—indeed, “The Springs of Affection,” widely held to be her magnum opus, is of comparable length. Yet, the unusual provenance of the text, not to mention the sobering prescience of its subject matter, has to a certain extent set it apart from the other compilations of her work. Following the discovery of a single typescript at the University of Notre Dame, *The Visitor* was published in 2000, with little more known of its origins than that it had been submitted to, and rejected by, a literary agent sometime in the mid-1940s when

²⁰ Bourke notes that, before her transferal to Louise Gavan-Duffy’s “pioneering” Irish-speaking (lay) school, Scoil Bhríghde, Brennan had defied the nuns at her boarding school by starting a secret society with her classmates, dedicated to the learning and speaking of Irish – “The girls bought Irish books with their own money,” Jerrold states (*quoted in* Bourke, 2004, pp. 102, 103-104). Prior to his incumbency in Washington, Robert Brennan had already produced two detective novels, and two plays, *Bystander* (1930), and *Good Night, Mr. O’Donnell* (1931), debuting at Dublin’s Abbey and Olympia theatres respectively; the latter was subsequently translated into Irish and staged at Galway’s Middle Street theatre as *Oidhche Mhaith agat, a Mhic Uí Dhomhnaill* (1932) (pp. 109-111).

²¹ Even such anodyne habits as wearing trousers aroused astonishment in some younger relatives, as late as the mid-1970s (Bourke, 2004, p. 263).

²² Brennan was hired in 1943, working as a copywriter under Irish-born editor-in-chief Carmel Snow (who had latterly recruited Diana Vreeland, herself a later editor of *Vogue* magazine). Within two years, Brennan would be promoted to fashion editorials at the fledgling affiliate *Junior Bazaar* (Bourke, 2004, pp. 140-141). Her first published writing – a short fiction piece entitled “They Often Said I Miss You” – appeared in *Harper’s* in June 1943, within months of her joining.

By contrast to the cosmopolitan atmosphere of New York’s middlebrow magazine culture, the opportunities for women in Ireland were few and prosaic. The Irish Constitution (1937) had enshrined women’s place within the home, whilst married women were obliged to retire from the Civil Service under legislation that remained in place until the mid-1970s (Foley, 2022, p. 60). For more on the Constitutional subjection of Irish women, see chapter two of this thesis, “Diaspora Space,” pp. 108-110.

Brennan was living on East Tenth Street. With a single source at his disposal, Christopher Carduff balked at the task of editing the novella, noting that he approached the process, “not as a textual scholar but as a trade book editor; that means,” he reasoned, “[cutting] a repetition here, identif[ying] a speaker there, and ma[king] a number of small, silent, thrice-considered changes throughout” *V* 85. Whilst the published edition rightfully retains a place amongst her finest writing—and, indeed, arguably amongst the finest works of short fiction produced by any twentieth-century Irish author—*The Visitor* must now, I argue, be considered within the new, fluid, still-more-complex frame of reference determined by the recent emergence of two previously-unknown typewritten drafts. Having appraised both typescripts (latterly made available at the archives of Emory University), I contend that the central themes of the published text—what Carduff describes as the peculiar “chord” of Brennan’s literature: “a ravenous grudge, a ravenous nostalgia, and a ravenous need for love” *V* 84—far from being ineluctable, were actually subjected to extensive, and at times startlingly conflicting, emendations. Indeed, the redoubtable figure of Mrs. King is altered so drastically over the course of the (collective) narrative that, in one variant, so far from being the watchful figure of authority, she is rendered practically extraneous to the action of the text. I discuss *The Visitor* at length in chapter four of this thesis, citing all three redactions, and paying particular attention to the inception, and subsequent expurgation, of Anastasia’s sexual agency.

Yet, what remains a constant throughout the narrative—an ineradicable thread that tethers one variant to another, and the aggregate text of *The Visitor*, in turn, to the body of Brennan’s later urban compositions—is the figure of the wayfaring woman; the curiously itinerant narrator, and ineluctable hallmark of Brennan’s pseudonymic missives from the streets that appeared in *The New Yorker* magazine for over twenty years from the mid-1950s. “To be a traveller,” she wrote in a 1963 journal, “is to be at ease in the world – to be no longer ill at ease” (Brennan, 1963). Indeed, she would later describe the ‘Long-Winded Lady,’ her fictional counterpart and sauntering *flâneuse*, as “a traveler in residence” *LWL* 2, for like Brennan, she too would plunge into the heart of the city and walk where she was neither meant, nor expected to (Elkin, 2017, p. 20). In the public act of walking alone—indeed, of eating and drinking alone, living alone, and generally sustaining herself independent of the company (which is to say without the financial support and/or social validation) of men—Brennan *qua* the ‘Long-Winded Lady’

disrupted the masculine possession of public space, and staked a claim to the city-sphere, however small or incipient, in both its literal and literary incarnations²³.

Brennan joined the staff of *The New Yorker* magazine in 1949. By 1952, the first of her short stories had appeared amongst its hallowed pages, swiftly followed by a first, brief communication from the ‘Long-Winded Lady’²⁴. In weekly circulation to over half-a-million readers, *The New Yorker* was, at the time, perhaps the most illustrious literary periodical in the English-speaking world, and the coveted publishing destination for a legion of writers, both established and prospective²⁵. It was to be the exclusive home of Brennan’s literary output over what would prove to be a lamentably foreshortened career, for although it reached its apogee in 1969 with the coincident publication of two discrete collections of her writing, its coruscation would be as brief as it was brilliant, and by 1973 the last of her short stories had been published, with only two further ‘notes’ from the ‘Long-Winded Lady’ appearing thereafter²⁶. Yet, in spite of its transience and its limited output—she published just forty-two short stories in all—Brennan’s work evinces a level of profoundness and a quality of exactitude few other writers could hope to attain with twice, or thrice the experience²⁷. And it was—perhaps curiously, perhaps necessarily—the most ordinary of subjects and ordinary of places that inspired what is arguably her finest fiction.

Written over a ten-year period, beginning in 1962, the fourteen short stories that dominate the sequence colloquially known as the ‘Dublin stories,’ take place in a small, terraced house indistinguishable from that of Brennan’s childhood home on Cherryfield Avenue²⁸. They

²³ For a detailed discussion of the figures of the ‘Long-Winded Lady’ and the *flâneuse*, see chapter one of this thesis, “Urban Space,” pp. 36-45 and pp. 59-72 respectively.

²⁴ “The Joker” (December 1952), and “Skunked” (January 1954) respectively.

²⁵ Yagoda gives a readership of 500,000 by 1960; the high watermark of the magazine’s circulation, which began to gradually level-off thereafter (2000, p. 212). In the 1950s and 60s, during Brennan’s tenure, the magazine published works by Philip Roth, James Baldwin, Sylvia Plath, and J.D. Salinger, amidst a panoply of the twentieth-century’s most celebrated writers. Closer to home, Frank O’Connor, Mary Lavin, and Brian Friel were regular contributors, making – in O’Connor’s case at least – considerable sums of money in the process (O’Connor & Maxwell, 1996, pp. 38-39).

²⁶ “A Daydream” (1976), and “A Blessing” (1981); for a brief overview of both texts, see chapter two of this thesis, “Diaspora Space.”

²⁷ In the years following her death, forty-one of Brennan’s short stories were reprinted between two collections, *The Springs of Affection* (1997), and *The Rose Garden* (2000). “They Often Said I Miss You,” published in *Harper’s Bazaar* in 1943, has never been reprinted. Additionally, sixty or so of Brennan’s ‘Long-Winded Lady’ communications – including three less-easily categorised texts later included in a 1998 reissue of *The Long-Winded Lady: Notes from The New Yorker* (1969) – bring her collected works to one-hundred or more, including *The Visitor* (2000).

²⁸ “The Poor Men and Women” was published by *Harper’s* in 1952. Ten years later, “An Attack of Hunger,” the second story to feature Rose and Hubert Derdon, was published in *The New Yorker*, whereupon the remaining

recount the ordinary, domestic tribulations of two middle-class families, the Derdons and the Bagots, whilst laying bare the stark inadequacies of marriage and motherhood for the middle-class housewife, marooned within the stultified margins of suburbia. Rose and Hubert have one son, “the priest”, who is largely absent from the six stories in the Derdon cycle *SA 128*. Imbricating that sequence are the stories of Delia and Martin Bagot, who live in the selfsame house with the selfsame furnishings, and the potted ferns arrayed in the front “bow-window,” as they once sat in the window of no. 48 Cherryfield Avenue (Enright, 2016). The Bagots have two little girls, Lily and Margaret, who play a part in the stories, much as the young Maeve and her siblings feature in the seven memoir-like sketches that comprise the remainder of *The Springs of Affection* (1997). Yet, notwithstanding the degree of artistic licence that Brennan undoubtedly engaged in, the desolate marriages limned in these narrative cycles have uneasy echoes of Brennan’s own short-lived marriage to fellow writer St. Clair McKelway, over and above the sorry, stubborn traces of dysfunction—the silent, inscrutable resentments—that she had assuredly witnessed in, and borrowed from, her parents’ marriage²⁹. For there is more than a ghost of Brennan’s mother Una in the adumbrated figure of the housewife, the expanse of whose desires have been slowly, continually attenuated, by duty and convention, to the slender margins of a small, pedestrian home; There is, likewise, more than a shadow of Robert Brennan in the emotionally estranged husband, whose frequent absences appear to delimit the void that

twelve stories that make up the Derdon and Bagot narrative sequences appeared in the eleven-year period to March 1973.

The seven stories of Brennan’s childhood that open *The Springs of Affection* (1997), and the four stories included in *The Rose Garden* (2000) – “The Holy Terror,” “The Bohemians,” “The Beginning of A Long Story,” and “The Rose Garden” – make up the rest of the ‘Dublin stories’.

²⁹ St. Clair McKelway – a writer whose legacy has also been largely neglected – married Brennan, the fourth of his five wives in 1953. The marriage was brief, tempestuous, and according to Bourke, ill-omened in the eyes of their closest friends and colleagues. By the late-1950s they were living apart, and divorce followed in short order. Like Brennan, McKelway suffered with mental health problems – exacerbated by alcohol abuse (Bourke, 2004, p. 179). Unlike Brennan, however, he ended his days in a good deal of comfort, if suffering from similar episodes of psychosis. A nineteen-page, handwritten letter, held at the archives of the New York Public Library – delivered to Brennan in July 1972, thirteen years after their final separation, and eight years before his death – attests to the undying, if exceedingly incoherent, nature of his affection for her (McKelway, 1972).

Bourke provides an exhaustive account of Una Brennan’s antecedents, including her activities with *Inghinidhe na hÉireann*, the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), and her later dejection and poor-health as the insurgent’s wife, and, eventually, as minister’s wife. Brennan appears to have fostered a certain resentment of her own for what she interpreted as a wilful subordination on her mother’s part. Yet, after Una’s untimely death in 1958, Brennan’s letters begin to evince a (neurotic) preoccupation with better understanding her mother, whom she casts in a decidedly more forgiving light. The short story “The Shadow of Kindness,” from the Bagot sequence – published in (1965), a few short years after her mother’s death – betrays something of that maternal preoccupation. For an appraisal of the story, see chapter two of this thesis, “Diaspora Space,” pp. 90-92.

endures within the family, and distinguish the gulf between the feminine confines of the (private) household, and the masculine compass of the public sphere.

Brennan was to pursue those memories with a monomania that brooked little variation. Indeed, as the author herself was touched by the unforgiving hands of time, so too the characters began to age and die off, until—in a final, unpublished story, “Mrs. Bagot’s Legacy”—the house itself is sold off, and a resolution of sorts is attempted, however inadequate, however bittersweet. The small, unassuming home of Brennan’s childhood remained the setting of her most vivid imaginings to the far extremity of her days, sustaining her writing, until she could write no more.

The final years of Brennan’s life—notorious now for an opacity that rivals, and even perversely adumbrates, her literary achievements—were marked by a degree of itinerancy she could not have anticipated, as she extolled the virtues of travelling, almost twenty years beforehand—“To be a traveller is to be at ease in the world – to be no longer ill at ease” (Brennan, 1963). After several hospitalisations in the mid- to late-1970s, she became lost to her New Yorker ‘family’—even Howard Moss, with whom she had kept a years-long correspondence, was forgotten in the depths of her dejection, and her repudiation of the world. Yet, she continued to write, and friends who attended the (writers’) colonies alongside her as late as the mid-1980s, were gifted with letters that carried flashes of the profundity of which she was clearly still capable, the same with which her very best writing is imperishably suffused (Bolick, 2016, pp. 279-280). What is more, she continued to write the story of Delia and Martin Bagot, completing several interrelated portraits, either rejected by, or never submitted to, *The New Yorker*, but which nevertheless survive in draft form at the archives of Emory University. In the final chapter of this thesis, I examine two such stories at length—“What the Grocer’s Children Knew,” and “Mrs. Bagot’s Legacy.”

The afterlife of Maeve Brennan, so long obscured from view, continues to emerge—if only by slight, hesitant degrees—from the morass of neglect and speculation engendered within the long, purposeful evanescence of her later years. A complete picture of those years may never be known. Yet, the story of one of Ireland’s most important writers continues to evolve, in a complex of questions and resolutions that, in many respects, mirrors the antinomies of the author herself, and of the dense, introspective, often unhappy body of work she left behind. It is my hope that in writing this thesis, I have made just such a contribution—modest, certainly; paradoxical, perhaps—but one that strives to enlighten, even as it inevitably emerges from the dark.

Overview

I begin with an analysis of what is perhaps the most obvious spatial paradigm in Brennan's work, *Urban Space*. Chapter one looks at aspects of the urban space Brennan inhabited (physically and psychically) through her *flâneusing* alias, the 'Long-Winded Lady.' It considers the effects of urban renewal upon the physical environment of New York City, and how that reconfiguration, antithetical to the residential components of the metropolis, disproportionately affected the lives of the poor, the elderly, and the 'Other'—of whom Brennan, as a single, childfree woman, was necessarily one. It further charts the contingent phenomena of the post-war, American suburb, and the cult of domesticity it advanced, before exploring the socio-cultural factors that gave rise to the chimerical figure of the *flâneuse*. Finally, it traces the initial iteration of that figure in Brennan's work, to the protagonist Anastasia King in the novella, *The Visitor*.

Chapter two takes the view that Brennan's work exists within the theoretical paradigm of *Diaspora Space*, defined by Avtar Brah as the juxtaposition of "multiple subject positions," as the narratives of migration collide with those of "staying put" (1996, p. 205). Here, I consider Brennan's ambiguous attitude to home as a corollary of migration, from a provincial childhood in Dublin—the home that "would never blow away" SA 239—to the unfamiliar, and inherently strange space of the metropolis. In spite of (or perhaps because of) her transnationalism, I identify a legacy of mythic and folkloric fragments in Brennan's 'Dublin stories,'—including the (devouring) female "sovereignty figure" (Moloney, 1996, p. 104), and the Sheela-na-gig—whilst situating her fiction (Irish and American) within a fairy-tale tradition that, though not specific to Ireland, figures prominently in the literature of the post-colonised. Brennan experienced a fragmentation, figural and cerebral, which is clearly signified in the fractured portraits of Rose Derdon and Delia Bagot; and I relate this fragmentation to the invidious position of the doubly-subjugated Irish female, in the wake of Irish independence.

In chapter three, I devise a schema for the conceptual model of *Manic Space*, itself a component of diaspora space, and a framework for thinking about the sheer volume of madness, or mania, that occurs in Brennan's writing. I theorise upon various factors contributing to the disproportionate incidence of mental illness in the Irish—notably, in nineteenth- and twentieth-century migrations of Irishwomen—and attempt to link the idiom of madness in Brennan's work to the spaces (physical and psychological) of the female body, of home, and of the social order itself. Through comparative analyses of the stories in the Derdon

sequence, I further pursue the theme of fragmentation in the figure of the alienated, suburban mother, before considering analogous patterns of manic space in the nonfictional, ‘Long-Winded Lady’ text, “Howard’s Apartment.” Finally, I conclude with a brief exegesis of the short story “Stories of Africa,” from the Bagot sequence, as a paradigmatic example of the manic occurring within, and colliding with, the diasporic.

The final chapter, *Feminine Space*, attempts a reconciliation of the disparate elements introduced in the first three chapters, beginning with the conceptualisation of a distinctly feminine (as opposed to generically *feminist*) space, which, I propose, allows for a better understanding of the inherently gendered aspects of the urban, the diasporic, and the manic. Consonant with earlier readings of ‘home’ as a composite of spaces—real and imagined; encompassing the possibility of the “No place” (Brennan, 1972) and the ‘any space’—this chapter appraises the affective (dis)order of home, through close readings of the closely-coupled texts, “Family Walls” (*published*), and “What the Grocer’s Children Knew” (*unpublished*). Incorporating a second unpublished text, “Mrs. Bagot’s Legacy,” I then return to an enquiry of the witch, or *cailleach*, as a paradigm of the subjugated *qua* domesticated (Irish) housewife, leading to a consideration of home as a feminising, refractory space, that flattens gender distinctions, and subverts masculine (colonial) sovereignty. Finally, the chapter concludes with an appraisal of *The Visitor* (in both its published *and* draft forms), which further explores the tensions between Irish men and women within the feminised, post-revolutionary narrative space of the text.

Conclusion

I have made the point that Brennan’s output was relatively small. Indeed, it consists of little over a hundred compositions, most of them brief, or fragmentary. Yet, for all its brevity, all its apparent slightness, Brennan’s prose was enigmatic, densely layered, and capable of conveying an astonishing weight of meaning, often in the narrowest of margins—oftener still, employing the subtlest of palettes. Her editorial process typically encompassed multiple drafts, painstakingly composed over years—and in the case of “Family Walls,” over more than a decade (Bourke, 2004, p. 262). Brennan’s condensed fiction commands an awareness of the unsaid, as much as of the words themselves. Archetypally interstitial, the stories reveal themselves by degrees, in the intricate laminae of nuance and suggestion. Indeed, it is testament to the magnitude of her work—to say nothing of the exiguous scope of my research—

—that I have managed even a passing reference to no more than half of her published oeuvre, over the course of this thesis. Whilst a select few titles recur in several chapters—“The Poor Men and Women,” and “Family Walls” amongst them—whole sequences are needfully, regrettably, elided altogether—the Herbert’s Retreat stories, as a case in point.

Yet, my intention in writing this thesis is not to provide a comprehensive overview of Brennan’s opus—were such a thing even possible in the space of eighty-thousand words. Rather, like that of the Long-Winded Lady herself, my frame of reference is a strictly delimited one. And I have faithfully adhered to the components that have spoken loudest and longest to me; those that, sufficiently observed, begin to disclose the structures of space that underpin them.



References Cited:

Abensour, L. (2013). Liminal space, manic writing. In *Psychotic Temptation* (pp. 136–152).

Taylor & Francis Group.

<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ed/detail.action?docID=1125210>

Adorno, T., Benjamin, W., Brecht, B., Lukács, G., & Adorno, T. W. (2007). *Aesthetics and Politics*. Verso.

<https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=5649902>

Benjamin, W. (1999). *The Arcades Project* (R. Tiedemann, Ed.). Belknap Press.

Bernstein, N. A. (1968, December 12). *Letter from Nahum A. Bernstein to William Shawn*.

Letters to William Shawn, 1960-1976 (MSS 1172, Box 1, Folder 3), Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, United States.

Blunt, A., & Rose, G. (Eds.). (1994). *Writing women and space: colonial and postcolonial geographies*. Guilford Press.

Bolick, K. (2016). *Spinster: Making A Life of One's Own* (Paperback). Corsair.

Bourke, A. (2004). *Maeve Brennan: Homesick at the New Yorker*. Jonathan Cape [u.a.].

Brah, A. (2005). *Cartographies of diaspora contesting identities*. Routledge.

Brennan, M. (1998). *The Springs of affection: stories of Dublin*. Houghton Mifflin.

Brennan, M. (2000). *Rose Garden: Short Stories*. (Paperback). Counterpoint.

Brennan, M. (2002). *The Visitor*. Atlantic.

Brennan, M. (2016). *The Long-Winded Lady: Notes from The New Yorker* (Paperback).

Counterpoint.

Brennan, M. (n.d.-a). *Letter from Maeve Brennan to William Shawn (Fire at the Van Cortland Hotel)*. Letters to William Shawn, 1960-1976 (MSS 1172, Box 1, Folder 1), Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, United States.

- Brennan, M. (n.d.-b). *Letter from Maeve Brennan to William Shawn (from the Van Cortland Hotel)*. Letters to William Shawn, 1960-1976 (MSS 1172 , Box 1, Folder 1), Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, United States.
- Brennan, M. (n.d.-c). *Letter from Maeve Brennan to William Shawn (from the Van Cortland Hotel)*. Letters to William Shawn, 1960-1976 (MSS 1172, Box 1, Folder 1), Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, United States.
- Brennan, M. (1960a). *Letter from Maeve Brennan to William Shawn (Attitude to Irish Conflict)*. Letters to William Shawn, 1960-1976 (MSS 1172, Box 1, Folder 1), Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, United States.
- Brennan, M. (1963). *Notebook entry*. Maeve Brennan Papers, 1948-1981 (MSS 1142, Box 6, Folder 3), Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, United States.
- Brennan, M. (1972, September 10). *Letter from Maeve Brennan to Howard Moss (from Dublin)*. The Howard Moss Papers, The Berg Collection (Box 55, The Maeve Brennan Folder), The New York Public Library, New York, United States.
- Brennan, M. (1973, October 8). *Letter from Maeve Brennan to Howard Moss*. The Howard Moss Papers, The Berg Collection (Box 55, Maeve Brennan Folder), The New York Public Library, New York, United States.
- Buck-Morss, S. (1991). *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (New). The MIT Press.
- de Certeau, M. (1998). *The Practice of Everyday Life*. University of California Press.
<http://qut.eblib.com.au/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=922939>
- Elkin, L. (2017). *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice and London*. Vintage.

- Fogarty, A. (2002). The Horror of the Unlived Life: Mother-Daughter Relationships in Contemporary Irish Women's Fiction. In A. Giorgio (Ed.), *Writing Mothers and Daughters: Renegotiating the Mother in Western European Narratives by Women* (pp. 85–118). Berghahn Books.
- Freeman, E. (2010). *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. Duke University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822393184>
- Frisby, D. (2001). *Cityscapes of modernity: critical explorations*. Polity Press in association with Blackwell.
- Grishakova, M. (2012). *The Models of Space, Time and Vision in V. Nabokov's Fiction: Narrative Strategies and Cultural Frames (Volume 5.0)* (Vol. 51). University of Tartu Press.
- Halberstam, J. (2011). *The queer art of failure / Judith Halberstam*. Duke University Press.
- Halberstam, J. J. (2005). *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York University Press.
<https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.18574/nyu/9780814790892/html>
- Higonnet, M. R., & Templeton, J. (Eds.). (1994). *Reconfigured spheres: feminist explorations of literary space*. University of Massachusetts Press.
- Kiberd, D. (1996). *Inventing Ireland: the Literature of the Modern Nation* (Paperback). Vintage.
- Knirck, J. K. (2006). *Imagining Ireland's Independence: The Debates Over the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Lefebvre, H., Nicholson-Smith, D., & Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The Production of Space* (33. print). Blackwell Publishing.
- Lejeune, A. (Ed.). (2001). *The Concise Dictionary of Foreign Quotations*. Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers.

- Massey, D. B. (1994). *Space, place, and gender*. University of Minnesota Press.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttw2z>
- McDaid, A. (2019). "As Important ... in My Childhood as the Catholic Church and the Fight for Irish Freedom": Legacies of Conflict in Maeve Brennan's Cherryfield Avenue Stories. *New Hibernia Review*, 23(4), 79–99. <https://doi.org/10.1353/nhr.2019.0042>
- McKelway, S. C. (1972, July 19). *Letter from St. Clair McKelway to Maeve Brennan*. Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books, The New Yorker Records (The Joseph Mitchell Papers, MSS COL 23209, Box 82, File 82.1), The New York Public Library, New York, United States.
- Moloney, C. (1996). The Hags of "Ulysses": The "Poor Old Woman," Cathleen Ni Houlihan, and the Phallic Mother. *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.34((1/2)), p.103-120.
- Nash, C. (1994). Remapping the Body/Land: New Cartographies of Identity, Gender, and Landscape in Ireland. In A. Blunt & G. Rose (Eds.), *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies* (Paperback, p. 256). Guilford Press.
- Nelson, B. (2012). *Irish Nationalists and the Making of the Irish Race*. Princeton University Press. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ed/detail.action?docID=878312>
- Ó Broin, L. (1976). *Revolutionary underground: the story of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, 1858-1924 / Leon Ó Broin*. Gill and Macmillan.
- O'Connor, F. (2004). *The lonely voice: a study of the short story*. Melville House Pub.
- O'Connor, F., & Maxwell, W. (1996). The happiness of getting it down right: letters of Frank O'Connor and William Maxwell, 1945-1966 (M. Steinman, Ed.; 1st ed). A.A. Knopf: Distributed by Random House.
- Pratt, M. L. (1981). The Short Story: The Long and the Short of It. *Poetics*, 10(2), 175–194.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-422X\(81\)90033-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-422X(81)90033-4)

Ronen, R. (2010). *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory* (e-book). Cambridge University Press.

<http://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=4638487>

Scheper-Hughes, N. (2001). *Saints, Scholars, and Schizophrenics: Mental Illness in Rural*

Ireland (20th anniversary ed., rev.expanded). University of California Press.

Yagoda, B. (2000). *About town: the New Yorker and the world it made* (1. publ). Duckworth.

Chapter One:

*Urban Space**Introduction*

All cities change, modernise, adapt; yet, for a metropolis like New York City, change is a constant, ingrained into the “generative pattern” of its grid plan (McGrath & Shane, 2012, p. 646). Yet, Ann Peters avers that, “the fifties and sixties were a particularly traumatic moment in [New York’s] history” (2005, p. 5). The Housing Act of 1949—part of Harry Truman’s Fair Deal—led to massive urban renewal efforts, leading to slum clearances that would pave the way for decades of urban reconfiguration and upheaval, as whole square blocks of Manhattan’s low-income housing were levelled to make way for roadways, vast monolithic office blocks, and upmarket apartment buildings (Zipp, 2006, p. 566; Fox Gotham & Greenberg, 2014, pp. 4-5; Caro, 1974, p. 848).

In the summer of 1955, *The New Yorker* published a piece entitled “The Last Days of New York City.” It was written by Maeve Brennan, a young Irish staff writer at the magazine. The short, somewhat disjointed story is a snapshot of 1950s Manhattan in the teeth of urban renewal. Regretting the loss of one home, one hotel, one terrace of houses after another, it would foreshadow a major theme of her later writing, and indeed of New York City itself, in the decades that followed. Through the prism of Brennan’s exact narration, this chapter will assess the large-scale urban regeneration—typified by “master builder” Robert Moses—which shaped and reshaped the city over much of the twentieth century, whilst further considering the impact of the reconfigured urban environment on women’s lives—notably, the lives of single women—as encapsulated in the disruptive epistles of Brennan’s *flâneusing* alias, the ‘Long-Winded Lady’. Intrinsic to this discourse is the concomitant development of suburbia, as a corollary of urban-masculine space, and a site of women’s domestic subjugation.

Women were amongst the most vehement opponents of urban renewal, many of them writers like Brennan, and Jane Jacobs; a great many more, mothers—concerned for the preservation

of their homes and neighbourhoods, and for their children's welfare—ranged in serried rows before the bulldozers, a formidable phalanx of perambulators (Zipp, 2010, p. 207; Peters, 2005, p. 4; Caro, 1974, p. 984-992). According to Catalina Neculai, New York writers in the 1950s and '60s:

“took overt interest in the literary articulation of spatial knowledge: short stories, novels and poems alike, became the writers' own responses to the changes that were taking place in their neighbourhoods and in their city” (2014, pp. 10-11).

Indeed, she might well have been describing Brennan here, as a writer who “[documented] and disseminated [her] urban annotations and reflections [...] via literary magazines [...] for the simple reason that consciousness-raising was part of the community's infrastructure of resistance and contestation” (p. 11). Brennan observed the tectonic changes occurring all around her—even, at times, under her very feet—and documented their effects, spatial and social, typically in the false colours of the *comme il faut* suburban housewife. Yet, by eschewing those same conventions of domesticity and motherhood in her personal life, she exposed herself to the hazards of a reconfigured urban space that was increasingly hostile to her very presence as a single, non-reproductive woman³⁰. Indeed, Michael Mostoller stresses the issue of an “[urban] society coming to grips with a delicate and complicated problem [...] of its single women”; whilst Picket et al., adducing her “exclusion from [the] new suburban developments,” further contextualise the bifurcated plight of the single woman as a consequence of the destructive cycles, “unleashed through urban renewal and highway construction” (2012, p. 198; 2020, p. 314; Zipp, 2006, pp. 498-500). I begin this thesis, therefore, by considering Brennan's experience of home(-lessness) and fragmentation, even the particular historical erasure she suffered, as a consequence of the disintegrative cycles of urban renewal, then at the height of its vogue in mid-twentieth-century New York City (Neculai, 2014, p. 34).

³⁰ The term “non-reproductive” is invidious. I employ it in its non-pathological sense. Moreover, I use it advisedly, in the absence of sufficient evidence (or, indeed, of any information at all) as to what informed Brennan's personal (non-)reproductive choices; conscious, too, of Lucia Cervi and Joanna Brewis's statement that: “A woman's ability to decide to become or not to become a mother, and whether this decision can safely be enacted within our societies, is a longstanding question in feminist studies” (2021, p. 9). For balance, I use the term interchangeably with ‘childfree’ at various points throughout this dissertation.

Urban Reconfiguration

The decade that followed the Second World War witnessed a flight of capital and labour forces away from cities, as returned war veterans and middle-class families migrated in their millions to the newly conceived, mass-produced suburban developments (Siegal, 1974, p. 3; Spiegel, 1992, p. 186). Yet, in that same period, “New York’s paradigmatic exceptionalism would,” Neculai claims, “only grow in intensity” (2014, p. 32), managing by dint of “a phenomenal postwar building boom” to defy even its harshest critics (Peters, 2005, p. 5; Spiegel, 1992, p. 186-189). The visionary architect behind much of that change was Robert Moses, City Parks Commissioner, Chairman of the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority, and powerhouse of New York’s urban development and regeneration for more than half a century. Moses’ vision was as absolute as it was flawed. With Machiavellian abandon, he tore through whole sections of poor and slum neighbourhoods, on the pretence of rebuilding neighborhoods that would act as “internal bulwarks of freedom necessary for the struggle with Communism in the newly emerging Cold War” (Zipp, 2006, p. 296). Yet, in reality, Moses—here, a synecdoche for “the cataclysmic forces of progress, technology, science, and modernization” that impelled New York’s urban regeneration (p. 577)—catered almost exclusively to the needs, nay demands, of its white, (upper-)middle-class inhabitants (Zipp, 2010, p. 163; Caro, 1974, p. 849; Walker, 2012, p. 305).

The advent of ‘Title I’—a provision of the 1949 US Housing Act, that subsidised and expedited “the clearance of areas designated as slums, so that private developers could rebuild them” (Chronopoulos, 2014, p. 208; Caro, 1974, p. 1006)—shifted Moses’ focus away from freeways and urban parks to the construction of large-scale public and private housing. Many slum communities were easily subdued, inordinately composed of poor immigrants living well below the poverty line as they were. Their mass eviction and consequent destitution is well documented by later critics. The building of the Cross-Bronx Expressway, as a case in point, took fifteen years and required “seven miles of people [...] to be removed [...] from homes, which in a time of terrible housing crises in New York were simply irreplaceable” (Caro, 1974, p. 848; Sedensky, 2001). The building of Manhattantown, one of Moses’ most ambitious housing projects, provides a clear example of the extraordinary abuses of power of which he was capable. Caro offers a detailed account of the corruption and mismanagement, which saw the eviction of over 3,600 families from the ‘slum’ site, its subsequent sale at a fraction of its value to a developer who proceeded to partly-demolish it – continuing all the while to extract

rents from sitting, or in some cases rehoused tenants – yet refusing to undertake any maintenance or essential building works until a Senate hearing, six years after evictions began, forced its sale to a new contractor (pp. 962-965, 971-977).

Yet, perhaps more insidious were the ways in which Moses' designs transmogrified the urban environment for women, particularly single women, seriously threatening their ability to remain within the city. Indeed, single women—next to women (and men) of colour, and the elderly—were amongst the population sectors worst impacted by Moses' swingeing urban reforms, as the post-war deindustrialisation that accompanied the shift from a Fordist to a Post-Fordist economy, led to a gradual eradication of central, affordable, and safe accommodations for women in cities across the United States. Neculai situates the relentless cycles of degeneration and regeneration in the urban sphere within the Schumpeterian model of creative destruction—the process by which the socio-spatial environment responds to the ever-evolving needs of capitalism (Metcalf, 2017; Neculai, 2014, pp. 22-25, 52-53). These patterns of urban disintegration, she contends—both a response to, and an imitation of, cycles of growth and decline in the capitalist regime—would later contribute to New York's "steady and sure journey on the slope of decline and despair" (2014, p. 32).

The early 1940s had witnessed an unprecedented demand for women's labour, as the United States entered the Second World War in December 1941. Its mass mobilization of man power left many vacancies in occupations traditionally off-limits to women. Recent scholarship has challenged the conventional belief that the 'Rosie the Riveters'—the millions of working women who supported the war effort—"gave up their jobs to returning veterans and returned to the home [i]mmediately after World War II" (Spain, 2014, p. 585). Women's expansive entrance into the labour market during the years of the Second World War led to "a large and persistent increase in [their] participation" even after 1945 (Bellou & Cardia, 2016, p. 136). Yet despite the fact that, both during and after the war, the city became less inimical to women, there was a significant push towards the reinstallation of women in the home in the years immediately following the war. Millions of working women who found themselves suddenly redundant were dispatched to the suburbs, "to build up [an] infrastructure that would house the millions of children [they] were busy making" (Traister, 2016, p. 64). Now, as "Mrs. Consumer," woman would play as "significant [a] role in the restructuring of the postwar economy" (Spain, 2014, p. 586) as she had done in the preservation of the wartime economy. Rebranded as "guardians of taste" (Wilson, 1992, p. 112), the suburban housewife was expected to uphold traditional family values, and to forego personal fulfilment in favour of an "everyday life" that consisted in the consumption of "commodities intended to symbolise

happiness” (p. 114). Yet, the mass-produced suburbia that emerged in the 1940s and ‘50s was intended to “reproduce patterns of nuclear family life,” (Spiegel, 1992, p. 189); This suburban space, by its very nature, excluded the old, the homeless, and crucially the unmarried, who were, writes Spiegel, simply “written out of these community spaces [and] relegated back to the cities” (p. 189)—the same cities, she might have added, that were already inherently hostile to their presence.

‘The Long-Winded Lady’

Brennan worked as a staff writer for *The New Yorker* magazine for almost two decades. Publishing all but two of her stories, it was to be her professional home, and a channel for her creativity in what were arguably the most prodigious years of her life. In 1954, she began a series of journalistic epistles under the pseudonym the ‘Long-Winded Lady’³¹. Anything but long-winded, they appeared as commentary, or “Notes,” from a capricious correspondent, making her way about the tumultuous city, meditating on the lives of her fellow New Yorkers—glimpsed at a bar, on the street, or through a restaurant window—and chronicling the many faces of the mercurial metropolis itself.

Initially promoted as fashion and lifestyle advice for *The New Yorker*’s now majority-female readership (most of them, married college drop-outs), the first missives from the Long-Winded Lady concern the purchase of a fur collar, and, later, an ill-made earthenware teapot³². Yet, such seemingly trivial reflections can be sublimated to greater, more complex meaning. As Angela Bourke writes, “highly subversive messages can be passed in safety if the words appear sufficiently frivolous” (2004, p. 189); and even stories such as these, concerning minor retail misadventures, can serve as “pointed commentar[ies] on the way[s] men and women respectively [pay] attention to what women say” (p.189). By the mid-1950s, a “particularly virulent form of the ‘feminine mystique’” persisted (Bartky, 1990, p. 13)³³; and at a time when patriarchal femininity—ever-“synonymous with infantilization” (Ashley Hoskin, 2017, p. 7)—encouraged “weak,” “vulnerable,” “childish,” and “immature” women (p. 7), the Long-

³¹ Brennan adopted the nom de plume for her literary dispatches in the “Talk of the Town” section of *The New Yorker* later gathered together for publication as *The Long-Winded Lady: Notes from The New Yorker* (1969); hereafter, *LWL*. It was an ironic choice of soubriquet, given that most of her “notes” were brief – what Brennan herself would later describe as “snapshots” *LWL* 1.

³² Ben Yagoda writes that, “the magazine’s readership [...] had flip-flopped to 55 percent female in 1954”; while one long-term subscriber regarded the *New Yorker*’s content as “a superior continuance of [her] dropped college years” (2000, p. 311).

³³ In Sneden’s Landing on the banks of the Hudson River, Brennan was briefly neighbours with Betty Friedan, who was then conducting research for her 1963 monograph *The Feminine Mystique* (Bourke, 2004, p. 195).

Winded Lady bespoke confidence, pragmatism, shrewdness, and a prodigious capacity for astutely reading the zeitgeist. The sheer scale of Brennan's achievement, in gaining access to an audience of millions was, writes Bourke, "more daring than it looked, for she was unique in making a woman's voice heard regularly in that forum" (2004, p. 190). Indeed, the second instalment, from July 1955, concerning an encounter with a down-and-out at a local supermarket, already sees the Long-Winded Lady probing the limits of that ciphered speech, plainly transgressing her appointed 'feminine' province with the sound observation: "I mean to say that the impulse toward good involves choice, and is complicated, and the impulse toward bad is hideously simple and easy" *LWL 157*.

Appearing in "Talk of the Town", the magazine's flagship, editorial section, Brennan's contributions would remain strictly anonymous—a standard convention for "Talk" (Bourke, 2004, p. 189). Readers were given few details of the mysterious correspondent's appearance; fewer still of her personal circumstances. Practically nothing of her identity was made known through the intermittent publications, which rarely amounted to more than a handful in any given year. Yet, by means of a carefully regulated narrative, the Long-Winded Lady could be—was, indeed—made to appear as a model of the kind of hegemonic feminine standards expected of, and to a certain extent *by*, the millions of women, trapped in the gilded cages of their suburban homes, who subscribed to *The New Yorker* in record numbers from the mid-1950s, as much for its middlebrow imprimatur as for the vicarious escape it afforded them (Yagoda, 2000, pp. 336-337; Keyser, 2011, p. 8; Traister, 2016, p. 64)³⁴. The Long-Winded Lady's dispatches offered the reader a view of the city she might well have experienced herself as an out-of-towner visiting for the day, taking in a little shopping at Bergdorf Goodman, or Wanamaker's, or enjoying a spot of lunch at Longchamps, the Adano, or any one of the "small, inexpensive restaurants" Brennan described as "the home fires of New York City" *LWL 2*.

The view of Manhattan promoted by the Long-Winded Lady was as undeniably middle-class as the life that assuredly lay behind it; a life tantalisingly concealed from the magazine's preponderantly female readership, who might well have wondered at—much less, envied—the sheer scale of autonomy exercised by its sibylline correspondent. In fact, Brennan *did* marry for a time. Yet, neither the short-lived affair, the absence of any children produced thereby,

³⁴ Described at the turn of the century as exile to "lonelyville" in *Good Housekeeping*, the prospering women who quit the cities in their millions, beginning in the mid-1940s, for the new and rapidly expanding suburbs, were left, writes Elizabeth Wilson, "standing behind the struggling young vines of [their] brand new piazza[s]" (Wilson, 1992, p. 67).

nor the divorce that soon followed, were ever so much as hinted at amidst the scores of intimate ‘notes’ she produced. Rather, the true facts of her singledom, of the numerous liaisons she likely enjoyed (and, in some instances, very probably tolerated) with her male colleagues; her childlessness and bouts of homelessness; the series of breakdowns she suffered later in life; and, indeed, the very exceptionality of her success as a woman writing for the most celebrated middle-brow magazine in the world; these facts and more were carefully, consciously elided from the version of the author promulgated as the Long-Winded Lady.

And yet, what remains of the at-times stark narratives is no less powerful, no less daring, for all that. Over time, the subject matter became gradually less circumscribed; less slight³⁵. Skirting the dictates of narrow editorial limitations, the pieces regularly gave voice to countercultural, or subcultural, elements, reflecting the narrator’s conflicting attitudes to an environment whose anonymity was at once emancipative and alienating, magnified, in fact, by the claustrophobia of a monolithic, and ever-more-dystopian skyline.

In one such counternarrative, “The Solitude of Their Expression,” the Long-Winded Lady marvels at the whimsies of her tower-dwelling neighbour, as she carelessly tosses the pages of a letter from her tenth-floor window³⁶. Later, she watches an old man shuffle along past a garish, glitzy Broadway nightclub, indifferent to the hubbub around him, carried along, she writes, almost “by the solitude of his expression” alone *LWL 10*. Yet, in and between these seemingly trivial vignettes lies a wealth of detail—equally trivial, but shamelessly, consciously, almost provocatively so. From her eleventh-story vantage point, the narrator seems impatient to describe everything she sees, for everything she sees is of equal significance, from the fit of the old man’s trousers at the waist, to the “square of white cloth,” which the old lady sometimes dries beneath her geranium pots, and which suddenly comes to life “with little flutters” *LWL 13*.

Here, Brennan universalises the trivial and trivialises the monumental, so that a sudden shift in the evening light deprives the “ugly length” *LWL 12* of the Empire State Building of “its air of self-satisfaction” *LWL 13*, and nothing in all that she surveys is “really certain” but the row of motionless pigeons by her balcony *LWL 13*. This power to invert, to perceive the

³⁵ In an undated letter (likely penned in Spring 1968), Brennan describes her “LWL pieces” as “slight,” noting, however, of their exacting composition: “[they] are balanced word by word, as you know” (“Letter from Maeve Brennan to William Shawn,” n.d.-a).

³⁶ “The Solitude of Their Expression” – not published in *The New Yorker* – was one of three new epistles to appear in *The Long-Winded Lady: Notes from The New Yorker*, published in 1969 by William Morrow. Brennan’s formal relationship with *The New Yorker* was terminated in 1968. Thereafter, fewer than ten contributions in all appeared under Brennan’s name.

virtue of the commonplace, and the exigency of the passing moment, recalls the everyday practices of Michel de Certeau. His description of everyday actions like “talking, reading, [and] moving about” as “tactical in character” (1988, p. xix), and victories of the “‘weak’ over the ‘strong’” (p. 91), are typified by the exactitude of Brennan’s prose, and the intimation that the words on the page somehow connote alternate, even antithetical, meanings to those manifestly conveyed within the syntax; hence, whole stories are captured in a single sentence—“I saw a little boy on the street today, and he cried so eloquently that I will never forget him” *LWL 146*—and the complex lives and afterlives of the city are condensed in the observation: “Architecturally, very little that was notable has been lost in the destruction of the Broadway area. What has been lost is another strip of the common ground we share with each other and with our city — the common ground that is all that separates us from the Machine” *LWL 145-146*.

De Certeau himself, viewing New York from the 110th floor of the ill-fated World Trade Center, describes the building’s mutation “into a texturology” (1998, p. 91). Surveyed from above, the city becomes singularly comprehensible, afforded what Kevin Lynch calls “legibility” (1960, p. 3)—a perspective simply not practicable at street level. Looking down, de Certeau notes the “contrasts between yesterday’s buildings, already transformed into trash cans, and today’s urban irruptions that block out its space” (1988, p. 91). “Unlike Rome,” he continues:

“New York has never learned the art of growing old by playing on all its pasts. Its present invents itself, from hour to hour, in the act of throwing away its previous accomplishments and challenging the future” (p. 91).

This image of intrinsic obsolescence in the city’s architecture is apposite. Yet, where de Certeau sees in it a certain virtue, Neculai relates it to the pernicious cycles of capitalism, a symptom of its parasitic impetus. These cycles of creative destruction are, she argues, “the essential fact about capitalism” (2014, p. 25). Indeed, much of what the Long-Winded Lady sees is framed by an awareness of the incessant shaping and reshaping of her environment. In the same story, she mentions “a narrow shaft of light” *LWL 11* that shines through a small gap where the behethmotic towers, “do not quite meet, or are prevented from meeting by some small stubborn survivor like the old five-story Forty-eighth Street houses down here at my feet” *LWL 11-12*. Implicit in this image is both the promise of looming change and the quiet acknowledgement of defeat. Survival for these houses will be short-lived, just as the old man who shuffles along the riotous sidewalk has become little more than a stubborn anachronism.

Although he walks the busy Broadway thoroughfare “as though it did not exist” *LWL 10*, it is really *his* existence that is in question, as transient as the “shaft of light” that slips between the “big buildings” *LWL 11*, as fleeting as the fluttering descent of a sheaf of paper tossed from the old woman’s hand.

Brennan’s ‘notes’ may be read as a kind of resistance, or the sort of subversive “consciousness-raising” identified by Neculai (2014, p. 11), penned with a deftness that allowed her to drive the subtle knife ever deeper, right from the heart of the middlebrow magazine culture which was then at the height of its powers. She concludes with the observation: “A good many of the ordinary ways of living go when people begin to live up in the air” *LWL 14*. A subtle denunciation, it expresses the same concern for the preservation of an urban way of life as those held by Jane Jacobs, journalist, activist, and one of Robert Moses’ fiercest opponents. Indeed, Brennan must almost certainly have been aware of Jacobs’ seminal treatise on urban planning when she wrote those words.

Jacobs inveighed against the flawed ideology of contemporary urban planners, most of them raised on the Le Corbusier model, and eager “to build slum towers in the sky, towers that bred crime and isolated people from the street life below” (Peters, 2005, p. 8). Her monograph on the folly of orthodox urban planning, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), was considered revolutionary at the time of its publication. Jacobs’ approach to urban planning was often as innovative as it was practical. It included such expressions as “eyes on the street” (Jacobs, 1992, p. 54), a simple but effective approach to social interaction and neighbourhood watch that promoted “direct observation and interaction among individuals in a building and individuals walking in the street” (Brown *et al.*, 2009, p. 234), notably by means of such vernacular components as “porches, stoops, and windows” (p. 234). She further criticised the “sameness” of the city’s built environment (Jacobs, 1992, p. 129), which she regarded as being “always the byproduct of renewal projects” (Rowan, 2010, p. 604). Her fears for the homogenising effects of urban renewal were reiterated by Brennan’s Long-Winded Lady, whose sentiments in turn echoed those expressed by preservationist Morris L. Ernst: “People cannot take root,” he said, “when they live more than six or eight stories off the ground” (*quoted in* Peters, 2005, p. 72). In fact, Brennan had begun to document those changes from her eighth-floor apartment years before Ernst’s pronouncement, before Jacobs’ notoriety, even at the high-point of the dystopian machinations inextricably linked to Moses’s urbanist vision (Caro, 1974, pp. 984-1004).

In “The Last Days of New York City,” the Long-Winded Lady sits in her two-roomed apartment, musing on the perversity of a house of cards—an impulse purchase from a day’s

desultory shopping—that is bound to outlive the bricks-and-mortar home it occupies. She writes:

“All my life I’ll be scurrying out of buildings just ahead of the wreckers, and I can’t afford to start wondering, every time I have the place painted, if the walls will speak up after the room has been laid open” *LWL* 219.

What might have prompted Brennan, then in her mid-thirties—successful, talented, and enchanting though she was—to look to the future with such foreboding eyes, may be explained by an indirect reference in the preceding passages. With something of the familiar, confidential tone of an intimate in which she was wont to address the reader, she writes that, recently, she has heard “talk of cutting an underpass through Washington Square” *LWL* 216. “It is only a rumor,” she tepidly concedes (p. 216), adding with more than a hint of the elegiac quality that pervades the rest of the story: “It will hardly look the same after that” (p. 216). With the force of an oblique assault, Brennan addresses a number of rumoured proposals, which were in fact part of official efforts to completely overhaul Manhattan’s transport system—including the construction of the Lower-Manhattan and Cross-Brooklyn Expressways (B. Sagalyn, 2016; Peters, 2005, p. 72). Amongst the more ambitious proposals conceived by Moses, these projects are notable for their failed implementation, thanks in no small part to the activism of women; volunteers from the Women’s City Club, and the women-led Save Our Homes initiative, who “defied the fifties paradigm of gender [by] rallying in public [and] demanding official action” (Zipp, 2006, p. 357; Caro, 1974, pp.972-973). Peters avers that it was often middle-class women who issued the clarion call for reform. Indeed, Jacobs herself, in her *Death and Life*, commended local activists Shirley Hayes and Edith Lyons (both mothers and Washington Square residents) for their “remarkable intellectual step of envisioning improvement for certain city uses, such as children’s play, strolling, and horsing around, at the expense of vehicular traffic” (1992, p. 361), whilst fellow resident and former First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, was also a vocal opponent (Nycgovparks.org, 2020).

The preservation of Washington Square Park was an important example of civic, women-led opposition to divisive urban planning; the first in a number of major public works envisaged for Manhattan, that would be shelved indefinitely, or decisively scrapped, over the course of the 1960s. Yet, in the summer of 1955, staring down from her high-rise, two-roomed apartment at an already much-altered Greenwich Village, Brennan would have had little cause for such optimism, prompting her to remark with bitter irony: “The hotel in which I now live is elderly,

and last night I wondered, not for the first time, whether its last days might not be approaching”
LWL 217.

Indeed, it is well she might have wondered, for the construction of the Cross-Bronx Expressway, begun in the late-1940s, and lasting well over a decade, had already caused untold damage to significant sections of the South Bronx, most notably to the East Tremont neighbourhood. Vested with Title-I powers, Moses’ bulldozers were razing extensive tracts of slum settlements to make way for his Manhattantown development, forcefully evicting thousands of families from an impoverished though “stable” community, into ever more marginalised and destitute conditions (Caro, 1974, pp. 963, 966, 970-971). Significantly, the slum communities that Moses evicted for his vast Manhattantown project were racially-integrated—something that appealed to many African-American residents, not merely for reasons of common fellowship, but because they understood that public services were “far better in non-segregated areas” of the city (p.971). The slum conditions they had been living under were enviable compared to those in Harlem, where many of them feared to go, and where many more ultimately finished up³⁷.

Indeed, Brennan expresses a consciousness of, and evident disquietude over, attitudes to racial bigotry, as evidenced both in her Long-Winded Lady missives and in personal correspondence. In a letter to *New Yorker* editor William Shawn (conceivably sent in the spring of 1968), she evinces grave misgivings over the magazine’s attitude to racial discrimination, instantiated in the excision of a single name—that of “the only Negro” in a company of sixteen men, the “top brass” of the famed Latin Quarter nightclub, gathered together for their annual New Year’s Eve dinner (“Letter from Maeve Brennan to William Shawn”, n.d.-h)—from one of her recent Long-Winded Lady contributions (“Mr Sam Bidner and His Saxophone”)³⁸. Punctilious in her enquiries, Brennan protests that she scrupled to record the name of each and every attendant—

³⁷ If Moses’s racial prejudice were not already obvious in the implementation of many of his subtly-segregationist civic developments, there is little doubt that his grander urbanist vision deliberately excluded the city’s poor, African-American, and immigrant communities, outwith considerations of their dismantlement and dispersal (Walker, 2012, p. 305). In the case of at least two of the ten enormous city swimming pools, construction of which he oversaw in the 1930s, Moses sought to forestall racial integration by employing “only white lifeguards and attendants” (Caro, 1960, p. 514), and maintaining a water temperature well below the “comfortable” (p. 514) seventy degrees Fahrenheit, in the benighted belief that African Americans were less tolerant of cold conditions than their Caucasian counterparts (p. 514).

³⁸ Yagoda opines that, until the publication of James Baldwin’s “Letter from a Region of My Mind” in November 1962, *The New Yorker* had almost entirely disregarded race—both in its hiring and editorial process—nevertheless running “an extraordinary number of cartoons about ‘natives’” over its forty-year history (2000, pp. 316, 318-319). The first black editorial assistants were hired in 1963, just five years before Brennan’s letter to Shawn (pp. 318-319).

“Mr. Sam Bidner and His Saxophone” was published as a ‘note’ from the ‘Long-Winded Lady’ in January, 1968.

–“I kept [asking]‘Have I got them all?’” (n.d.-h); yet, despite her assurance that “[Mr. Jack Hunter’s] name was on the last proof [she] saw,” by the time the volume goes to press, Hunter’s name alone has been “omitted” (n.d.-h). “Is it possible he objected to having his name included?” she frets; “I cannot believe it. They have that dinner every year [...] Who on earth could have decided to leave out his name and why didn't they ask me (*sic*)” (n.d.-h).

The letter extends to eleven hand-written pages, concluding disconsolately: “But you see, I'm afraid his name was simply dropped, and I am desperately upset about it” (n.d.-h). Yet, implicit within this seemingly over-particular grievance is an alertness to the complexities of racial identity, and an acknowledgement of the insidious structures of bigotry and intolerance, both at institutional and civil levels. Perceptible, here, is a consciousness of the “boundaries between [the] self and others,” reflected in, and initiated by, the physical divisions (with)in the structures of urban space itself (Felton, 2012, p. 131). Indeed, there is a self-consciousness in the very naming of the racial ‘Other,’ as Brennan’s interlocutor identifies Hunter as “the colored fellow,” while she opts for (the consciously capitalised) “Negro” (“Letter from Maeve Brennan to William Shawn”, n.d.-h)³⁹:

“If his name was simply left off, I would like to write to him a little note, of apology, because the omission is spectacular, in that little group. But then if I write to him he will know his name was left off by someone. And he may even think I am only writing to him because he is a Negro. I am certain that if I had written “Mr. Hunter is a handsome, dignified middle aged Negro” his name would have remained. And if I had written these words I would have been insulting him by singling him out when I did not single out any of the others except as they singled themselves out. And Mr. Hunter did nothing to call attention to himself” (n.d.-h; *Brennan’s emphasis*).

Against an admittedly chequered background of Irish-American attitudes to race—historical and, sadly, enduring (Walter, 2000, p. 70; Luibheid, 1997, pp. 511-512)—it is heartening to see that Brennan found herself on the right side of history, and that over and above “the panoply of behaviours occasionally exhibited in the urban public space, of people who are disoriented, traumatized and simply unwell” (Felton, 2012, p. 139), her capacity to empathise with the stranger—“In the nexus between the private world of the citizen moving through the public spaces of the city” (p.129)—extended to cultural, class, and racial differences too. Here, the

³⁹ It is worth noting that in his extended editorial, “Letter from a Region in My Mind” (1962), which arguably precipitated the changes to race – procedural and attitudinal – within *The New Yorker* magazine, James Baldwin repeatedly uses the (capitalised) “Negro” to refer to the black population(s) for whom he resolves to speak (Baldwin, 1962; Yagoda, 2000, pp. 318-319).

Long-Winded Lady is a psychic geographer, chiefly concerned with the “psychodynamics of place”—that “collective emotional geography of [the] city [...] expressed through moments that erupt and disturb civil life” (p.131). Notwithstanding—indeed, conceivably consequent upon—her liminality as a colonial subject, or what Sandra Lee Bartky identifies as a “victim of a [very particular] ‘psychic alienation’” (1990, p. 22), Brennan inhabits an interjacent space within the urban sphere, alive to the antimony between her social occlusion as a single woman in a public (male) space, and the privileged visibility afforded by her whiteness and bourgeois status. An outsider inside—and, conversely, an insider outside—Brennan was arguably sensitive to the inherent incongruity of “white [...] Irish women [who were] constructed as a dominant group vis-à-vis black women in and through the discourses of anti-black racism, even when they themselves [were] in turn subordinated within anti-Irish racism” (Brah, 2005, p. 90); an “ambivalence” acknowledged by Bronwen Walter, who contends that Irish women, in nineteenth century American cities, “[were] the key group being constructed as white and against whom blackness was judged to be inferior” (2000, pp. 63, 69).

It would not be the last time Brennan challenged *The New Yorker*’s ethnocentric bias. In a second, undated letter to editor William Shawn, she protests: “I am amazed at the tone of our editorial this week. [...] If I were black I would hate this magazine. This is Anglo-Saxon enlightenment” (“Letter from Maeve Brennan to William Shawn,” n.d.-i) But perhaps more importantly, in “The Two Protestors,” published in April 1964, Brennan deftly captures something of that ‘ambivalence,’ of the watchfulness that, amidst the hue and cry of an ever-more schismatic socio-political landscape, suffused public and private discourse, and confronted critical, if overlooked, anxieties over “urban power struggles [and] the right to the city movements” (Dybska, 2015, p. 9). One of a very few Long-Winded Lady pieces to address issues of race and social division, albeit with the muted obliqueness characteristic of her deftest writing, it details two distinct encounters with the urban ‘stranger’ “making himself public” on the city streets *LWL* 89. With compendious expression, Brennan describes the antics of a man, “howling in the street,” to the general amusement of a passing crowd of late-night revellers *LWL* 88.

“[S]tanding alone about fifteen feet away from me. [...] He was an astonishingly tall, thin man in a blue suit, and he had his head and shoulders thrown violently back. His face was turned up to the sky. He had only one leg, and his crutches, which were like stilts, were both braced in front of him so that they slanted back as he did” (p. 88).

Fearful of the violent indifference of the crowd—and conscious herself of the dangers inherent in such unsanctioned (public) visibility—the narrator observes:

“[A]lthough he was making no sense, he seemed to be making a good deal more sense than those who were laughing at him, and they, of normal height and standing on two legs, seemed more grotesque than he” *LWL 89*.

The spectacle summons a similar instance of public exposure to the Long-Winded Lady’s mind. Once again, the stranger—here, “a very small man, about five feet one” *LWL 89*—finds himself the unfortunate object of the crowd’s attentions. Yet, whereas the first scene is one of nocturnal dissipation, this second occurs in the daytime, in the midst of a silent and irresolute crowd, “mournful[ly] gather[ed] in the afternoon sunlight” around a man who had “smash[ed] the large plate-glass window on the Sixth Avenue side of the Forty-ninth Street Schrafft’s” (p. 89). What so interests the Long-Winded Lady, and presumably leads her to compare one incident with another, is not the man’s expression—“interested and obedient, not ashamed or frightened or angry” though it is *LWL 90*—but the expression of the crowd itself, conceived here as an aggregate body, and, acting in chorus, “thinking, or appearing to think” (p. 90). The narrator concludes with the sobering coda: “The only thing I have left to say about the two protestors [...] is that one of the men was black and one was white” (p. 90). Published at a time of enormous social and spiritual upheaval, “The Two Protestors” elicits the condition of moral introspection that characterised a decade adumbrated by—indeed, overwhelmingly defined by—the protracted Vietnam War and concurrent Civil Rights and Second-Wave feminist movements. Yet, without recourse either to sermonising or proselytising, Brennan’s commentary carries a weight of moral enquiry greatly belied by the apparent ‘slightness’ of the prose.

The Long-Winded Lady’s placement within *The New Yorker*—a conspicuous vehicle for the patterns of consumption described by Felton as “marginalising those unable or unwilling to participate in consumer culture” (2012, p. 137)—arguably, even ironically, facilitated a degree of civil discourse in opposition to such ‘marginalising’ praxis, whilst introducing a measure of subtle, and at times subversive, consciousness raising.

Single Women in the City

“The Last Days of New York City” was published at a curious time in both the city’s and the author’s life history. Evicted from her “little Ninth-Street apartment” only a year before

its publication (it was “torn out from under [her] by the wreckers” *LWL* 218), Brennan decided to marry and move in with fellow *New Yorker* writer and editor St. Clair McKelway—conceivably as a consequence of her eviction (Bourke, 2004, pp. 180-181). The marriage, however, was ill-starred. Dogged by personal demons, issues of addiction and depression, married life with McKelway arguably exacerbated Brennan’s sense of isolation, and ultimately failed to insulate her from the challenges of single life faced by countless women across the city, which she experienced now with a new intensity following an amicable divorce in 1959, little over five years into the marriage.

Another of her Long-Winded Lady epistles, penned shortly after the separation, finds her walking alone at dawn, fulminating over Sixth Avenue’s failings⁴⁰:

“During those hours, in the silence and the nice clean light [...] anyone walking alone through that ugliness can see without any trouble that Sixth is not a human thoroughfare at all but only a propped-up imitation of a thoroughfare, and that its purpose is not to provide safe or pleasant or beautiful passage for the people of the city but to propitiate, even if it is only for a little while, whatever the force is that feeds on the expectation of chaos. Those blocks, as far as you can see, offer nothing except the threat, or the promise, that they *will* come tumbling down. The buildings have about them nothing of the past and nothing of the future, no imitation of lives spent or to come, but only a reminder of *things* that should not have happened and a guarantee of *things* that should not have come to pass” *LWL* 123-124 (*Brennan’s italics*).

Gone is the disconsolate tone of “The Last Days of New York City.” The invective is as emphatic as the italicised “*things*,” signified here by whole blocks of the avenue that “*will*” be demolished. She writes with a sense of desperation, and a contempt for the disintegration that appears to pursue her; the “chaos” that underpins her anxieties, past, present and future, that sounds a subtle discordance in so much of her urban commentary (p. 124). Now, those fears expressed five or six years beforehand have become all too real, as an entire avenue is recast as little more than an ugly “imitation,” trapped in a cycle of perpetual transience, a palimpsest of infinite presents, each one worse than the last (p. 123). The ruinous imagery is potent, reinforced by the imagined obliteration of the avenue beneath “tons and tons and tons of snow,” which, she writes, “should always be falling there” (p. 126)—a subtle nod to Joyce’s “The

⁴⁰ Bourke writes that the *New Yorker* “kept stories in its ‘bank’ for years,” awaiting the marriage of time and circumstance for publication, meaning that this essay, “Sixth Avenue Shows its True Self,” published in November 1961 was likely written in or around the time of the divorce. No ‘Long-Winded Lady’ essays were published in 1959 (Bourke, 2004, p. 194).

Dead”⁴¹. The narrator imagines the avenue suddenly engulfed by a deluge of “desolate” snow (p. 126); yet, as the buildings retreat into nothingness, she concedes: “Sixth Avenue possesses a quality that some people acquire, sometimes quite suddenly, which dooms it and them to be loved only at the moment when they are being looked at for the very last time” (p.126). The passage’s elegiac quality is no mere bombast. With whole terraces, and in some cases whole blocks, downed in a matter of days, Brennan is moved not merely by the disquietude of spatial disorientation—“let the mishap of disorientation once occur,” writes Lynch, “and the sense of anxiety and even terror that accompanies it reveals to us how closely it is linked to our sense of balance and well-being” (1960, p. 4)—but by the still more disquieting reality of the steady erosion of safe, affordable accommodations for the city’s poor, the elderly, the racialised ‘Other,’ and—crucially for herself—the many unmarried, divorced, and/or childfree women⁴². Single once again, Brennan now faced the vexing issue of finding ‘decent’ housing—an issue that had dogged women for decades, bound by implication to the larger question of orthodox attitudes to (single) women living in cities. Indeed, Bourke notes of Brennan’s divorce that, left “without property or a private income, a sense of lowered consequence was probably inevitable” (2004, p. 220); adding, it was “no small thing” for her to have abandoned married life in her forties, “with no prospect of alimony” (p. 216).

As far back as the 1920s, matters of affordability and “virtue” had bedevilled single women hoping to make a success of city life (Byron, 2010). Historian Rosalind Rosenberg holds that there were no viable alternatives to the string of women-only residences dotted around the city, which housed and fed debutantes and young working girls, safely and inexpensively, until—in the ‘logical’ course of things—they “married and moved out” (2010). Wage disparities ensured that affordability remained an issue for women, who were forced to compete for an ever-diminishing supply of furnished rooms and SROs (Single Room Occupancy dwellings) with an ever-increasing number of the city’s poorest⁴³. Indeed, it would be another twelve years before US banks would even begin to offer mortgages to women “regardless of their marital

⁴¹ Brennan would certainly have been very familiar with the final passage of Joyce’s extended story, “The Dead,” which begins, “[S]now was general all over Ireland” (Joyce, 2000, p. 313).

⁴² In “The Last Days of New York City,” the Long-Winded Lady observes: “When I went to lunch, I found a whole block of Sixth Avenue gone, and I hadn’t any recollection at all of those vanished houses, except that I thought they might have been a reddish color” *LWL* 217-218.

⁴³ Assessing the disastrous effects of Moses’ \$54 million housing project, Manhattantown, Caro illustrates the effects of evicting several thousand residents – “always poor, predominantly Negro,” (1960, p. 964) – from six square blocks of the city, through the insidious rise of overcrowding in the West-Side and Upper-West-Side neighbourhoods, recalling that on the first hot day of the year, “the West Side was – all at once – not just a racially mixed neighbourhood, but a much poorer neighbourhood, and a much more crowded one” (p. 964).

status” (Hardy & Wiedmer, 2011, p. 6)—by which time, it should be noted, Brennan’s contract with *The New Yorker* had already been terminated.

The history of the SRO (Single Room Occupancy) is intimately allied to the housing crises that bedevilled New York over the second-half of the twentieth century. Long a staple of unmarried adults and childless couples, the city’s supply of SROs, rooming houses, and hotels, were as integral to women’s independent existence in the early decades of the twentieth century, as their wholesale demolition in the Fifties and Sixties would be to post-war efforts at reinstalling women in the home (Peters, 2004, pp. 70, 79).

After the United States’ intercession in the Second World War, major urban centres saw a massive influx of workers looking to fill the manpower void left behind by drafted servicemen. New York landlords responded to the surge in demand for housing by further subdividing the brownstones and “greystones” from habitable two- and three-family townhouses into what effectively became tenements, sheltering as many as ten families per building (Siegal, 1974, pp. 3-4). Over time, the rudimentary SRO became a haven for the marginalised: lesbian and gay couples, able-bodied persons with mental health issues, and “quasi-familial arrangements of older women, and alcoholic men” (p. 5)⁴⁴. These people were “peripheral to the mainstream of the life of the city” (p. 5), alike in their “isolation, loneliness, and tendency to personal disorganisation” (Zorbaugh *quoted in* Siegal, 1974, p. 6).

Between the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the woman in the hotel had made the transition from disreputable to respectable figure. Single women of all hues, unmarried, divorced, widowed, young and old, found in the residential hotel a space to circumvent the conventions of marriage and domestic servility. Before the emergence of safe houses (literal and figurative) in the first years of the twentieth century, women “who lived on their own in cities, or who roomed with other women”—inherently “suspect” when alone out of doors (Spain, 2014, p. 583)—ran the risk of being taken for prostitutes (Traister, 2016, p. 90). At the beginning of the twentieth century, institutions like the Martha Washington Hotel and The Trowmart Inn had enabled women—notably, single women—to live “free from the suspicion of amoral behaviour” (p. 87). These boarding houses catered to “respectable” young women, many of them hoping to make a career in the city, many more bolstered by wealthy parents—

⁴⁴ No less than seven individuals – at “a minimum” – were expected to share a single bathroom and kitchen (one toilet, one stove, etc.), in each SRO “unit” (Siegal, 1974, pp. 3-4).

and it should be noted, almost all of them white (Biondi, 2007, p. 16)⁴⁵. Writers such as Edna Ferber and Dorothy Parker found in the hotel a safe and comfortable space to work freely, whilst Dawn Powell viewed the hotel as a space for “urban exploration and sexual freedom” (Peters, 2005, p. 78)⁴⁶. Indeed, Powell would take to eulogising Manhattan’s “upper- and middle-class hotels – the Astor, the Brevoort, the Lafayette, [and] the Hotel Imperial” (p. 78), as Brennan herself would later eulogise the cheap, serviceable hotels of Greenwich Village and the West Village in the Fifties and Sixties.

Writers like Parker, Powell, and Brennan celebrated the hotel as an instrument of independent living—what Peters calls their “voluntary homelessness” (2005, p. 79)—and recognised in its destruction something that extended beyond mere physical demolition, to a greater obscuration of the hotel “as architectural space and cultural idea” (p. 75). As the grand old hotels and the mid-range hotels came tumbling down, the city’s SROs and furnished rooms gained a newfound importance, not merely for women, but for the tens of thousands of poor and underprivileged, evicted from bogus slums by Moses’ bulldozers, and rendered homeless by the monolithic office blocks and upscale apartments that supplanted them (Caro, 1961, pp. 963, 986)⁴⁷.

Yet, to the extent that, even in the 1950s, the SRO could still be considered a viable option for those of limited means to maintain a home in the city, it would not endure long. By the mid-1960s, the SRO was spuriously identified as a new kind of slum dwelling by New York state officials⁴⁸. In 1965, the Deputy Mayor of New York expressed doubts as to whether or not the SRO could even being considered “lawful housing,” and broached the possibility of “phasing [them] out of existence” (Crystal & Beck, 1992, p. 684). Following this, writes Peters, as many

⁴⁵ Paulina Bren writes of another notable women-only institution, the Barbizon Hotel, “Mademoiselle guest editor Barbara Chase had been a pioneer when she stayed [there] in 1956, most likely the first Black woman to have done so, but over ten years later, things had barely changed” (2021, p. 266).

⁴⁶ Pulitzer Prize-winning author Edna Ferber’s novels included *Show Boat* (1926) and *Giant* (1952), both of which were made into blockbuster Hollywood films.

⁴⁷ “The places that Moses’s bulldozers [levelled] were not ‘slums,’” writes Zipp. “Where official planning surveys [...] found physical decay and social turmoil, tenant activists saw ‘old established neighbourhoods of 30-50 years’ with low rents and close (*sic*) to workplaces” (2010, p. 205). Certainly, Moses bore this out with his magnum opus the Lincoln Center, construction of which saw him demolish 7,000 low-income homes over eighteen square blocks, to be replaced by 4,400 new homes, more than nine-tenths of which were “luxury apartments” (Caro, 1974, pp. 1013-1014).

⁴⁸ A study carried out in the 1980s by Crystal and Beck surveyed almost five hundred residents of New York City’s rooming houses, residential hotels, and SRO buildings. Their findings indicated that long term, elderly residents were least likely to have experienced psychiatric hospitalisation in the past. Additionally, the same older residents, “by a strong majority” indicated a stronger attachment to, and a greater feeling of safety in, their SRO dwelling (Crystal and Beck, 1992, p. 684-685).

as “100,000 SRO units disappeared” in the ten-year period 1972 to ’82 alone (2005, p. 14). Yet, by the time the New York City Council saw fit to address the issue, “by imposing a moratorium on conversions, alterations and demolitions of single-room occupancy dwellings” (Crystal & Beck, 1992, p. 685), the city was contending not merely with a housing crisis, but also with a homelessness crisis of calamitous proportions.

Brennan *qua* the Long-Winded Lady spent years regretting the destruction and disfiguration of her adopted home. From the Whitney Museum to the Holly Hotel, the Brevoort to Wannamaker’s department store, she traced a pattern of loss that was at once private and indiscriminate, observing and recording the wholesale destruction of landmark buildings scattered around the city⁴⁹. Stepping out for lunch one afternoon, she remarks upon the sudden disappearance of an entire block of Sixth Avenue: “It is very disconcerting,” she protests, “to have a gap suddenly appear in a spot where you can’t remember ever having seen a wall” *LWL* 218.

Brennan’s awareness of her environment was absolute; her sorrow for its ceaseless mutation, habitual. Through the progressive disorientation she suffered, and in the socio-spatial erasure she scrupulously documented, she manifested what Lynch saw as, “the [crucial] need to recognize and pattern our surroundings” (1960, p. 4).

Whiter-than-white Suburbia

The American suburb flourished in the years following the Second World War. As a socio-political phenomenon, it was fraught with an aesthetic of spatial and racial division from the outset (Spain, 2014, p. 586). Over a period of almost 30 years, beginning with Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal (1933-1934), the United States federal government “subsidised \$120 billion in new housing; 98 percent of it for white families” (Traister, 2016, p. 67). Congenitally racist, post-war suburbia underscored and reinforced class distinction, privileging the white, middle-class, nuclear family, effectively eliminating social heterogeneity on the basis of ethnicity, class, sexuality and—since both single women and single mothers were also excluded—marital status. Yet, even the white, middle-class housewives exiled to their shiny new commuter-belt homes soon found that they had unwittingly adopted a gilded cage for their

⁴⁹ She openly professed to having little or no knowledge of vast tracts of the city, tending to find lodgings in the same familiar neighbourhoods time and again. She favoured the cheaper accommodations around Manhattan’s Midtown district, as well as some of the more affordable neighbourhoods of the lower-west side. In *The Last Days of New York City* she refers to the smaller hotels clustered around Washington Square, a number of which she had inhabited at one time or another *LWL* 1-3.

own captivity. The idealised suburban housewife-and-mother would quickly discover in her post as governess of her own domestic fiefdom an oppressive home routine, and an all-encompassing set of domestic duties. Described by *Good Housekeeping* as exile to “lonelyville,” suburbia would prove itself less than Edenic to the women who quit the cities in their millions from the mid-1940s, only to find themselves left “standing behind the struggling young vines of [their] brand new piazza[s]” (Wilson, 1992, p. 67)⁵⁰.

Chief amongst the housewife’s often unrecognised—and oftener unpaid—duties were the decoration, beautification, and upkeep of the family home (Spain, 2014, pp. 585-586). Women were duty-bound to covet and (ideally) purchase the labour-saving utilities manufactured by their management- and executive-grade, white-collar husbands (Traister, 2016, p. 64). The suburban housewife became, in Wilson’s words, “increasingly imprisoned in the genteel interior” (1992, p. 105) of her own fashioning. Betty Friedan saw her as the victim of, “an ‘everyday life’ in which [her] role was largely to consume commodities intended to symbolise happiness; [though yet] in practice,” she added, “the avalanche of things became cloying [and] suffocating” (Wilson, 1992, p. 114). Although not quite an ‘avalanche,’ Brennan’s eye for the ‘things’ of her own childhood home—the same that would later be repurposed as the setting of her Dublin stories—is nevertheless scrupulous, finely attuned to the trappings of the lower-middle-class household, described with the one-time fashion editor’s faculty for colour, texture, and type. It must come as no surprise, then, that much of what Brennan wrote is allied to the worlds of fashion and, by way of her *flâneuserie*, the fetishized commodity—a connection considered at length later in this chapter.

Ben Yagoda opines that the Long-Winded Lady “caught the heartbeat of the time and made the magazine indispensable to hundreds of thousands of readers each week”; moreover, he adduces Brennan’s contributions as having restored “a connection to the city streets [that] it had lacked” (2000, p. 306). Yet, the fictive raconteuse who was regularly to be found beetling along the Manhattan grid, swilling martinis at the Algonquin, or visiting a favourite department store, was as much a component of the greater marketing of the city itself—which is to say the experience of New York-as-commodity—as that of conscious agent in the at-least tangential commercialisation of her “nonfacetious” dispatches (p. 306).

⁵⁰ Interestingly, Rose Derdon and Delia Bagot – estranged housewives of Brennan’s Dublin stories – are often seen standing behind the thriving fronds of their potted ferns, in the “bow” window of that lonely suburban home (48 Cherryfield Avenue).

Vaia Doudaki has written of another of New York's pseudonymous *flâneuses*—Carrie Bradshaw, from the HBO series *Sex and the City*—that she possesses the ability to adapt her look to a particular mood (hers or the city's). Indeed, that “[she] looks like her cherished New York, which forms its elusive and potentially ever-evolving character of the disparate elements that compose it” (2012, p. 15). In this, Doudaki might well have been describing Brennan's Long-Winded Lady, who used style, writes Ellen McWilliams, “as a deeply meaningful form of creative expression and an important channel of personal agency” (2016, p. 52).

In “A Shoe Story,” the Long-Winded Lady accidentally breaks her heel while crossing Park Avenue. Furious, she determines to take a cab to the store that sold her the shoes only a week beforehand, but stops short with the thought, “I realized that I could make a much more effective stand [...] if I walked in in a pair of brand-new, expensive shoes from some other shop” *LWL* 27. That other shop, we learn, is Bergdorf Goodman, a luxury department store favoured by Brennan. Yet, within this paradigm of hegemonic femininity, the Long-Winded Lady realises a kind of paradoxical visibility, in which the shoes that impoverish her—literally and figuratively; exposing her to the hazards of physical pain and of (sexual) objectification—coincidentally afford her a visibility that obscures perceived feminine subordination⁵¹. Jocelyn Bartram Scott writes of this paradox that, “the experience of wearing high heels while wielding the power of wearing them, illustrates that the powerfulness of femininity does not exist without powerlessness” (2021, p. 6). This empowered-disempowered dichotomy arguably extends to the Long-Winded Lady's relationship to the city itself as a space at once inimical to, and a validation of, her very existence. Single and childfree, Brennan *qua* the Long-Winded Lady undertakes a feminisation of the urban environment by (physically) inhabiting it, and by reproducing, nay reconstituting, it in a distinctly feminine register.

If, as Doudaki suggests, Bradshaw's mutable style expressed the disparate nature of New York City, I argue that Brennan's uniform “little black dress”—her “[Baudelairean] livery of grief [...] for an age in mourning” (Yazan, 2012, p. 104)—and fresh carnation (a nod to [Willean] queer alterity), appears to defy that urgency of change, and embrace the immutable in the face of regressive urban renewal⁵². In her personal life, however, Brennan often eschewed material gain, practicing the sort of financial insouciance that led her, in one instance, to install a parquet

⁵¹ Second-wave feminists were wont to accuse women who wore make-up and heels as being willing victims of the patriarchy. For more on ‘femmephobia’, see Hoskin (2017).

⁵² McWilliams sees Brennan's style as part of “a lineage that is ultimately traceable to Oscar Wilde” (2016, p. 43). In “From the Hotel Earle,” we see the Long-Winded Lady purchasing a single carnation for her lapel *LWL* 39.

floor in the living room of her rented apartment, only to up-sticks and abandon it within a matter of months (Bourke, 2004, p. 242). The trunks of possessions worthy of paid storage that she failed to reclaim on at least three occasions, invariably consisted of memorabilia, souvenirs, theatre flyers, diner menus, and her extensive correspondence, amongst scores of galley prints and drafts of her writing⁵³. Indeed, her most valued possessions were the fine, often signed and rare editions of books, which she several times lost in hock, only to have them reacquired by concerned and charitable friends. Consumerist apostate on the one hand, commercial agent on the other; it is difficult to reconcile these opposing avatars of the author. Conversant with codes from childhood, Bourke suggests that Brennan engaged in a kind of literary subterfuge, communicating the otherwise uncommunicable to those women readers who had been, “[r]elegated to the suburbs, excluded from the ‘real’ world, [...] the intellectually frustrated women who experienced Friedan’s ‘problem that has no name’ [and] developed a facility for gauging shades of meaning” (2004, p. 190)⁵⁴.

Yet, what is equally worth considering here are Brennan’s creative impulses as face-value artistic expressions: the desire to express herself by noticing, by simple observation, may have been an end in and of itself. As Julia Cameron puts it: “One of the great misconceptions about the artistic life is that it entails great swathes of aimlessness. Attention is a way to connect and survive” (2016, p. 52). This sense of observational urgency is borne out in one of Brennan’s last-known (and still little-known) letters⁵⁵. Cautioning a friend against the hazards of writer’s block, she writes: “When you are so sad that you ‘cannot work’ there is always a danger fear will enter in and begin withering around. A good way to remain on guard is to go to the window and watch the birds for an hour or two or three. It is very comforting to see their beaks opening and shutting” (*quoted in* Bolick, 2016, p. 280). In other words, the relationship between author and reader may have been a less subtly didactic one.

⁵³ At least three such storage troves have come to light since Brennan’s death in 1993, auctioned off in the decades following their abandonment at various storage lock-ups, and at various times in the 1960s and ‘70s, across the state of Massachusetts. Bourke lists two in her biography of Brennan (2004); a third was purchased in 2010 by the University of Emory, having been originally abandoned at a storage facility in Wellfleet, Massachusetts, in the 1960s (2004, p. 274; Brennan, 2010).

⁵⁴ Robert Brennan shared his passion for mystery novels (of which he composed two himself) with the second of his three daughters. In one of her last Long-Winded Lady dispatches, “On the Island” (1970), published when Brennan was 53 years old, we see the narrator purchasing a book by popular contemporary crime writer Dorothy Sayers.

⁵⁵ From Kate Bolick’s *Spinster* (2016). Bolick managed to track down and interview one of the last people to have known Brennan, Edith Konecky, who shared with her the contents of a letter Brennan had written in the 1980s to a mutual friend, Tillie Olsen (2016, pp. 278-280).

According to David Frisby, “urban literature itself [created] barriers for its readers, transforming the mental topography of the city into safe and unsafe areas” (2001, p. 64). The relationship here between author and reader is at once conformist and transgressive, as the predominantly female readership, consigned to the (cultural) boondocks of white suburbia, looked to the anonymous narrator as much for consumerist advice, as for the vicarious fantasy of urban living, of sipping a drink alone in a hotel lobby, or walking alone at night to an unfamiliar quarter of the city for the sole purpose of seeing an eighteenth-century farmhouse transposed to its new home from the other end of the island. In short, to be alone. “A woman alone is a beautiful thing,” writes Mallory Ortberg (*quoted in* Traister, p. 125). In spite of the considerable barriers women faced in the city, its “varied mores also provided them the shelter of forgiveness and redemption and reinvention, possibilities that [were] often lacking in smaller, rural environs” (p. 90)—environs not unlike those inhabited by the majority of mid-century suburban housewives. Brennan herself arguably partook of this ‘reinvention,’ having consciously freed herself from the provincial mores of interwar Dublin. Like fellow Irishwoman Carmel Snow—who, as editor of *Harper’s Bazaar*, would give Brennan her first ‘break’ in the 1940s—she experienced New York as a place to explore a level of autonomy, bodily and artistic, that only the anonymous space of the city could afford.

In spite of the substantial evidence cited by Spain that women feared cities far more than men (2014, p. 588), Elizabeth Wilson, adducing Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*, considers it “rather ironic that women have often appeared less daunted by city life than men” (1992, p. 157). Indeed, Traister highlights the possibility of the city as a kind of surrogate partner to women:

“The notion that women too might get from urban homes what, in another era, they got – or what men got – from marriage is a radical, progressive revision of what marriage means [...] This dynamic also permits women to function in the world in a way that was once impossible, with the city serving as spouse, and, sometimes, true love” (2016, p. 79).

Certainly, if New York served as surrogate partner to Brennan—and there is much to support that contention—it was a tempestuous affair, reified in her observation that,

“New York does nothing for those of us who are inclined to love her except implant in our hearts a homesickness that baffles us until we go away from her, and then we realize why we are restless. At home or away, we are homesick for New York not because New York used to be better and not because she used to be worse but because the city holds us and we don't know why” *LWL 142*.

Domesticity

The Brennans' move to Washington D.C. when Maeve was seventeen immersed the family in a world—a state, at least—of racial segregation, experienced not least of all through their interactions with the African-American servants they employed (Bourke, 2004, p. 129). Because Mrs. Brennan suffered from ill health, and while she struggled with the housewifely duties of a diplomat's wife, cooks, cleaners, and a chauffeur to drive the minister were on hand. Maeve and her siblings became accustomed to rudimentary luxuries which would have seemed greatly out of place amid the social conservatism of Dublin in the 1930s. Bourke identifies the sense of culture shock with which the late-adolescent Maeve encountered the American cult of beauty. Used to the society of her “blue stocking” mentors—friends like Dorothy McArdle—America's ubiquitous make-up culture would likely have struck her as “common” and “not necessary” (p. 128). Indeed, it was arguably an early baptism into the world of commercial beauty in which, at *Harper's Bazaar* at least, she would soon be steeped (p. 128). Yet, in spite of her experiences of segregationist Washington, Brennan rarely took up the mantle of racial intolerance with such frankness as she did in the case of the Irish maid. She evinced an enduring curiosity for the faithful ‘Brigid’ of American domesticity—the many thousands of Irish women who crossed the Atlantic for well over a century, from the time of the Act of Union (1800) until the 1930s, when Britain became the preferred destination for many of the emigrating Irish⁵⁶.

Tanya Ann Kennedy interprets the ubiquitous presence of the “working girl” in early twentieth-century literature as, “symptomatic [of] middle-class anxiety about the female subject's place within an urban culture that increasingly marginalizes the cultural influence of female domestic space” (2007, p. 27). Indeed, women in the workplace, and the notion of charity as the duty of the middle-class housewife—and the penance of the middle-class husband—are themes common to some of the earliest fiction Brennan produced, both at *Harper's* and *The New Yorker*. In “The Joker” (1952), Isobel Bailey is obsessed by the notion of waifs. “What makes a waif?” she wonders *RG 52*—often at Christmas with winter approaching. The importance of

⁵⁶ The pattern of ‘marriageable’ Irishwomen emigrating to the United States gained momentum in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Indeed, even as late as the 1920s, Irish-born women accounted for more than four-fifths of all female domestic servants in US employment at the time (Akenson, 1993, p. 181; Walter, 2000, pp. 49-50).

being seen to acknowledge and, on occasion, give assistance to such waifs, gives purpose to Isobel's privileged, sheltered life. "Isobel," we read,

"believed implicitly in law, order and organisation. She believed strongly in organised charity. She gave regular donations to charity, and she served willingly and conscientiously on several committees. She felt it was only fair that she should help those less fortunate than herself, though there was a point where she drew the line. She never gave money casually on the street, and her maids had strict orders to shut the door to beggars. 'There are places where these people can apply for help,' she said" *RG 53*.

But when the tables are turned and Isobel finds that—at the end of the charitable Christmas dinner she has arranged for three "respectable [and] gentle-looking" waifs *RG 52*—she herself has become the object of another's sympathy, the very idea is repellent to her.

"'Are you people sympathising with me?' Isobel said. 'Because if you are, please stop it. I am not in the least upset, I assure you.' With hands that shook violently, she began to serve the pudding" *RG 69*.

Isobel's abhorrence is twofold. On the one hand, she realises that her 'charity' may be less desirable than she had previously believed it to be, rendering her preferred *métier* valueless; on the other, that the distance separating her from the waifs of her fascination may be far slighter than she had thought possible, that indeed there might even be a narrowing of "[t]he distance between the working-girl and middle-class woman" (Kennedy, 2007, p. 27).

According to Kennedy, "early twentieth-century women writers represented the urban and domestic as mutually constitutive of one another and accessed that intersection through the figure of the working-girl" (2007, p. 26). Isobel's anxieties over her proper place in the urban environment—couched though they are in ersatz notions of charity, "order and organisation" *RG 53*—arguably reflect Brennan's own misgivings over her place as a middle-class woman within an urban culture that increasingly subjugated domestic space, consequently attenuating feminine space itself.

Yet, in truth, the "transactional services" of marriage (Traister, 2016, p. 76), reimagined by single, independent, city-dwelling women like Brennan as the *actual* exchange of money for services, were achieved at the expense of millions of less fortunate women—poor, often ethnic and immigrant labourers. The mass exploitation of those phalanxes of working women rose in direct proportion to the expansion of the middle-class, notably the suburban middle-class (p. 180). "The actual scrubbing of the hearth," writes Traister, "was often done by poorer women, immigrants, and African-Americans who were in no economic position to depart the work force and attend to the cleaning and uplift of their own homes" (p. 180).

A second early story, “The Bride” (1953), concerns the fate of a young Irish ‘Brigid,’ Margaret Casey, who spends the night before her wedding bitterly regretting her decision to marry and give up the security of domestic service. Published little over six months before Brennan herself married, it is a travesty of unfulfilled dreams and grudges, and clearly an overture to the deeply unsatisfactory and incompatible marriage that followed.

Margaret, it seems, has consented to marry only after her mother’s death—once her dream of returning to Ireland to live out her days peaceably, as her mother’s faithful companion, has been truly blighted. Marriage clearly represents an invidious choice for this near-destitute woman, whose long-imagined gloating at her sister’s expense will no longer be possible, now that she has found herself suddenly dispossessed of the family home and all its possessions—possessions no doubt purchased with the remittances she never stinted to send home. The closing passage positively seethes with stifled anger, casting its long shadow over the couple’s ill-fated future. As if to put a shape on that shadow, the story originally ran in *The New Yorker* superposed by a cartoon of a couple in late-middle-age. The woman looks on disaffected, as the husband, seated before a glowing television screen, complains: “Sure, go right ahead and interrupt. The man only gets ten thousand dollars an hour to entertain me” (Brennan, “The Bride”, 2020). In contrast to such embittered domestic relations, a life of service might well appear secure, reliable, even peaceable.

Margaret’s employers are clearly saddened by her departure: they offer her money, moral support, a wedding breakfast, and are overjoyed at her “good fortune” in finding a husband *RG 154*. Faced with equally unsatisfactory prospects—marriage, or service—Margaret opts for matrimony, grudgingly eschewing a life of service that millions of young Irish ‘Brigids’ before her had taken up in the hope of achieving what Breda Gray describes as “bourgeois American individual status” (2004, p. 3). For many such immigrant Irishwomen, “[c]hoice and freedom [were] seen as shaping their migrant lives for the better through a language of autonomy and self-realization” (p. 3). However deluded she may be—and notwithstanding her tacit agreement to marry—Margaret feels more mutuality with her bourgeois employers, Mr. and Mrs. Smith, than with the man she will marry, with whom she might—just might—eke out an acceptable standard of living.

The virtues of Margaret’s present circumstances, however imperfect, seem preferable to the slim chance of real happiness in her own home, with her own family, in “the house (not yet built) that Carl hoped to buy,” with “his plan[s] to go into business with his brother someday, not right away” *RG 154*. The derision is self-evident. At the crucial moment, Margaret finds that, without sufficient reassurance, faced with the reality of choosing—much less the reality

of a fiancé merry with an eagerness (of which she is entirely bereft) to marry—“she [only] wanted to scream at him that he was beneath her” *RG 158*.

Many more such ‘Brigids,’ both in name and nature, appear throughout Brennan’s fiction, notably in the series of farces concerning the community of well-to-do suburbanites and their faintly absurd companion Charles Runyon, set in the semi-fictional Herbert’s Retreat.

Brennan went so far as to attempt a novel—long, incomplete drafts of which survive in the archives—based upon the waspish, effete, anachronistic critic, who lives alone in a rundown hotel, and involves himself intimately, invasively even, in the lives of the community’s residents. McWilliams writes that Brennan’s long-standing fascination with Runyon—a long-winded, quick-witted, in many ways queer character, about whom she is often pointedly disparaging—is perhaps unsurprising in light of the dandyish traits of “self-containment, self-presentation and style” that they shared (2016, p. 49)⁵⁷. Yet, the vitriol she reserves for him, often expressed through the character of the old Irish maid Bridie, may be explained by his stylistic insincerity, which—like Wilde, McWilliams argues—Brennan abhorred. She continues: “Runyon’s greatest failing in these stories is his marked lack of what Sammell’s calls ‘individual personality’ in the cultivation of his personal aesthetic” (p. 50). It is significant, however, that Brennan devoted as much time and effort to this character as she plainly did, for if indeed she identified with him to the extent that they shared common characteristics of dandyism, there is, I argue, as much to be said for Runyon’s ‘Otherness’, his rejection and false pride—even his queerness—as a reflection of the ‘Otherness’ Brennan herself likely experienced in the brief period she spent living a conventionally domestic life in Sneden’s Landing, the salubrious residential enclave of upstate New York, upon which the arch satires of the ‘Herbert’s Retreat’ stories were based (Bourke, 2004, p. 182).

In light of the author’s stultifying if hedonistic marriage to St. Clair McKelway, Charles’s persistent secretiveness—his reclusiveness, even—appears as a kind of corollary to Brennan’s suburban confinement. Written in the throes of her tempestuous and short-lived marriage, Charles arguably represents the part of Brennan that longed for escape, even as she wrote so scathingly his avarice, his viciousness, and his inauthenticity. While she penned the stories of Herbert’s Retreat in the mid-1950s—and as she continued her attempts to craft a longer narrative from the same scenario after her marriage had ended—Brennan was in a sense turning the pen on herself in a despairing critique that mirrored the caustic Charles Runyon’s own

⁵⁷ As to his long-windedness, it is no accident that his name is a portmanteau of ‘run on.’

withering appraisals as critic—even a failed critic, such as he is. Whatever security she might have found in acquiring an enviable suburban family home, she cannot have lightly tolerated the concessions to conventional housewifery it doubtlessly engendered, having staunchly disavowed them in her personal life, as a result of seeing, and learning to resent them in her mother's. As a married woman with (at least some) responsibility for the upkeep of the family home, Brennan was once again confronted with the “increased [...] amount of domestic work” that attended women “imprisoned in the genteel interior” of the middle-class, “consumerist” household (Wilson, 1992, p. 105).

Brennan would later depict the “atmosphere of sexual and cultural abstinence [that] prevailed” in interwar suburbia with ruthless honesty (1992, p. 106)—albeit transposed to the suffocating Dublin suburbs. She personally disdained the ubiquitous culture of ‘keeping up with the Joneses’ (to which, incidentally, the Long-Winded Lady’s epistles doubtlessly contributed), ultimately preferring the dandy’s self-governing consciousness—that which sees “beauty in streets, factories and urban blight” (p. 5)—over the privileged exile of suburban family life. As Charles Runyon conspires to keep a foot in (or perhaps an infrangible dominance over) Fiona Harkey’s enviable Herbert’s Retreat home, whilst still holding onto his hotel room in the city—sanctum of his true inner-life—so Brennan approached marriage to McKelway and suburbia with the same dilettantish indecision; and with both feet permanently oriented towards the city.

Flâneuse

While her ‘Long-Winded Lady’ missives do, in a sense, chart Brennan’s personal history of fragmentation, they may also be read as a form of “dynamic mapping,” a cartography of the order of urban decay that exacerbated, and arguably hastened, Brennan’s decline (Manolescu, 2018, p. 3). In addition to “actual geographical maps” (p. 6), Monica Manolescu’s definition of cartographies encompasses “walking and other forms of urban mapping that have an ironic and subversive component” (p. 2). For Brennan, walking, in addition to (and as a means of) observing the urban environment, was both a subversive and defiant act. Lauren Elkin’s recent study seeks to recontextualise the arcane practice of sauntering, or *flânerie*, wresting the early image of the woman in public away from the department store and the tea shop, and returning her to the streets and avenues of the metropolis—London, Paris, and New York. Elkin’s *Flâneuse* (2017) cleaves a separate image for women from that of the more familiar portrait of the male flâneur. Brennan’s strolling observations as the Long-Winded Lady, aligns her with a neglected coterie of nineteenth- and early-twentieth century *flâneuses*,

that included George Sand and Virginia Woolf (Elkin, 2017). Indeed, Elkin avers that, “the flâneuse is not merely a female flâneur, but a figure to be reckoned with all by herself.

A photograph from 1945, credited to photographer Nina Leen, presents a young Maeve Brennan, straw cap in hand, dressed in a gaberdine coat buttoned almost to the neck, where it meets a ribbon of scarf or necklace (*fig. 1*). Her hair is piled high in a characteristic chignon and, with a purse tucked discreetly at her waist, she stands at a shop window observing the array of items within. They look to be glazed stoneware: vases, plates, a lamp, and a pair of decorative horses. We see Brennan, outside, on the street, through the shop window, from the imagined perspective of a person—perhaps a customer—within. She looks to be in deep contemplation of the objects, whilst behind her, a busy New York street—people, cars, high-rise buildings, lacking definition all—fades into a distant, white blur. It is one in a series of photographs of Brennan that appeared in *Harper’s Bazaar*, during her time there as junior fashion editor. The caption reads, “Maeve Brennan of *Harper’s Bazaar* looking through store window”; another, “Maeve Brennan of *Harper’s Bazaar* examining a choker necklace,” and so on. She is variously shown trying on glasses, examining the fabric of a dress modelled by another young woman, and trying on a headpiece.

By 1945, only a kind of flash fiction of hers had yet appeared in print (although it is likely that, by then, she had completed, or was then completing, one or more drafts of her as-yet-unpublished novella, *The Visitor*)⁵⁸. Yet, the image itself is important, and potentially as instructive as many of the texts that, as the ‘Long-Winded Lady,’ she had yet to write. Of the half-dozen bodies visible on the street—with Brennan decidedly the cynosure of the camera lens—all appear to be women. A couple stand together at a crossroads to Brennan’s right, waiting to cross in safety. Behind them, increasingly indistinct, another pair in hats and skirts can be seen walking closely together.

To the left of Brennan, a woman walks alone; halfway across the street, she is wearing heels, a jacket and skirt, and a coat slung business-like over her arm. Amidst the hurly-burly, Brennan has paused to peruse a shop-window of commodities—we can imagine her stopping mid-stroll to examine a decorative vase, the likes of which her later protagonists Isobel Bailey, or Fiona Harkey, might equally stop to admire, nay purchase.

Of course, the image is only a conceit. Brennan is no idle shopper, caught in the act of window-shopping. The camera lens positioned on the other side of the vitrine distorts and repositions

⁵⁸ “They Often Said I Loved You,” appeared with Brennan’s by-line in a June 1943 edition of *Harper’s Bazaar*.

her apparent interest in the objects. Yet, as an insight into urban space in the years immediately following the war, it is illustrative of the binate evolution of woman's greater autonomy, since on the one hand she now had the latitude to wander through the city with relative impunity—without a male chaperone; even completely alone—whilst, on the other, it was equally anticipated that she would devote that freedom of movement to the purchase—indeed, the veneration—of commodities intended for the (typically suburban) home; goods designed, marketed, and ultimately foisted upon women as a kind of social narcotic—an opioid for the masses of newly-prosperous, stultified housewives.



Fig. 1. "Maeve Brennan of Harper's Bazaar looking through store window" © Nina Leen, *Harper's Bazaar* 1945

Here, Brennan is a woman amongst many caught in the act of *flâneusing*—the feminised *flânerie* (itself, the dandyish act of sauntering and observing), and an historically strictly male

pursuit. Elkin contends that, “the great writers of the city, the great psychogeographers, the ones that you read about in the *Observer* on weekends: they are all men” (2017, pp. 19-20). “Narratives of walking,” she persists, “repeatedly leave out a woman’s experience” (p. 20). Woman’s transition from prostitute to respectable actor within the urban sphere was arguably concurrent with the rise of mass consumption (Wilson, 1992, p. 8; Traister, 2016, p. 90). There is, in fact, much evidence to connect the emergence of the department store to that of the *flâneuse* herself (and, conceivably, the contingent decline of the flâneur)—“his final ambit,” wrote Walter Benjamin “is the department store” (1999, p. 448). Yet, to understand what gave rise to the *flâneuse*, one must acknowledge her proximity to fashion—and by extension, creative destruction. As Neculai states, “The production of the commodified body is the first step in the production of space” (2014, p. 73). The significance of Brennan’s *flâneuserie* cannot be understated in terms of her relationship to the space of the city, or indeed to Benjamin’s dialectics of spatial proximity.

Yet the question of whether there can be a female flâneur, much less a *flâneuse*, is theoretically problematic. For Benjamin, *flânerie* became possible through the advent of the commercial arcades, and the window displays that gave rise to the practice of window shopping—a practice that engendered the attendant acts of loitering and sauntering (Buck-Morss, 1991, p. 85). Yet, as has been already established, prior to the 1920s, a woman alone on the city streets risked being seen as a prostitute. For women to loiter and saunter, to peruse the artefacts on display in nineteenth-century arcades as the flâneur did, was practically unheard of, unless disguised as a male figure (George Sand’s conceit, and hardly a risk-free practice in any nineteenth-century industrialised society), or indeed under the supervision of a male figure—thereby sacrificing the self-directed autonomy required of true *flânerie*. Based on such restrictions to women’s mobility, late-twentieth-century scholars—notably Janet Wolff and Keith Tester—have challenged the very plausibility of the female flâneur, citing, in the first instance, the public-domestic disjunction of space *qua* the masculine-feminine divide (Wolff, 1985; Tester, 1994)—“The arrogant verticality of skyscrapers, and especially of public and state buildings,” wrote LeFebvre, “introduces a phallic or more precisely a phallogocentric element into the visual realm” (1991, p. 97); this, compared to the “sheltering haven” of home (Kreuter, 2015, p. 5), preserve of the dutiful housewife. Yet, more recent scholarship from Catherine Nesci, Wilson, and Elkin, disputes conventional thinking around women in public space, allowing for the possibility of an active, self-possessed female presence on the streets (Nesci, 2007; Wilson, 1992, 2001; Elkin, 2017). While scholars like Friedberg have attempted to reclaim a space for female *flânerie* by according a certain philosophy, even a contemplative virtue, to the act of

shopping—though ignoring the inherent toxicity of commodity fetishism (Mouton, 2001, p. 8)—director-screenwriter Agnes Varda is less quixotic in her assessment. Varda avers that the first feminist act is the female gaze, a faculty with which the eponymous character Cléo, from her 1962 film *Cléo de 5 à 7*, is amply imbued as she walks the streets of Paris. Mouton writes:

“Cléo embarks on a journey – by foot, in the city streets – during the course of which she takes on an identity so rare for women in Western culture that its feminine form, ‘flâneuse,’ is rarely mentioned” (2001, p. 7).

Further problematising “the masculine supremacy of the flâneur” (Kreuter, 2015, p. 5), Wilson rejects wholesale depictions of women’s “passivity and victimisation” within the urban sphere. One thinks of photographer Ruth Orkin’s celebrated work, “American Girl in Italy” (*fig. 2*), depicting a woman walking unaccompanied amidst a crowd of Neapolitan men. She looks to be walking briskly, a faint intimation of disquietude on her slightly furrowed brow. With one hand clasping her shawl, and the other holding a purse, or what might be a carrier bag, before her—out of harm’s way, as it were—she appears defiant amid the glaring, leering, possibly even jeering, men. Yet, Orkin’s snapshot, captured in 1951, is one of a series originally entitled, “Don’t Be Afraid to Travel Alone” (Ruth Orkin, 2020). When interviewed later in life, the subject of the photograph, Ninalee Craig, stated that, rather than being afraid, as the journalist had suggested, she was “thrilled” by the experience: “I look at it and I’m taken right back and it was wonderful [...] I was an art student. I was carefree. I was 23 and the world was my oyster” (Grinberg, 2017).

Once again, the city proves itself the locus of women’s co-occurrent subjugation and emancipation, as Craig repudiates the notion of the (admittedly white, middle-class) woman in the city either as victim or temptress, celebrating instead the right to walk and be seen, to saunter and to gaze.

By the time Benjamin came to theorise the Paris arcades as the birthplace of flânerie, writing in the late 1920s, the practice itself had been largely superannuated⁵⁹. Displaced by the advent of a way of life and a mode of commerce antithetical to that of the nineteenth-century—mass production, the rise of the automobile, and “the rapid turnover in style and fashion [...] experienced in high capitalism as extreme temporal attenuation” (Buck-Morss, 1991, pp. 64-

⁵⁹ In a later text, “Central Park” (1985), Benjamin hailed the resurgence of flânerie, although as a predominantly male pursuit.

65)—Benjamin saw in the decaying arcades “the petrified ur-forms of the present” (p. 65). Fashion, he wrote, is “always identical and always new [...] ‘the eternal return of the same’” (1999, p. 546).



Fig. 2. “American Girl in Italy” (1951) © Ruth Orkin

Through *The Arcades Project* (1999) (*Das Passagen-Werk*), Benjamin sought to frame those “urban objects” of the nineteenth century as “hieroglyphic clues to a forgotten past,” what Buck-Morss describes as “[a] historical construction of philosophy that is simultaneously (dialectically) a philosophical reconstruction of history” (1991, pp. 39, 55-56). The dialectical

image is, writes Benjamin, “that form of the historical object which [...] is the primal phenomenon of history” (1999, p. 474); or what Wolf conceives as an object that “waken[s] one to a truth that serves to undermine and contradict the ideological orthodoxy, and thus serves as an impetus for political action” (2019). Yet, within the paradigm of the dialectical image lies the potential for a dialectics of spatial proximity that extends inevitably to the tension between the *flâneuse* and the space she inhabits (and is at once inhabited by). Varda simplifies this concept in her observation that, “people are made of the places not only where they’ve been raised but that they’ve loved; I think *environments inhabit us*” (quoted in Elkin, 2017, p. 217; *my italics*). It is a sentiment continually echoed throughout Brennan’s urban literature, where we see the narrator as both spatial object, and as subject objectifying space; as a woman possessing, or personalising, urban space, even as it purports to possess, or contain, her—indeed, as Craig and Brennan themselves are contained within the physical boundaries of both images. *Flânerie* is as much an act of protest against a “consuming urbanism” (Neculai, 2014, p. 57), as it is a dissent from that same urbanism eulogised. The *flâneuse* revels in the urban environment, while simultaneously resisting the falseness of its urgency; She refuses to be hurried, nay harried, by the “industrial social controls” of the city (Buck-Morss, 1986, p. 136). For Benjamin, the flâneur’s act of loitering is a subversion of authority, and “a demonstration against the division of labor” (1999, p. 427). Both Hessels and Simmels recognised the disruptive, and “politically charged” activities of strolling and observation (Frisby, 2001, 36). Frisby writes that, “the detached stranger’s view contains dangerous possibilities” (p. 36), permitting the vexed speculation that every *flâneuse*, suspicious for being a woman alone on the street, is therefore dialectically more flâneur-like.

Yet, she engages in eulogies too, for like Meyron’s sketches of Paris pre-Haussmann, Brennan’s “snapshots” were composed as a way of capturing “the essentially fleeting character of modern history, and commemorating the suffering of the living by recording its traces” (*LWL I*; Buck-Morss, 1991, p. 96). This duality engenders in the *flâneuse* an ambivalence to the city, or what Neculai describes as, “two antithetic literary responses: the utopian and the dystopian” (2014, p. 59). In such a way, Brennan would come to write of her adopted home: “New York does nothing for those of us who are inclined to love her except implant in our hearts a homesickness that baffles us until we go away from her [...] the city holds us and we don’t know why” (2016, p. 142).

Brennan’s career was steeped in fashion. From her first engagements writing copy at *Harper’s Bazaar*, to her decades-long employment at *The New Yorker*, for almost forty years

her writing was immersed in a bourgeois aesthetic—both literal and figurative. Notwithstanding her tacit espousal of commercialism as the Long-Winded Lady, the very words Brennan wrote were often beleaguered by the advertisements that paid her salary. To substantiate the sheer volume of adverts typically carried by *The New Yorker*, a May-1955 edition which carried Brennan’s story “The Gentlemen In The Pink-And-White Striped Shirt,” featured a full twenty-five pages of advertisements out of the first forty pages of print (almost two-thirds), the overwhelming majority of which were targeted at women. In a format not dissimilar from today’s middle- and low-brow periodicals, they are comprised of vibrant, often lurid and sexualised images promoting, amongst others, Tiffany diamonds, chinchilla fur, “Oomphies” slippers, and “Kayser” lingerie (*Commercial advertisements*, 1955).

It is perhaps ironic, then, that as an exponent of fashion—if even an unwilling one—Brennan should be viewed as an agent of what Benjamin saw at the dream fetish; what essentially amounts to the narcotisation of commodity society. Buck-Morss writes:

“[T]he reveries of the flâneur [...] transform reality into an object that can be consumed passively, pleurably, and directly in its dream form, rather than ‘refunctioning’ the communication apparatus into a tool that will make it possible to wake up from the dream (1991, p. 144).

A greater antinomy still: while Brennan’s *flâneusing* may be seen as a kind of collusion with(in) the dream fetish, it equally connotes a first and last defence against what was essentially the fashion of urban renewal⁶⁰. As Buck-Morss attests: “With the smallest variations, fashion covers up reality. Like Haussmann’s urban renewal, it rearranges the given, merely symbolizing historical changes, rather than ushering it in” (1991, p. 100). Urban renewal as an ideology effectuates changes in objects—superficial changes to space, location, and form—while maintaining, and often reinforcing, the system of social order which underpins them. “Under Haussmann, schools and hospitals were built, and air and light were brought into the city, but class antagonisms were thereby covered up, not eliminated” (p. 89)⁶¹.

⁶⁰ Indeed, there is further irony in the role, central if unintentional, that artists played—authors like Brennan included—in the gentrification of city spaces. Neculai cites the example of SoHo (the area ‘South of Houston Street’): By rescuing it from redevelopment plans—where the “urban core was resignified and rebuilt at the intersection between the economic, the cultural, and some version of the vernacular” (Neculai, 2014, pp. 52-53)—its characteristic cast iron buildings became fashionable, increasingly desirable, and therefore ripe for gentrification.

⁶¹ The urban renewal effectuated by Robert Moses, which Brennan, and thousands of others like her, railed against, was arguably a simulacrum of Haussmann’s (Buck-Morss, 1991, p.316). Amongst its many perversions, it sought to beautify central slum districts by outsourcing the slums to the suburbs, an act that compounded slum conditions for millions of the poor and vulnerable.

Benjamin saw fashion as a correlative of death; Fashion, he wrote, “leads sexuality into the world of the inorganic” (1999, p. 70)—the “realm of dead things” (Buck-Morss, 1991, p. 101). It is “the dialectical switching station between woman and commodity – desire and dead body” (p. 101). Woman is once again interchangeable with the prostitute. By rejecting her own material degeneration, she aligns herself with “the mannequin, and enters history as [...] a ‘gaily decked-out corpse’” (p. 101). Scholars who reject the possibility of the female flâneur (much less the *flâneuse* as a distinct conception), do so on the basis that—as has been noted earlier in this chapter—women could not, and therefore did not, appear alone in public before the early decades of the twentieth century. To have done so would have been to risk being seen as a prostitute, thereby incurring the calumnies and cruelties of the crowd (Spain, 2014, p. 583; Elkin, 2017, p. 15). Yet, it is precisely in her visibility, and more so in the search for patronage (for her wares) that she comes closest to what Frisby (and Benjamin) saw as the true function of the flâneur, which is the act of production itself—as Neculai attests: “The production of the commodified body is the first step in the production of space” (2014, p. 73). By recording the dream image, the *flâneuse* advances the dream fetish. Even her empathic sensibilities (*Einfühlung*), her power of dissent, is prejudiced by her complicity in the commodity (capitalist) society. Her protests cannot be more than mere “gestures, because (not surprisingly under capitalism) [she] needs money” (Buck-Morss, 1986, p. 112). Hence, the *flâneuse* as prostitute-producer prefigures her ultimate (terminal) expression, which is that of *flâneuse* as writer-journalist. According to Frisby:

“The flâneur reads the city [...] In order to be able to see things in their hardly still remembered significance, the flâneur had to wrest the details from out of their original context. To read them means to produce new constructions, means to derive more meaning from them than they possessed in their own present” (2001, pp. 43-44).

A 1961 missive from the Long-Winded Lady sees her announce: “I have been searching for some good thing to say about Sixth Avenue, but I have failed in my search” *LWL 123*. Yet, in spite of her fulminations—“[Its] blocks,” she writes, “offer nothing except the threat, or the promise, that they *will* come tumbling down” *LWL 124* (*Brennan’s italics*)—she concludes that “Sixth Avenue possesses a quality that some people acquire, sometimes quite suddenly, which dooms it and them to be loved only at the moment when they are being looked at for the very last time” *LWL 126*. Evoking Benjamin’s notion of “‘love at last sight’ which [infects] the erotic life of the city dweller” (Buck-Morss, 1986, pp. 110-111), Brennan records only “the merely apparent reality [...] behind which the social relations of class remain concealed” (p.

111), much as the newfound charm she discovers in Sixth Avenue is merely the same “tacky,” “desolate” blocks, “hidden in a hazy confusion of sky and snow” *LWL 126*. With this narrative, pleasing though it is, she merely distracts the reader from “the true conditions of urban life,” rather than transcribing “its tedium” (Buck-Morss, 1986, p. 112).

Brennan as journalist effectuates a transformation of the city sphere into de Certeau’s “texturology” (1988, p. 91), the transcription of urban space and place into and through her writing. The *flâneuse*-as-journalist practices the art-act of “reading the city and its populations (its spatial images, its architecture, [and] its human configurations),” in a symbolic claiming and reclaiming of the city space (Frisby, 2001, pp. 28-29; *Frisby’s italics*). “Stories,” writes de Certeau, “carry out a labor that constantly transforms places into spaces or spaces into places” (1988, p. 118), where ‘space’ and ‘place’ are the generalised and the specified loci of action. As an agent of production, Brennan as *flâneuse* therefore creates place(s) by transcribing space according to her own narrative actions—here, by simply walking and observing the angle, volume and idiosyncrasies of the snow; crucial elements of the narrative syntax. Indeed, it might be argued that, just as Brennan ‘reads’ the urban space as text, so Moses, as chief architect of New York’s urban reconfiguration, inscribed the “brutal oppositions” of race, gender, and class into those same urban spaces in a criss-cross pattern of segregation (p. 91). In this way, the city’s architecture is “conceived as text in the process of being created or produced” (Frisby, 2001, p. 19).

“Benjamin proceeded,” writes Buck-Morss, “as if the world were language,” by naming objects, “translating their potential into the human language of words, and thereby bringing them to speech” (1991, p. 13). So, Brennan transliterated the city, its streets, buildings and people, into that same human language, transmuting the “transitory, fleeting and fortuitous” moments of urban life from spatial objects to literary objects for the purpose of consciousness-raising, and in order that its sufferings—hers and others’—might be recorded, remembered, and thereby reified (Frisby, 2001, p. 20; Neculai, 2014, p. 214). As Angela Bourke observes of Brennan: “[her] superb depiction of the ways physical and social structures choreograph behaviour, thinking and power relations [...] is perhaps her greatest gift to Irish literature” (2017, pp. 165-166).

Benjamin ultimately saw the flâneur as rootless or uprooted: “He is at home,” he writes, “neither in his class nor his birthplace but rather only in the crowd” (Benjamin, 1999, p. 895). In her earliest-known work, the posthumously published novella *The Visitor*, Brennan is

consumed by themes of rootlessness and home⁶². Anastasia King has returned to Dublin from Paris after her mother's death. It is a return from a self-imposed exile, of which her grandmother Mrs. King is bitterly resentful. The welcome Anastasia expects is not forthcoming, and over the course of the brief narrative she struggles to come to terms with her grandmother's intransigence on the matter of her return and the repatriation of her mother's body. Written shortly after Brennan's move from Washington to New York, *The Visitor* in many ways serves as an early draft for themes she would later explore, for traumas she would attempt to resolve, and for the questions she would struggle to answer over the span of her writing career. Indeed, home, both as destination and conception, is pursued here with near-frantic momentum, examined through the protagonist Anastasia King. An early essay in *flâneuserie*—prefiguring that of the Long-Winded Lady by almost a decade—Anastasia travels alone from Paris to Dublin, where she remains at liberty throughout the novella to walk the city streets unaccompanied. Yet, here, the face of the crowd is plainly more pernicious than that encountered by the Long-Winded Lady. Anastasia's attempts to '*flanêr*'—to saunter, to wander, to loiter, and peruse—are trammelled by ghosts of her past and present. In spite of her peregrinations, she fails to escape the extraneous controls of the living and the dead, and within the course of the narrative, ultimately comes to experience her wandering as an act of disempowerment, even a kind of phantasmagoria, where the shadows of many pasts attend her every movement.

When Anastasia finds herself in Grafton Street, surrounded by the “noise and hurry” of the crowd *V* 27, she seems ambivalent at best, taking note of “small things that interested her” (p. 27). Yet, moments later in a department store, she stands “irresolute,” watching the faces of passing shoppers (p. 27). Spotted by two girls appraising a necklace, she dissembles her aimlessness, “pretend[ing] to be watching for someone” (p. 27). The someone she is searching for is her mother, and sure enough she—or a person who looks and carries herself very like her—appears: “Then it seemed that her mother entered” (p. 27). In a conspicuous confrontation between fashion and death, Anastasia begins to follow her deceased mother's likeness, asking a shop attendant—in a prototypical instance of mania—“Have you seen my mother?”, before proceeding to give a childlike account of her appearance (p. 27). When the spectre finally

⁶² Hereafter, *V*.

reappears in the nearby church, Anastasia is practically ebullient: “I can leave her here” *V* 28, she resolves, departing with grateful tears in her eyes.

In the afterword to the first edition, editor Christopher Carduff notes that Anastasia closely prefigures, “the ‘I’ of Brennan’s first-person sketches for *The New Yorker*’s “Talk of the Town” *V* 84. Indeed, like the Long-Winded Lady, Anastasia has been exiled “from a lovingly remembered past [...] She is a sad, self-conscious, but exquisite observer, a traveller in residence, a visitor to this life” (p. 84). The Dublin that Anastasia returns to is in many ways a fixture of the past—multiple pasts; a stubborn, stifled anachronism. Here, walking becomes degenerative, and the mere act of observation disrupts established paradigms of power. Indeed, the narrative begins with Anastasia peering through a window of the train that will carry her home after six long years of exile. “It was raining when I left here” *V* 4, notes a fellow passenger, attempting to engage her in conversation. “[I]f I wasn’t sure I’d been away I might think I hadn’t gone at all,” he continues; “It was exactly like this the day I left” (p. 4).

Anastasia will promptly come face-to-face with the hazards of the shiftless city. Catching her first glimpses of Dublin through the window, she remarks, “I didn’t see much [...] it’s very dark” (p. 4). Indeed, throughout the narrative, she is continually described as peering in or peering out of windows or doorways in scenes redolent of the paintings of Edward Hopper. Often spied through a window, in a state of undress, or gazing inscrutably at the world without, Hopper’s women appear solitary, desolate, and lost amidst the city’s pastel drear. In this, they echo Brennan’s lonely portraits of Anastasia King in her very-nearly contemporaneous novella⁶³. Peter Schjeldahl observes:

“In Hopper’s [paintings] the unnerving relation of the far to the near is often reversed [...] Voyeurism—the saddest excitement—may be suggested. The emotional tug of many of [...] Hopper’s [characters] requires their unawareness of being looked at. To see them is to take on a peculiar responsibility” (2020).

Indeed, *The Visitor* is equally shot through with tropes of voyeurism; the watchful gaze is ever-present. When Anastasia first enters the house on Noon Square, her grandmother, we are told, stands in the doorway, arms folded, contemplating her. “She is waiting for me to make some mistake,” Anastasia thinks. Brennan exposes the culture of whispered surveillance, and the stifling gloss of respectability that overlaid it in post-Independence Ireland.

⁶³ Although Hopper was painting as early as the 1890s, he continued to paint right through to the 1960s. His best known work, *Nighthawks*, was completed in 1942.

At the end of the novella, Anastasia is forced to leave Ireland for good. Expelled from her homeland by the last of her family, she stands outside her grandmother's house, and removes her purse, her hat and gloves, her shoes and stockings, and places them on the roadway beneath her. Elkin observes that, for Jean Rhys, "roads were freighted with meaning" (2017, p. 48). Indeed, standing barefoot on the road, the busy square to her back, Anastasia is positioned in a kind of no-place, outwith the home, outwith the sanctuary of the square, a figurative island amidst the houses. The smile she wears is "wispy, frightened" *V 80*; yet, directing her gaze and her voice to the parlour window, she breaks into a puerile parody of the hymn, "There Is A Happy Land" (1843). She sings, we read, "[s]udden and loud, as one in a dream, who without warning finds a voice in some public place" (p. 80). The voice she has at last found is a disruptive, unquiet voice. When the faces of Mrs. King and her maid Katharine appear at the window, Anastasia observes them "[l]ooking out at her and waving, as though they were the ones sailing away" *V 81*. Her misapprehension, here—mistaking waving for what is undoubtedly the wringing of hands—has echoes of the bitter irony in Stevie Smith's monody, "Not Waving but Drowning" (1957). Anastasia calls to the shadowy figures in the window, "Goodbye, Grandmother. Goodbye, Katherine. You see, I haven't gone yet..." *V 81*.

Much of the imagery in the final passages arguably carries suggestions of suicidal ideation. Having left her valise at the hotel, we are told that Anastasia walked back towards Noon Square 'without haste,' thinking ahead 'methodically' *V 79*. Inspecting her purse for the keys to both the Paris home from which she is running, and her grandmother's home from which she has been expelled, she notes that, "Everything was in order" (p. 79). Indeed, there is an emphatic finality in the tautology "once more, the last time" (p. 79). The care with which Anastasia begins to undress, and the very act of undressing, of putting aside her worldly possessions—high-heeled shoes, her purse, her hat and gloves—evokes the careful preparation of many suicides. Her very actions connote a form of social suicide, for in the act of singing half-naked in the street, Anastasia transgresses the conventions of decency and respectability; and by exposing herself to public ridicule, she can no longer hope to be a part of that society. Finally, her actions are as much a repudiation of her grandmother's authority as of the social order that underpins it, one which has brought her to the very cliff-face of madness.

Standing half-naked and deranged on the public square, Anastasia has "retreated across a wide distance in her mind" *V 67*. Her exile, like that of the Long-Winded Lady across the Atlantic, will be permanent; and like that same analogue, Anastasia is "doomed to roam the city with no real home of her own" *V 84*. Her visibility—her *flâneuserie*, even—poses a threat, both to herself, and to the established order—betokened in the edifice of Noon Square, its dignified

façade a foil to those “who had grown old in their houses and their [own] accustomed ways” *V 13*. Anastasia’s final and most subversive act, then, is that of observation—the walker’s privilege. As she strips herself bare of the accoutrements of respectability, so the novella itself denudes the post-Independent Ireland of its pietistic institutions, suggested in the satirised lyrics of the Christian hymn she sings aloud—where saints in glory stand bright as day, she interpolates eggs and ham three times a day⁶⁴. Anastasia’s end is also a beginning, as incomplete as the ellipsis that closes the narrative. *The Visitor*, too, is a beginning and an end; a story that foreshadows not only the later works of the author, but the very circumstances of her life, at times even with chilling exactness.

Decline

Brennan’s *flâneuserie* was, in itself, a defiant act, since New York’s urban reconfiguration privileged the roadway over sidewalks. Moses’s urbanist vision actively excluded the pedestrian, favouring the car-owing middle-class family time and again, evidenced in his (unsuccessful) attempts to drive a freeway through Greenwich Village and Washington Square Park. Nature and recreational areas were places to be accessed outside the city, in the conveyance of the motor car, for which a network of arterial parkways and highways, extending to hundreds of miles, was constructed, causing irrevocable change and in some cases outright destruction to many urban communities—again, mostly poor ones (Caro, 1974; Nonko, 2020.) “[T]he detached stranger’s view,” writes Frisby, “contains dangerous possibilities” (2001, pp. 36-37). By walking the streets and avenues of Manhattan, Brennan engaged in the dissident acts of recording and observing.

The history of New York’s decline and despair was not merely a history of the poor, the immigrant and African-American communities. For much of the twentieth century, women too, women of immense privilege and none, occupied the margins of society. Women like Brennan, who failed to conform to expectations of motherhood, marriage, and domesticity, were simply overlooked in the onward march of progress, and the “paradoxical narrative of ‘disintegrative revival’” (Neculai, 2014, p. 34), which came to define late twentieth-century urban renewal in New York.

⁶⁴ Anastasia parodies the 1843 hymn, *There Is A Happy Land*, by Scottish schoolmaster Andrew Young (Clapp-Itnyre, 2016).

Brennan's later life was marred by a progressive fragmentation that, in many respects, mirrored the space of the city itself, her life's predicament and inspiration. The itinerant trail of her final years is incomplete, obfuscated by long stretches of homelessness. Brennan's chronicles of the social and spatial disintegration of New York in the Fifties and Sixties failed to protect her from the fate she shared with thousands of other New Yorkers, un-homed by the cycles of urban decay, cast adrift and left to disappear.

In one of her final dispatches as the ever-prescient Long-Winded Lady, she records an encounter with a "respectably dressed middle-aged woman" *LWL* 258, singing and dancing on a traffic island in the heart of rush-hour Broadway⁶⁵. The woman waves her umbrella of beige silk—"to match her gloves" (p. 258)—slamming it down onto the roof of a passing taxi, gaily bellowing the words of *Bei Mir Bist Du Schön* to "an audience she alone could see" (p. 258). Yet, as with Anastasia's manic singing at the close of *The Visitor*, the effect is tragic, not comic; her burlesquing infects the onlooker with fear, not laughter. Somehow, the mask has slipped from her face, taking with it all semblance of dignity and sanity. And in its place, a glimmer of madness sends the Long-Winded Lady scurrying into the nearest bookshop, leaving the dancing woman stranded on the flimsy isthmus of reason. All of her finery cannot alter the fact that she is drunk, broken, alone, little more than the "shrubby wither" at her feet (p. 260), amidst a "wasteland of tin cans and wine bottles and dirty scraps of cloth and paper" (p. 260). The woman's fate is a two-way mirror, reflecting the city's history of urban disintegration, and the author's own shadowy fate in the years ahead. "I wonder," writes Brennan, delivered at last from the apparition, "how she came to be helpless like that in public. I wonder at the power of her nightmare – that it could wait for years and then trap her when she was finding her way home" (p. 262).

Little wonder that she should be haunted by this woman, or that she should turn away from her so fearfully. Now, in late middle-age, alone and vulnerable, tormented by her past, and uncertain of her future, Brennan understood this woman perhaps more than she cared to admit. For in spite of its attractions, its vast concessions to freedom, Brennan understood the city's ruthless indifference to her plight, and its inherent hostility to women who lacked the basic securities of family and home. At the end of the narrative, walking back to her furnished rooms, the Long-Winded Lady comforts herself with the thought that, "Kind memory will fail her, to

⁶⁵ Published in January 1970, "On the Island" would be followed by just three more 'Long-Winded Lady' pieces over an eleven-year period.

save her” *V* 262. It is little enough consolation, but one she was no doubt grateful for when the mask finally slipped from her own face.

Conclusion

The life cycles of New York City’s urban renewal raised a path of devastation through urban communities for much of the twentieth century. The brand of bogus regeneration espoused by Robert Moses wrought a homogenising influence over the social and architectural order of New York for more than forty years. It privileged the car over the pedestrian, the wealthy over the poor, the office block over the family home, and raw, functionalist design over what Jane Jacobs called “the cheerful hurly-burly” of city streets (Jacobs & Epstein, 2011, p. xv). Jacobs saw New York as “a cornucopia of possibility and improvisation” (p. ix), and in this she shared a vision with Brennan, who mounted her own resistance in “the act of documentation,” (Neculai, 2014, p. 11), recording the streets and avenues she knew, moment by moment, precisely, fastidiously. These “moments of kindness, moments of recognition” *LWL* 3, have about them a frantic, almost frenetic quality, capturing a way of life through snatches of overheard conversation, a catalogue of somebody’s clothing, the minutiae of place and circumstance, and the buildings themselves, which were in some instances disappearing beneath her very feet.

New York’s history of creative destruction is intricately linked to post-war deindustrialisation and the rise of the service economy. Answering the unprecedented need for office space, Moses gaily swung his axe, demolishing slums, rooming houses, and indeed tens of acres of the city’s low-income housing. In the decades that would follow, the city became increasingly inhospitable to those who lacked the conventional securities of family and property. In her collected ‘*Notes*’ from *The New Yorker* (1969), Brennan likens New York to a “capsized city. Half-capsized, anyway, with the inhabitants hanging on [...] to the island that is their life’s predicament” *LWL* 1. By the time of its publication, Moses himself was over eighty years of age, his power decidedly on the wane, and many of his most ambitious plans for Manhattan now permanently shelved. Yet, change would come too late for Brennan, and many more like her. She was to become one of Isobel Bailey’s waifs, ever-more dependent on the city’s dwindling supply of residential hotels, and—as her finances and faculties failed her—upon the kindness of friends. In the midst of the demolition, often in the very path of the wrecking ball, Brennan documented and denounced the ‘wisdom’ of regressive urban renewal. Her fate, then,

is one of innumerable afterlives of the city's transmogrification, and a salient reminder of the very real human damage that persists long after the event has left off.



References Cited

- Akenson, D. H. (1993). *The Irish diaspora: a primer*. P.D. Meany Co. ; Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University of Belfast.
- Baldwin, J. (1962, November 9). James Baldwin: Letter from a Region in My Mind. *The New Yorker*. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1962/11/17/letter-from-a-region-in-my-mind>
- Bartky, S. L. (1990). *Femininity and domination: studies in the phenomenology of oppression*. Routledge.
- Bartram Scott, J. (2021). Negotiating relationships with powerfulness: using femme theory to resist masculinist pressures on feminist femininities. *Psychology & Sexuality*, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2021.1878470>
- Bellou, A., & Cardia, E. (2016). Occupations after WWII: The legacy of Rosie the Riveter. *Explorations in Economic History*, 62, 124–142. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eeh.2016.03.004>
- Benjamin, W. (1985). Central Park (L. Spencer & M. Harrington, Trans.). *New German Critique*, 34, 32–58. <https://doi.org/10.2307/488338>
- Benjamin, W. (1999). *The Arcades Project* (R. Tiedemann, Ed.). Belknap Press.
- Biondi, M. (2001). How New York Changes the Story of the Civil Rights Movement. *Afro-American Historical Association of the Niagara Frontier*, 31(2), 15–31.
- Bolick, K. (2016). *Spinster: Making A Life of One's Own* (Paperback). Corsair.
- Bourke, A. (2004). *Maeve Brennan: Homesick at the New Yorker*. Jonathan Cape [u.a.].
- Brah, A. (2005). *Cartographies of diaspora contesting identities*. Routledge.
- Brennan, M. (2000). *Rose Garden: Short Stories*. (Paperback). Counterpoint.
- Brennan, M. (2002). *The Visitor*. Atlantic.
- Brennan, M. (2016). *The Long-Winded Lady: Notes from The New Yorker* (Paperback). Counterpoint.
- Brennan, M. (n.d.-h). Letter from Maeve Brennan to William Shawn (Problem with Long-Winded) (Letters to William Shawn, 1960-1976) [Letter]. Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library.
- Brennan, M. (n.d.-i). Letter from Maeve Brennan to William Shawn (Racism at New Yorker) (Letters to William Shawn, 1960-1976) [Note]. Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library.
- Brown, S. C., Mason, C. A., Lombard, J. L., Martinez, F., Plater-Zyberk, E., Spokane, A. R., Newman, F. L., Pantin, H., & Szapocznik, J. (2009). The Relationship of Built Environment to Perceived Social Support and Psychological Distress in Hispanic Elders: The Role of

- “Eyes on the Street.” *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, 64B(2), 234–246.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/gbn011>
- Buck-Morss, S. (1991). *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (New). The MIT Press.
- Byron, E. (2004, August 31). Rooms for Rent: Maid Service, Hot Meals, No Men; at the Webster in New York, Values Date to 1923; Visits in the “Beau Parlor.” *The Wall Street Journal*, A1.
- Cameron, J. (2016). *The Artist’s Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity* (25th Anniversary Edition). Tarcher Peregree.
- Caro, R. A. (1974). *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (1st ed.). Knopf.
- Cervi, L., & Brewis, J. (2022). Fertility treatment and organizational discourses of the non-reproductive female body. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 29(1), 8–27.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12733>
- Chronopoulos, T. (2014). Robert Moses and the Visual Dimension of Physical Disorder: Efforts to Demonstrate Urban Blight in the Age of Slum Clearance. *Journal of Planning History*, 13(3), 207–233. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1538513213487149>
- Commerical Advertisements (The New Yorker, 7th May 1955)*. (1955). [A4; Magazine].
- Crystal, S., & Beck, P. (1992). A Room of One’s Own: The SRO and the Single Elderly. *The Gerontologist*, 32(5), 684–692. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/32.5.684>
- de Certeau, M. (1998). *The Practice of Everyday Life*. University of California Press.
<http://qut.eblib.com.au/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=922939>
- Devlin Trew, J. (2018). Diaspora Engagement in Ireland, North and South, in the Shadow of Brexit. In J. Devlin Trew & M. Pierse (Eds.), *Rethinking the Irish Diaspora: After The Gathering* (1st ed. 2018, pp. 15–57). Springer International Publishing : Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Doudaki, V. (2012). Sex and the City: In the ambivalent playground of postmodern identity. *Journal of International Communication*, 18(1), 5–17.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13216597.2012.670126>
- Dybska, A. (2015). Where the War on Poverty and Black Power Meet: A Right to the City Perspective on American Urban Politics in the 1960s. *European Journal of American Studies*, 10(3). <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejas.11251>
- Elkin, L. (2017). *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice and London*. Vintage.

- Felton, E. (2012). Living with Strangers: Urban Space, Affect and Civility. In S. Vaughan & O. Zelenko (Eds.), *Design and Ethics: Reflections on Practice* (pp. 129–142). Routledge.
- Fox Gotham, K., & Greenberg, M. (2014). “Tighten Your Belts and Bite the Bullet” The Legacy of Urban Crisis in New York City and New Orleans. In *Crisis Cities: Disaster and Redevelopment in New York and New Orleans* (pp. 1–42). Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199752225.001.0001>
- Frisby, D. (2001). *Cityscapes of modernity: critical explorations*. Polity Press in association with Blackwell.
- Grinberg, E. (2017, March 30). *The Story Behind “An American Girl in Italy”* [News]. CNN.
<https://www.cnn.com/2017/03/30/europe/tbt-ruth-orkin-american-girl-in-italy/index.html>
- Hardy, S. B., & Wiedmer, C. A. (Eds.). (2005). *Motherhood and space: configurations of the maternal through politics, home, and the body*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hoskin, R. A. (2021). Can femme be theory? Exploring the epistemological and methodological possibilities of femme. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 25(1), 1–17.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10894160.2019.1702288>
- Jacobs, J. (1992). *The death and life of great American cities* (Vintage Books ed). Vintage Books.
- Jacobs, J. (2011). *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (50th anniversary ed., 2011 Modern Library ed). Modern Library.
- Joyce, J., & Brown, T. (2000). *Dubliners* (Repr). Penguin Books.
- Kennedy, T. ann. (2007). *Keeping up Her Geography*. Taylor & Francis.
- Keyser, C. (2011). *Playing Smart: New York Women Writers and Modern Magazine Culture*. Rutgers University Press.
- Kreuter, A. (2015). The flâneuse and the City as uncanny home in Lawrence Durrell’s *The Alexandria quartet*. *Literator*, 36(1), 8.
<https://literator.org.za/index.php/literator/article/view/1165>
- Lefebvre, H., Nicholson-Smith, D., & Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The Production of Space* (33. print). Blackwell Publishing.
- Luibheid, E. (1997). The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act: An “End” to Exclusion? *Positions : East Asia Cultures Critique*, 5(2), 501–522. <https://doi.org/10.1215/10679847-5-2-501>
- Lynch, K. (2005). *The Image of the City* (Nachdr.). MIT PRESS.
- Manolescu, M. (2018). *Cartographies of New York and Other Postwar American Cities: Art, Literature and Urban Spaces*. Springer International Publishing.

- McGrath, B., & Shane, G. (2012). Introduction: Metropolis, Megalopolis and Metacity. In *The SAGE Handbook of Architectural Theory* (pp. 641–656). SAGE Publications Ltd.
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446201756>
- McWilliams, E. (2016). ‘A sort of Rathmines version of a Dior design’: Maeve Brennan, Self-Fashioning and the Uses of Style. *Women: A Cultural Review*, 27(1), 42–61.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09574042.2015.1122488>
- Metcalf, J. S., & Ramlogan, R. (Eds.). (2017). *Creative Destruction*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
<https://doi.org/10.4337/9781784716356>
- Mostoller, M. (2012). A Single Room: Housing for the Low-Income Single Person. In E. Lardner Birch (Ed.), *The Unsheltered Woman: Women and Housing* (pp. 191–217). Transaction Publishers.
- Mouton, J. (2001). From Feminine Masquerade to Flâneuse: Agnès Varda’s Cléo in the City. *Cinema Journal*, 40(2), 3–16. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cj.2001.0004>
- Neculai, C. (2014). *Urban Space and Late Twentieth-Century New York Literature: Reformed Geographies* (First edition). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nesci, C. (2007). *Le flâneur et les flâneuses: les femmes et la ville à l’époque romantique / Catherine Nesci ; préface de Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson*. ELLUG, Université Stendhal.
- Nonko, E. (2017, July 27). *New York City’s subway crisis started with Robert Moses*. Curbed NY. <https://ny.curbed.com/2017/7/27/15985648/nyc-subway-robert-moses-power-broker>
- Orkin, R. (n.d.). American Girl in Italy 1951 | Ruth Orkin Photo Archive | The Work of Photojournalist Ruth Orkin. *Ruth Orkin Photo Archive*. Retrieved May 18, 2022, from <https://www.orkinphoto.com/photographs/american-girl/>
- Peters, A. (2005). A TRAVELER IN RESIDENCE: MAEVE BRENNAN AND THE LAST DAYS OF NEW YORK. *Women’s Studies Quarterly*, 33((3/4)), 66–89.
- Pickett, S. T., McGrath, B., Marshall, V., Morgan Grove, J., & Cadenasso, M. L. (2020). Ecological Urban Design: Theory, Research, and Praxis. In *Science for the sustainable city empirical insights from the Baltimore School of Urban Ecology* (e-book). Yale University Press. <http://www.vlebooks.com/vleweb/product/openreader?id=none&isbn=9780300249385>
- Rowan, J. C. (2010). The New York School of Urban Ecology: The New Yorker, Rachel Carson, and Jane Jacobs. *American Literature*, 82(3), 583–610.
<https://doi.org/10.1215/00029831-2010-025>
- Sagalyn, L. (2016). *The Cross Manhattan Expressway*. Museum of the City of New York.
<https://www.mcny.org/story/cross-manhattan-expressway>

- Schjeldahl, P. (n.d.). *Edward Hopper and American Solitude*. The New Yorker. Retrieved August 25, 2020, from <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/06/08/edward-hopper-and-american-solitude>
- Sedensky, M. (2001, July 10). Decades Later, Doing the Cross Bronx Expressway Right. *The New York Times*, 8–8.
- Siegal, H. (1974). *Outposts of the Forgotten: An Ethnography of New York City's Welfare Hotels and Single Room Occupancy (S.R.O.) Tenements* [PhD Thesis]. Yale.
- Spain, D. (2014). Gender and Urban Space. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 40(1), 581–598. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-071913-043446>
- Spiegel, L. (1992). The Suburban Home Companion: Television and the Neighbourhood Ideal in Postwar America. In J. Bloomer & B. Colomina (Eds.), *Sexuality and Space* (p. 389). Princeton Architectural Press.
- Tester, K. (1994). *The Flâneur / edited by Keith Tester*. Routledge.
- Traister, R. (2016). *All the single ladies: unmarried women and the rise of an independent nation* (First Simon&Schuster hardcover edition). Simon & Schuster.
- Walker, P. (2012). Charles Abrams vs. Robert Moses: Contested Rhetorics of Urban Housing. *Rhetoric Review*, 31(3), 289–308. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07350198.2012.684000>
- Walter, B. (2000). *Outsiders Inside: Whiteness, Place, and Irish Women*. Routledge.
- Washington Square Park Highlights - Shirley Hayes and the Preservation of Washington Square Park : NYC Parks*. (2020). Nycgovparks.Org. <https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/washington-square-park/highlights/9763>
- Wilson, E. (1992). *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women* (1st University of California Press ed). University of California Press.
- Wolf, A. (2019, October 12). Benjamin's Dialectical Image: Hegelian Interruption. *The Empyrean Trail*. <https://empyreantrail.wordpress.com/2019/10/11/benjamins-dialectical-image-hegelian-interruption/>
- Wolff, J. (1985). The Invisible Flâneuse. Women and the Literature of Modernity. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 2((3)), 37–46.
- Yagoda, B. (2000). *About town: the New Yorker and the world it made* (1. publ). Duckworth.
- Yazan, S. (2012). The black princess of elegance: The emergence of the female dandy. *Critical Studies in Fashion & Beauty*, 3(1), 101–115. https://doi.org/10.1386/csfb.3.1-2.101_1
- Zipp, S. (2010). *Manhattan projects: the rise and fall of urban renewal in Cold War New York*. Oxford University Press. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.31479>

Zipp, S. T. (n.d.). *Manhattan projects: Cold War urbanism in the age of urban renewal* [Ph.D., Yale University]. Retrieved May 14, 2022, from <https://www.proquest.com/docview/304986602/abstract/C3FB4FA4505F424FPQ/1>

Chapter Two:

*Diaspora Space**Introduction*

Cherryfield Avenue in Ranelagh is a terrace of small, serviceable houses that face each other across a long, narrow road. The houses are uniform in appearance, stucco- or brick-faced, each boasting a large bay window upstairs and down, and fronted by a small patch of garden, contained within a cast-iron railing. Many of Brennan's most powerful stories take place in one such house, no. 48, the real home of her childhood from which, in 1934, at the age of seventeen, she departed with her family, destined for the United States. Robert Brennan, a figure of some importance in Eamon de Valera's retinue, had recently been appointed Ireland's first minister to the United States (Bourke, 2004, p. 126). His title would change to Minister Plenipotentiary beginning in 1938, when the nascent Free State seceded from the commonwealth, following the ratification of de Valera's new constitution, becoming the new independent state of Ireland. It was to inaugurate the third of four official titles the island of Ireland would pass through before Maeve Brennan's thirty-third birthday.

Brennan was born a subject of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland under George V in January 1917, just nine months after the events of the Easter Rising, and only a few short years before the establishment of the Irish Free State⁶⁶. It would be followed by the birth of Ireland (Éire) in 1937, before at last becoming the Republic of Ireland in 1949. By then, Brennan was working as a staff writer at *The New Yorker* magazine. She could now count

⁶⁶ After a brief spell as the self-governing dominion of Southern Ireland – a part of the same United Kingdom – the Free State was formally established in December 1922. Southern Ireland existed largely provisionally from 3rd May 1921 to the 6th December 1922, when the Irish Free State came into being. For more on the Partition of Ireland (1921-'22), see *Home Rule: An Irish History, 1800–2000* (2004), by Alvin Jackson.

herself a native of at least four different Irelands—four national identities, four versions of home. Yet, in truth, many more, since she had by that time been living in America for almost as long as she had lived in Ireland—any one of them. In the early 1940s, she found a new home in New York City, having spent years with her family in Washington, moving from one house to another as her father moved up the ranks, political and social. And within a few short years of her move to *The New Yorker*, Brennan had found a very public voice for herself in the person of the ‘Long-Winded Lady’, whose dispatches from the streets and avenues of Manhattan would help, writes John Updike, “[to] put New York back into *The New Yorker*,” granting a bird’s-eye view of the tumult, the colour, and the life of the city at the centre of the world to the magazine’s millions of subscribers for more than two decades” *LWL* i⁶⁷. Indeed, Brennan would later describe the Long-Winded Lady as, “a traveller in residence” *LWL* 2. It seems an accurate, honest description of the circuitous route taken by a native itinerant, such as she was, and suggests what Avtar Brah cites as the simultaneity of “roots and routes” at play in the narratives that followed (Brah, 2016, p. 189). Indeed, Brah’s pioneering characterisation of diaspora space is of central importance to my reading of Brennan’s body of work, with particular regard for the characteristics that distinguish her Irish and American fictions.

The Home That Wasn’t There

“Where is home?” It is, writes Brah, “a mythic place of desire [and] belonging in the diasporic imagination” (2016, pp. 188-189). In 1976, *The New Yorker* published the penultimate dispatch from the ‘Long-Winded Lady’⁶⁸. Amongst the briefest of her ‘notes,’ “A Daydream” appears as a diaphanous impression of the past, an almost inconsequential memory, that closes, however, with the curious admission:

“The daydream was, after all, only a mild attack of homesickness. The reason it was a mild attack instead of a fierce one is that there are a number of places I am homesick for. East Hampton is only one of them” *LWL* 265.

⁶⁷ In the decades that followed the founding of *The New Yorker*, Yagoda argues, it was co-opted as a ‘local’ periodical by millions of Americans with an aspirational *qua* urban mindset the nation over (Yagoda, 2001, p. 27).

⁶⁸ “A Daydream” was later re-used as the preface to *The Rose Garden* (2000).

The intersection of home and desire, poignantly described by Brennan here, evinces the particular cast (and dilemma) of belonging within the diasporic imaginary, or what Bromley describes as both the transnational and “post-national model of belonging” (2000, p. 5). Writing those words, Brennan was, in a sense, a very long way from home—from any one of the homes she was sick with longing for. Brennan had come a great distance from the Edwardian Dublin of her childhood. Now, lying in what was most likely a hospital bed she is overcome by the phantasms of many pasts, and we cannot but wonder at the number of homes for which she is longing, emphasised here by the binary, “fierce” and “mild”⁶⁹. The presence, here, of a “walled rose garden” *LWL* 265, not otherwise mentioned in the Mary Ann Whitty stories to which the other referents—“East Hampton,” “the long dune grass,” “the cats and [...] Bluebell,” (p. 265)—ostensibly pertain, suggests a convenient imbrication of memory and place, in which past and present, Ireland and America, fiction and non-fiction, collide; or what Brah, describing diaspora space, sees as “the intersectionality of diaspora, border and dis/location” (2016, p. 178)⁷⁰. Brennan’s memory here confounds disparate elements of her life and prose, from the East Hampton stories of the fictionalised Mary Ann Whitty, to the real beach homes, often supplied by friends, where she wintered with her cats and her beloved Bluebell; from the rose garden of her imagining, featured in the eponymous story of Mary and Dom Lambert, to the rosebushes meticulously cared for by Delia Bagot at the ubiquitous Cherryfield Avenue home.

This “travelling back and forth” (Bromley, 2000, p. 10) of place, of time, and of memory, illustrates the restive nature of diaspora, and the space it inhabits in the migrant imagination. It is an ambulant space of “multiple travellings” (Brah, 2016, p. 180), where home and community become imaginative constructions, just as home itself becomes a signifier of the “social and psychic geography of space” (p. 4).

Brennan had a clear sense of home’s complexity from an early age. She weaves it, an anxious, mutative thread, throughout her work, from her deft initiation in the early 1940s—“Home is a place in the mind [that] is fretful with memory [...]” *V* 8—to the last faltering words she penned

⁶⁹ Bourke speculates that “the nubby white counterpane” described by the narrator could be the starched sheets of a hospital bed, since by the time of its publication in 1976, Brennan had already been hospitalised several times (2004, p. 270).

⁷⁰ Brennan published five stories in all about the character Mary Ann Whitty – all but a pseudonym for the real Maeve – and her Labrador Bluebell, with the family of cats, and the seven children who live next door in a mansion by the beaches of East Hampton. They appear together as a subset of fiction in *The Rose Garden* (2000). Brennan describes the house and environs in some detail, but never mentions a rose garden, walled or otherwise, which appears to have been plucked directly from the eponymous story – entirely unrelated – “The Rose Garden,” which if anything belongs to the Dublin stories.

in the 1980s when, in a letter to William Maxwell, she returned once again to those same importunate memories of home and childhood⁷¹. Indeed, it is my contention that these imaginative explorations of the “psychic geography” (Brah, 2016, p. 4) of home, are a corollary of, and a complement to, the physical sauntering, or *flânerie*, treated at length in the first chapter of this thesis; whilst memory, as a function of literary prose, is used by the author to mediate “the psychological complexities of migrant experience” (Murray, 2017, p. 99). Bachelard writes that memory and imagination should not be subordinate to materialist understandings of space (2014, pp. 50-66), and in this sense I argue that the remembered spaces of the past—all of Brennan’s pasts, from Cherryfield Avenue in Ranelagh, to the family homestead in Wexford where she spent summers as a child; every apartment, and rooming house, every hotel that was once home, however briefly; and the beach house in East Hampton that she dreamt of when her thoughts were too confused to sustain her writing—each of these pasts, individually and collectively, comprises the “contested” and “contingent” dimensions of Brah’s diaspora space, where location and longing collide, a fragile space that threatens at all times to collapse in on itself (Murray, 2017, p. 102)⁷². Home for the diasporian, gives rise to a kind of *flânerie* of the mind. It is, “a space for ‘day-dreaming’” (Rogers, 2013, p. 270), where “a multiplicity of [...] cartographies” intersect, overlap, and are hybridised within and alongside “existing mappings” (Karim, 2003, pp. 8, 9). But if the Long-Winded Lady can stake a claim to the space of the city without materially altering its progression, so too in her imaginative explorations, Brennan manages to negotiate a way into the past only to find herself increasingly lost in the trail of its “desperate chimeras” (Cleary *quoted in* Murray, 2017, p. 107). In this sense, she is forever “trying, but always failing, to look in” (Rogers, 2013, p. 271).

Peter Schjeldahl has written of the realist artist Edward Hopper: “Nearly every house that he painted strikes me as a self-portrait, with brooding windows and almost never a visible or, should one be indicated, inviting door” (2020). The same might be said of Brennan, writing, here, instead of painting her self-portraits through the homes she inhabited: the windows and doors, yes; the stairs and walls, too, as well as the wallpaper, the carpets, and the oiled linoleum floor. Finding an absence where a wall should be, Brennan records it amongst the

⁷¹ *The New Yorker* published a final dispatch from the ‘Long-Winded Lady,’ entitled “A Blessing,” in January 1981. It would be the last new works of Brennan’s to appear in print in her lifetime.

⁷² This sense of spatial *dis*-integrity is echoed in the Bagot and Derdon cycles, as the walls of the Cherryfield Avenue house appear to be constantly at risk of collapsing in on the protagonists, notably the male protagonists Martin Bagot and Hubert Derdon; See chapter four “Feminine Space,” pp. 190-191.

inventory of objects within the home, as conspicuous in its non-existence as the actual structures that flank it⁷³. When describing the attributes of a house, Brennan imbues it with life, and the caprice of human emotions. Nora Kilbride's parlour in *The Visitor* (2000), for example, is described as "not formal, but stiff in a gentle, unconscious way" *V* 38, while the East Hampton house in the Bluebell sequence of stories becomes "goodhearted in spite of itself" *RG* 285; and a friend's apartment, in one dispatch from the 'Long-Winded Lady', appears at once "friendly but aloof," even as its central living space is described as "waiting for something to happen" *LWL* 206, 211. This conceit is especially noteworthy in Brennan's stories of Dublin, the majority of which occur in her childhood home, or one which is effectively indistinguishable from it. Indeed, it is home to no less than five separate families within the body of Brennan's fiction. If, then, as Schjeldahl suggests, the house may be viewed as a kind of self-portrait, it is arguable that the occupants in their turn—all five families—may be seen to inhabit the psychic space of the author, in a very tangible example of the intertwining of narratives—of separation and of remaining, of dispersal and of "staying put" (Brah, 2016, p. 178). In this way, the Dublin fictions may arguably be read as acting on those parts of herself (Brennan, as author) which persist in the Ireland she left, enclosed within a semi-autonomous materiality that is at once immanent in, and subordinate, to the present, or the "kind of multibody of [...] past and memory" identified by Christine Buci-Glucksmann (1994, p. 39). In other words, the contingent space of Brennan's narrative authority, reified in the home-place of Cherryfield Avenue, becomes the very interpellation of diaspora space, a kind of anchorhold in which the characters remain cloistered, visible only by turns (or the author's creative whims), much as the Poor Clare nuns Brennan describes in "The Barrel of Rumours" interact with the outside world only by means of a "revolving barrel", containing, writes Brennan, "an open section [that] had been built upright into the narrow end wall that sealed the public hall away from the rest of the convent" *SA* 30. Indeed, this frontier image provides a convenient point of departure for any assessment of diaspora space, which intrinsically signifies and presupposes the theme of borders. Tölölyan writes of diasporas that they are, "emblems of transnationalism because they embody the question of borders" (*quoted in* Bromley, 2000, p. 9). Throughout her work, Brennan evinces a persistent concern for borders, those "psychological, sexual, spiritual, cultural, class and

⁷³ "Doors and windows and fireplaces all stood out in their full theatrical size [...] so that you could see from a mile away what you were looking at. Only, there was no room left for walls. The architect forgot about the walls." From 'In and Out of Never-Never Land' *RG* 294.

racialised boundaries” (Anzaldua, 1999, p. 3). These dividing lines, and those and that which they divide, are at the heart of narrative space, including the elusive and illusory boundaries of identity and madness, which, I contend, run through and alongside the diasporic theme of Brennan’s writing.

Shadows of Remembrance

Angela Bourke writes of Brennan’s last published work, it was “clearly intended as a letter [...] perhaps a family letter to the Maxwells” (2004, p. 272). It is, she continues, “wry, profound [and] kind” (p. 272), the qualities that distinguish her best writing. It was probably for this reason that *The New Yorker* decided to print it, despite its digressive, ostensibly manic tone⁷⁴. Indeed, it continues the oneiric theme of “A Daydream,” published almost five years earlier, as she recounts an incident from her walk in New York City the previous afternoon, in which she is struck by the presence of a shadow, which appears to have reached out across time and space, unchanged from her childhood. “[A]cross from Bryant Park,” she writes:

“I saw a three-cornered shadow on the pavement in the angle where two walls meet. I didn’t step on the shadow, but [...] I recognised it at once. It was exactly the same shadow that used to fall on the cement part of our garden in Dublin, more than fifty-five years ago” *LWL* 267.

Whether it is a sense of reverence or fear that prevents her from stepping on the shadow is unclear, but it seems that the shadow has become a ghostly arbiter of entry and exit, standing astride two distinct worlds; two times and two versions of herself, at once separate and indivisible. What follows is a loving memory of that same childhood home, where, we are told, she celebrated all her birthdays that fell between the ages of five and seventeen, and where, “One New Year’s Eve” *LWL* 267, all the houses on her street opened their doors to hear the ringing of the New Year bells. It was, she writes, “one of the great occasions of our lives” (p. 267). We are left in no doubt as to which home she is referring to—“It wasn’t a street; it was called an avenue. Cherryfield Avenue”—noting that,

“It was one of a long row of houses that faced, across the quiet little street, another long row of houses, just like them, each with a little front garden and a good-sized back garden” *LWL* 268, 267.

⁷⁴ By the early 1970s, writes Bourke, Maxwell struggled to find anything of hers that could be deemed “publishable” (2004, p. 258).

If the description sounds familiar, it is with good reason. As early as 1952, beginning with the publication of “The Poor Men and Women,” Brennan had begun that evocation of home that would repeat and intensify in its repetitions, culminating here in a final subtle harmony with the bells of New Year, which necessarily proclaim both beginning and end⁷⁵. Home serves as both the nexus of identity and what Dallas Rogers identifies as the “repository for the memories” of her past selves (2013, p. 268). Indeed, the repeated need to remember and record, to retrace the lineaments of home and its material objects, takes on a prayer-like quality, becoming a kind of architectural *blazon*. As Liliane Abensour writes, “Trying to hold on to every moment and every detail through words is a way of preventing the world from falling apart” (2013, p. 13). Indeed, Brennan’s obsession arguably prefigures that of the acquisitive Min Bagot in “The Springs of Affection,” the longest and perhaps the most brutally forthright of her stories. If Min gathers about her the artefacts of discarded or un-lived lives, Brennan, too, can be seen to amass the discarded artefacts of home as both “an assemblage of memories,” and “an active process of embodied remembering” (Rogers, 2013, p. 264). Whilst this notion of embodied remembering captures the essence of much of the repetition at play in Brennan’s writing, it becomes nevertheless an increasingly abortive process, since memory tends to obscure rather than distinguish fact from fiction. As Rogers argues, “[t]he more habitual a memory becomes, from the continual retrieval of that memory, the less capable the social subject [becomes in discerning] ‘the truth’ from such a recollection” (p. 266).

Time and memory coalesce to produce specious results proportionate to the memory’s retrieval, giving rise to the possibility of the false narrative, or the unreliable narrative voice. In assessing the narrative accounts of Irish diasporic women, Bronwen Walter identifies the fictions that fashioned them, and their conscious use of selective memory, noting, “they are ‘composed’ to fit in with the contemporary lives of the storytellers” (2013, p. 38). William Maxwell—Brennan’s long-standing editor at *The New Yorker*—writes of memory and storytelling that, “in talking about the past, we lie with every breath we draw” (*quoted in* Bourke, 2004, p. 92). “‘Fact’ and ‘fiction’ clearly overlap and intermingle,” writes Walter, such that, “[a]pparently ‘true’ stories of personal and family memory are constructed in the present for particular purposes, to make sense of [...] significant lives” (2013, p. 30).

⁷⁵ Published in *Harper’s Bazaar* in April 1952, “The Poor Men and Women” was the first of Brennan’s stories to feature the Cherryfield Avenue home, and the first to feature Rose and Hubert Derdon.

Choice, therefore, becomes the defining impetus between what is revealed and what is concealed within a narrative that represents both reaction and resistance to social and, as we shall see, somatic regulation. Yet, Rogers draws a line between “habitual” and “[i]nvoluntary or autobiographical memories,” those that “often evoke recollections of the past subconsciously” (2013, p. 266), suggesting a clear distinction between the narrative impulse—here, the Long-Winded Lady’s recognition of her “three-cornered shadow” *LWL* 267—and the (discrete) narrative engendered within that remembering. Memory itself is subjected to the narrator’s editorial control, while the act of (spontaneous) remembering remains subconscious, *ergo* pure. Brennan’s conscious valorisation of home—and by ‘home,’ here, is meant the Cherryfield Avenue home, as much as her childhood in Dublin—reinforces and ascribes meaning to the present, even as it impoverishes the memory that validates that same desire. In this way, the shadow at play in the narrative, which draws attention to the past, becomes itself the point of focus, and a gateway, or boundary that stands for—and at—the juncture of past and present; it is, in a sense, the cognate object of Foucault’s heterotopic mirror (Foucault, 1986, p. 24; Knight, 2017, p. 145). Yet if the shadow-as-impulse—itself an “autobiographical” memory—defines (the limits of) truth, what might be said of the “habitual” memory that follows, as the conjunction of “fact and fiction” (Walter, 2013, p. 50)? Even if unreliable, habitual memories present a version of truth expedient at the moment of recognition, and in doing so, subject that truth to the same imaginative impulse that, for Bachelard, is no less important and no less revealing than other psychic geographies (Rogers, 2013, p. 270)⁷⁶. They are, moreover, expressions of narrative agency, which draw attention to the dialectics of time and space, of illusion and reality (Walter, 2013, p. 37).

Shadow becomes a point of convergence once again in “The Shadow of Kindness,” the second of the sequence of stories concerning Delia Bagot, her husband Martin, and their two children, Lily and Margaret. The children have gone to spend a month with their aunt and uncle on the family farm in Co. Wexford (Delia’s childhood home.) They have been gone less than a day, yet Delia feels lonely and fretful without them; like the house itself, that, “[w]ithout them [...] had neither substance nor meaning—the house was lonely, [and it] was making [Delia] lonely” *SA* 240. Without the company or distraction of the children, Delia is forced to confront her lack of purpose, her want of identity: “It [is] not right,” she confesses, “to let yourself get so

⁷⁶ It is perhaps significant that, in the preface to the collected ‘notes’ of the ‘Long-Winded Lady’ (1969), Brennan – speaking of the narrator in the third-person – concludes that: “[T]hese forty-seven pieces are the record of forty-seven moments of recognition” *LWL* 3.

lost in your children that you [can] find no trace of yourself when they [are] gone” SA 241. Lost, she stands at the window watching the colours of her garden wash before her, indistinct and unrecognizable in the rain. Earlier in the day, we are told, she had cut all but the yellow roses in her garden, and placed them in bunches throughout the house: on the piano, in the dining room, in the hall, and “foolishly [...] in the children’s room to make it seem less deserted” SA 242. Yet as Delia reflects on her marriage (past and present), a sense of disquiet emerges that seems just as pervasive and insistent with or without the children’s presence, a disquiet that encompasses the physical space of home and, with still greater urgency, the couple’s stilted relationship. As a husband and father, Martin Bagot is disconnected from the sequence of everyday occurrences that compose the intimate domestic life shared by Delia and the children. They coexist within the same household, yet Martin’s life appears to be chiefly governed by the extrinsic factors of work and the world without— “[H]e hardly saw them” SA 246. Habitually returning as late as “one or two” in the morning (p. 246), he has taken to sleeping alone in the spare back bedroom; and on those rare occasions when he returns home before Delia has gone to bed, he proceeds directly to his room without acknowledging her. For her part, Delia seems devoted to him. She looks at him with “the same devoted, desperate look” SA 247 that Bennie, her beloved white terrier, gives to her. When, one night, Martin wakes her to ask for a glass of milk, her gratitude is profound, and memory overcomes her, casting its “happy [...] radiance far into the future” (p. 247). Yet, for all her devotion, Delia is afraid of Martin, and whether that fear is real or wilful is not immediately clear:

“[W]hile the children were at home she did not want to say anything for *fear* of a row that might *frighten* the children, and now that the children were away she found she was *afraid* to speak for *fear* of disturbing a silence that might, if broken, reveal any number of things that she did not want to see” SA 248-249 (*Italics, my own*).

At the close of the narrative, she goes to the children’s room to brush her hair. Looking in the mirror, Delia notices a shadow on the adjacent wall:

“She looked closer and at that moment, as it bent its head, she knew what she was looking at. That was her mother’s shadow there on the wall. There was no mistake about it; that was her mother” SA 253.

The narrator’s conviction here prefigures the Long-Winded Lady’s encounter with the three-cornered shadow on the streets of Manhattan almost two decades later. Once more, the two contiguous worlds, past and present, illusion and reality, are tethered (and disjoined) by

threadlike memory, as fragile as the shadow's stray hairs that, like those of her mother's, "were never more than the length of a straight pin" at her temples and at the nape of her neck *SA* 253. They are immanent, coincident worlds, awaiting the simultaneity of time and place—of memory (past), and the immediacy of longing (present)—to become apparent. As the three-cornered shadow waits on Forty-second Street for more than fifty years for the marriage of time and circumstance, so the shadow of Delia's mother has waited, "patient" and "hidden," "up there in the children's room all these years [...]" *SA* 253,254; and will continue to await its moment of recognition when, "frail" though the pattern may be *SA* 253, the shadow of memory *qua* the shadow of longing transgresses the bounds of reason to become, "more real at [that] moment than the pattern on the wallpaper, as the pencilled rain in a Chinese watercolor is more real than the strong and enduring landscape that lies beyond" (p. 253). Here again, as before, memory gives false hope and subordinates the present to the past—"She felt very hopeful all of a sudden [...] It was wonderful knowing that (*sic*) shadow was upstairs and would never go away" *SA* 254⁷⁷. Yet, if memory manages to dispel the dread and sorrow of isolation, it does so by confounding reason, and opening up the possibility of an interjacent space of madness, which is, I argue, intrinsic to the occurrence of diaspora space throughout Brennan's Irish-based fiction.

A study in loneliness, "The Shadow of Kindness" is at heart a ghost story. The house itself has become an embodiment of loss and desire, typified in the shadow of Delia's mother; in essence, her own unquiet shadow. Indeed, the story is haunted by mothers and the more significant trope of motherhood. An overwrought, possessive mother to two absent children, Delia moves through the house like an apparition, encountering in her daughters' bedroom the still more ghostly apparition of her own mother. When Martin comes to her room to ask for milk in the middle of the night, the "ecstasy of gratitude" *SA* 246 Delia feels but fails to understand or question, arguably confounds her sexual frustrations with the longing she endures for her unborn son (the eldest child of the eponymous story)⁷⁸.

"The Shadow of Kindness" occupies an interesting, liminal place within the body of Brennan's literary output. Published at the midpoint of her career, it conveniently bridges some of the more prominent themes already well developed in her writing, with those that would be given newfound prominence in her later work, particularly as they became increasingly relevant to

⁷⁷ In the story "In and Out of Never-Never Land," (first published in July 1963) Brennan wrote, "But false hope feels the same as real hope" *RG* 292.

⁷⁸ "The Eldest Child" first published 29th June 1968, approximately three years after "The Shadow of Kindness."

the material circumstances of her life⁷⁹. Thus, the story becomes a two-way mirror, like the “big naked window” Delia looks through, only to see herself coming and going, entering and leaving—“a mirror that went both ways and showed both sides” *SA* 251. A symbol of the embodied dialectics of time (past/future) and space (presence/absence), the mirror-window takes on the significance of Foucault’s disturbed *other space*, “at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through [a] virtual point which is *over there*” (Foucault, 1986, p. 24; *my italics*). Delia’s attempts to look forward result in an endlessly-backward conveyance, both to the present, and to a past that remains “a ghostly and final wall,” forever unchanged behind her *SA* 252. Indeed, it is just such an involuntary memory—“born of ‘shock’,” Christine Buci-Glucksmann writes—that produces the fundamentally insubstantial (and inadequate) figure of the shadow-shade-ghost that, “like the ‘flashing’ historical constellation of past and present, presents itself only in images or *figures*” (1994, p. 111; *author’s italics*). Within the shadow of remembrance, memory and longing collide to produce a kind of *manic* space, at once as proximate and contested as the story’s palliative conclusion that the presence of shadows alone is “almost like having somebody in the house” *SA* 254.

The Bagot stories correspond with a separate narrative thread, centring on the Derdon family—Rose, her husband Hubert, and their only son John, a priest—which largely predate them⁸⁰. Together, they comprise the most complete, and most extensive of Brennan’s numerous narrative cycles, focusing on themes and characters that are often as indistinguishable from each other as the house they inhabit is indistinguishable.

There are so few indications of time in all of Brennan’s Irish fiction, that without a certain amount of conjecture, the stories appear to float in a kind of temporal vacuum, almost entirely

⁷⁹ The mid-point in publication, if not production terms, “The Shadow of Kindness” was published in 1965, roughly fifteen years after “The Holy Terror,” Brennan’s first short story, was published by *Harper’s Bazaar*, and fifteen years before the touching if confused valediction appeared as a New Year “Blessing” in *The New Yorker* in 1981.

⁸⁰ Brennan published six stories in all about the Derdons, beginning with “The Poor Men and Women” and ending in March 1973 with “Family Walls,” her last short story proper to be published in her lifetime. Despite the considerable interval in time, there is much evidence to suggest that most of the stories were written over a much shorter period, however, probably between the mid-1950s and the mid-1960s, with significant subsequent edits, and *The New Yorker’s* irregular publication practices, at fault for their piecemeal issuance (Bourke, 2004). Eight stories in all were published on the Bagots, beginning in May 1964 with “The Carpet with the Big Pink Roses on It.” It was followed that July by “A Free Choice,” the penultimate story concerning Rose and Hubert Derdon, after which the only stories to appear concerned the Bagots, with the notable exception of “Family Walls,” (mentioned above) which, according to Bourke, existed in draft form as early as 1962, indicating less of an overlap in their production than the order of publication suggests, and that in actuality, as Brennan was concluding one set of fictions, she was beginning another.

free of the encumbrance of context, social and political. Indeed, the ahistoricism of the female narrative voice, in particular that of the Irish woman's voice, is addressed by Anne Fogarty in relation to the "unattainable privacy" of Mary Lavin's short stories (2002, p. 3). Whilst much of her fiction logically occurs at an "explosive" time in twentieth-century Irish history (p. 3), Fogarty argues that Lavin consciously eschews any historical referencing, to allow a "prominence to the stories of women that are usually omitted in political histories of the period" (p. 3). Brennan's Irish narratives are similarly undated and, in a sense, un-datable.

The vicissitudes of Brennan's early childhood were largely determined by her father's involvement in the struggle for Irish independence. Bourke provides ample details of Robert Brennan's activities within the IRB. As an insurgent, he spent years on the run, between incarcerations (in both Irish and English prisons), taking refuge in safe houses, and returning to Una and the children only intermittently, and for brief periods at that (Bourke, 2004, pp. 41-56). Brennan's story "The Day We Got Our Own Back" addresses the memory of one such raid on the family home in Cherryfield Avenue, by those she describes in a consciously childlike manner as, "some unfriendly men dressed in civilian clothes [...] carrying revolvers" SA 37⁸¹. The story belongs to an arguably complete body of fiction produced by Brennan for *The New Yorker* in the earliest years of her engagement⁸². Described by William Maxwell as "slight [though] definitely written" SA 31, they occur in and around the same ubiquitous home, focusing on the small but significant memories of the young Maeve. Whether intimate or domestic in nature, whether childish or adolescent, they are above all firmly entrenched in time and space, in a way that sets them apart from the rest of her Irish-based fiction. "I was peacefully approaching the end of my thirteenth year" SA 47, begins "The Devil in Us"; while, setting the scene in "The Morning after the Big Fire," we are told, "I was about eight" SA 16. In "The Barrel of Rumours," Maeve's baby brother Robert was, "at this time about two years old," SA 35; Yet, in "The Day We Got Our Own Back," the facts are incontrovertible: "This was in Dublin, in 1922," she writes; "The treaty with England, turning Ireland into the Irish Free State, had just been signed" SA 37. There are no other examples in all of Brennan's Irish-based fiction where history impinges so conspicuously and so deliberately upon the narrative.

⁸¹ The narrator identifies them as Royal Irish Constabulary, given her father's anti-Treaty stance.

⁸² The seven stories – ostensibly autobiographical – recounted by a young Maeve Brennan (conceivably, though not likely fictional) are grouped together as the opening selection within *The Springs of Affection* (1997). Beginning with "The Morning After the Big Fire," in February 1953, and ending with "The Old Man of the Sea" in January 1955, their publication in *The New Yorker* roughly coincides with a separate collection – the 'Herbert's Retreat' stories – which are clearly distinguishable by their setting in upstate New York, and the shift to third-person narrative.

Here alone, we see her directly address the incendiary years of her childhood, coinciding as it did with the “terrible beauty” of the nation’s birth (Yeats, 2015, p. 54)⁸³. Angela Bourke notes that: “The first four years of Maeve’s life were at once a time of displacement and danger, and one of the most densely inscribed periods of Irish history” (2004, p. 44). Yet on the surface of it, the story seems almost anodyne. The young narrator—“five years old,” we learn *SA 37*—is “spellbound with gratitude, excitement, and astonishment” *SA 39* at having been acknowledged by one of the armed intruders, as she calmly threads a beaded necklace in the sitting room. The danger encountered—“one of the men was before her [mother], with his revolver raised against her” (p. 39)—is later laughed off, or forgotten over tea, while any disorder within the home seems largely confined to the housewifely upending of “tins of flour and tea and sugar and salt” on the kitchen floor *SA 41*. Yet, the terse prose and conversational tone seem to belie the sense of anxiousness that simmers just below the untroubled surface. Brennan’s idiosyncratic use of the smile makes an early appearance here, as her mother responds to the soldier raising his revolver against her by “staring up at him, half smiling,” adding, “I have often seen her smile like that when she is agitated” *SA 39*⁸⁴. Later, a second, still more inimical invasion, “about a year after” (p. 39), leaves her mother laughing amid the wreckage left by the soldiers. “We had seldom heard my mother’s voice raised in laughter,” she writes; and if there is a suggestion here that the children were used to hearing it raised in rancour, or in despair, the disjunction is clearly borne out in the final observation, “she laughed as though her heart might break” (p. 41).

In his introduction to *The Springs of Affection* (1997), Maxwell describes the opening sequence of stories as, “radiant with the safety and comfort of home” *SA 3*. “Even when the house is brutally ransacked by plainclothesmen,” he argues, “nothing really bad happens. The house is protected by love” (p. 3). Yet, after the raid, “the house,” writes Brennan, “looked as though it had suffered an explosion without bursting its walls” *SA 40*. If its structural integrity holds out (externally, at least), inside is all disarray, cracked and unbalanced as the mother’s frightened smile and trembling laughter. Indeed, the story, like so much of Brennan’s Irish-based fiction, is riven with such cracks in thought, speech, and manner, through which, as

⁸³ Taken from “Easter, 1916” (1916) by W.B. Yeats. Although the poem deals with the aftermath of the Easter Rising, and not directly with the events of 1919-1923 that led to the birth of the independent state, the shift in public opinion, following the execution of its leaders – “MacDonagh and MacBride And Connolly and Pearse” – was a shift in favour of the insurrectionists, a fact which coloured the ensuing Irish War of Independence (1919-1921).

⁸⁴ For more on Brennan’s idiosyncratic use of the smile, see chapter four “Feminine Space”, pp. 168-171.

Frank O'Connor writes of Joyce's "The Dead," "we perceive the presence of death all about" (2004, p. 121). As in "The Shadow of Kindness," the interstitial narrative allows for the presence of ghosts (past and future). Moreover, the confession, "It would be a long time before she had the house neat again" *SA 40*, is arguably quiet acknowledgement of the profound and far-reaching effects of the damage caused. Indeed, the story, "slight" though it seems *SA 31*, foreshadows certain recurrent motifs in the still more compelling narratives of the Derdons and the Bagots that were to follow. Like Rose (Derdon) and Delia (Bagot), Mrs. Brennan applies herself to polishing the brass rods that hold the red carpet runner in place, as well as that of the oilcloth on the dining-room floor⁸⁵. Her physical appearance—"small" and "thin," her "straight brown hair [...] always worn in a bun at the back of her head" *SA 37*—is consistent with the description of Rose as a woman of "forty-seven, with a gaunt body and a long soft face, [her] hair, brown [...] done up at the back into a kind of bun or loaf" *SA 128*. Yet, perhaps the most telling symmetry lies in the malaise that suffuses the space and silence of home—all three homes—and more generally underlies Brennan's most compelling fiction. Mrs. Brennan smiles when she is afraid, and laughs in the midst of despair, just as Delia smiles weakly to show her appreciation for "a remark she did not really understand," *SA 291*, and Rose, in her utter confusion with the world, "only [ever] stopped smiling in order to smile again" *SA 185*. There is a sense of awareness, even of self-consciousness, in the depiction of domestic affairs within the narrative; as though the everyday responsibilities of cleaning and polishing, of preparing tea, and of seeing that the children are comfortable and rested, are inconsequential, frivolous even, when weighed against the responsibilities of the insurgent (absent) father, and of the armed men who repeatedly invade and upend the home in their pursuit of him. There is, in other words, a subordination of the feminine domestic to that of the masculine public world. The house, it seems, must suffer a physical "explosion" *SA 40* in order to explode the illusion of its equilibrium (before and after the soldiers' intrusions.) The public-private dialectic is brought into sharp focus, here, as we see the prudent governance of home mocked, laid bare, even as something to be laughed off (or laughed at), while the mother's trembling smile and sorrowing laughter are doubtfully advanced as appropriate responses to the violation of home. Fogarty's assertion that, "maternal subjectivity remains curiously resistant to narrativity [whilst] locked in the obdurately ahistorical space of private reflection" (2002, p. 93), bears upon the narratives of all three women. The private sorrows of their lives, of marriage and

⁸⁵ In the Bagot and Derdon stories, the dining-room is furnished with linoleum as opposed to the oilcloth described here.

motherhood, hidden, and largely unexpressed within the sequestered space of home, are further debased by the (masculine) encroachment of time and circumstance, which are at once extrinsic to, and at variance with, the (feminine) private-domestic sphere. Whatever the reasoning, Brennan consciously circumscribed the narrative space of her Irish fictions such that the seismic political, cultural and social changes of her youth—changes that privileged the masculine in their determination, if not also in their execution—could not obtrude therein. Brennan’s niece, Yvonne Jerrold, speculates that the Brennan’s were greatly scarred by the circumstances of their childhood in Dublin⁸⁶:

“Maeve grew up with more knowledge of the Irish troubles than my mother did, but all the family had mental scars from the violence of the time [...] They’d grown up in poverty. Every now and then their father was dragged off to yet another prison. They grew up frightened. And they turned against politics [...] Some writers come out of tempestuous countries and write about it for the rest of their lives [...] but Maeve never mentioned politics or the Irish war of independence in her writing” (*quoted in Bolick, 2015, p. 270*)⁸⁷.

Jerrold’s claim that Maeve and her siblings grew up afraid is strongly redolent of Frank O’Connor’s observations on the author Katherine Mansfield, whose childhood injuries, he suggested, turned in adulthood to hysteria: “[I]t is pointless to argue about it,” he wrote; “[H]ysteria is not to be argued with, and a hurt child is always a hurt child” (2004, p. 106). The stories of the Bagots and the Derdons clearly belong to the past; yet, without the explicit indices of time, or the fetters of historical context (evident uniquely in this story), they appear to take place in the same mystical, timeless space as Lavin’s stories, where above all things remain the same; or indeed where change itself becomes immutable—and if not immutable, *impotent*⁸⁸. They are, in short, conscious expressions of fantasy, or what might better be termed fairy stories.

⁸⁶ Maeve and her elder sister Emer, more so than Derry and Robert, the two younger children.

⁸⁷ It is, perhaps, curious to consider that, when the pseudonymous Mary Ann Whitty hears the rumble of fire engines on a Fourth of July night in “In and Out of Never-Never Land,” her first thought is “Armored cars” *RG* 297; this, even though the story was published at least forty years after the explosive events of Brennan’s childhood in Ireland (Bourke, 2004, p. 55).

⁸⁸ By “this story” is meant “The Day We Got Our Own Back,” first published in *The New Yorker*, 24th October 1953.

Fairy Stories

Fairy stories, ghost stories; if there is a difference, it is a faint one⁸⁹. Brennan's stories of Delia Bagot and Rose Derdon—informally (and usefully, for our purposes), known as the Dublin stories—can arguably be read as fairy stories, if perhaps more specifically as Anti-Märchen, or *anti*-fairy tales. Jack Zipes comments: "It is in the other moral world of fairy tales that women tend to find an iota of justice" (2012, p. 83), noting of the paradigm of the persecuted heroine, that fairy tales function as "both psychological mirrors and socially framed registers," for the reader as much as the "neglected female storytellers and writers" who frame them (pp. 92, 84). Indeed, Abigail Heiniger situates Brennan's "dangerous Irish fairy tales" within a larger "Irish Cinderella tradition" (2020, pp. 65, 66-67). Rose Derdon's anxieties in "A Free Choice," she writes, are fundamentally determined by an ambiguity of place and identity, indeed, of "not know[ing] what role she is supposed to perform in a changing society" (p. 69). Yet if, as Heiniger suggests, Rose's confusion is a symptom, or a reflection, of a society rapidly changing for the worse, the metaphor can conceivably be extended to encompass most, if not all, of the Dublin stories. Rose and Delia's disillusionment, nay disorientation, is symptomatic of a generalised placelessness in the (post-)colonial Irish subject, stripped of her agency and identity, sexual and somatic, at one and the same time. Like many of Katherine Mansfield's shorter works of fiction, Brennan's Dublin stories take on fairy-tale-like qualities through the use of prosopopoeia, anthropomorphised animals, and the persistent collision (and collusion) of fantasy and material, real-world conditions. Just as the house is described in "The Shadow of Kindness" as "lonely" SA 240, or in *The Visitor* as "patient" V 5, a large clock that stands in the hall in "The Sofa" begins "to look quite friendly, [as though] it had calmed down and was taking its time," while the new sofa, around which the story is hung, becomes "restless [to be] settled down again so that ordinary life [may] begin again" SA 260. Of Mansfield's "At the Bay," O'Connor writes that, like a fairy tale, "speechless things talk like anyone else. Florrie, the cat [...] says, 'Thank goodness, it's getting late. Thank goodness, the long day is over'" (2004, p. 137). Similarly, in the Bagot stories, Bennie, the white terrier, pretends to be asleep, "to be sure he [is] allowed to stay in the same room" while the cake is being cut; whilst Rupert, the big orange cat, is "proud" of his purr, and Minnie, the second of the cats, sits "thoughtfully" by her milk saucer. In "Christmas Eve,"

⁸⁹ In her introduction to the *LWL*, Brennan describes her comments as "the record of forty-seven moments of recognition" *LWL* 3, going on to write: "Moments of kindness, moments of recognition – if there is a difference it is a faint one" (p. 3).

Mrs. Bagot's fervent wish that she should go on believing in Father Christmas, leads her to conclude: "No matter where the presents came from, Father Christmas came down the chimney, [she] was sure of that. He was probably hovering over Dublin now, seeing how the city had changed since last year" *SA* 300.

Yet if they are fairy stories, they are equally grim and unsatisfactory stories for all that. They take place on the knife edge between reality and fantasy, a path as narrow as that which Rose Derdon treads, definite and unwavering, "Between two sharp edges [...] to avoid touching the two madnesses [that guided] her, pressing too close to her and narrowing her path into a very thin line" *SA* 182.

Indeed, the dreamy, light hand of the fairy tale is conspicuous, too, in the five stories that feature Bluebell, Brennan's beloved black Labrador⁹⁰. Besides the protagonist Mary Ann Whitty, the stories are exclusively given over to the patient, precise observation of the world of children and animals, and the ingenuous emotions that propel them. She writes of a bee's fixity of purpose—"But the bee had collected all his force and had come to vigorous life and had come out fighting" *RG* 278; or the indignation of a flock of gulls—"the sea gulls circled and swooped and screamed with exasperation at the sameness of it all. 'Every year,' the sea gulls screamed, 'every year'" *RG* 306; or the self-interest of cats—"[E]ach cat said, as always, 'I choose myself'" *RG* 287. Yet, ultimately, the stories attempt an elaborate and compassionate understanding of the nature of one particular animal, Bluebell, the "rather fat" black Labrador retriever, whose eyes say "I choose you [...] you, you," *RG* 276, when he gazes at his owner, just as Bennie, in "The Shadow of Kindness," looks at Mrs. Bagot with a "storm of devotion in his eyes [that] could never have found expression in speech" *SA* 244. Even Bourke describes the East Hampton beach-side home that inspired these stories as Brennan's "little fairytale cottage" (2004, p. 231), for there is a particular quality about the three stories recounting the adventures of a family of seven young children, who live in the "giant's mansion" *RG* 302 next door, which recalls the same wistful character of Oscar Wilde's stories for children⁹¹.

In his extended critique of Mansfield's fiction, O'Connor writes that,

⁹⁰ "I See You, Bianca," (first published June 1966), though not one of the five 'Bluebell' stories, arguably belongs to the same narrative subset, given the narrator's preponderant interest in the cat (the eponymous 'Bianca' of the title.)

It is worth noting that the German publisher Steidl produced *Bluebell* in 2013, an edition of Brennan's fiction devoted exclusively to those stories concerning Mary-Ann Whitty and her dog Bluebell.

⁹¹ Brennan admired Wilde; so much so, McWilliams argues, that the fresh boutonnière she wore daily as part of her unchanging style was a subtle nod to his green carnation (McWilliams, 2016, p. 56).

“to introduce a real country into ‘At the Bay’ would be to introduce history, and with history would come judgement, will, and criticism. The real world of these stories is not New Zealand but childhood, and they are written in a complete, hypnotic suspension of the critical faculties” (2004, p. 135).

It is in that place of suspension that Mansfield’s brilliance, and the daring invention of her short fiction, becomes apparent. “They are masterpieces,” writes O’Connor, “because they are an act of atonement [...] for whatever wrong she felt she had done” (2004, pp. 136-137); and in this way, I argue that Brennan’s fiction appears to be trapped in a similar ‘suspension’ of time and circumstance. Whether set in Ireland or America, the stories take place in an *other* reality, a resistant, fantasy world, beyond the scope of extrinsic ‘judgement,’ ‘will,’ or critique, thereby approximating the fantasy of the (anti-)fairy tale. Moreover, they appear to attempt a kind of *re-enchantment* of reality as a means of resistance to the alienation of human existence (Buci-Glucksmann, 1994, pp. 17, 18), presenting an interesting parallel with the Long-Winded Lady’s *flâneuserie*—itself, an act of resistance to the “commodification of life [and] fetishism of consciousness” (p. 3)—considered in chapter one of this thesis⁹². Yet, if Mansfield is tormented by ghosts of her past wrongs, Brennan’s *anti-fairy* tales ultimately appear to be haunted by that which can neither be affirmed nor disavowed. As anti-Märchen, they exhibit that “profound moral probing” (O’Connor, 2004, p. 82), not simply into the nature of grief, but of regret and atonement, or what more might accurately be termed consolation, for the wrongs of her own past—both those of childhood and adulthood. There is a sense that the power of Brennan’s literature comes from its very ordinariness, from the reader’s ability to reach down into his/her own reserve of experience and recognise the self-same guilt, despair, and even the capacity for such perfunctory cruelty as that which continually plays out within the two unhappy households.

Delia Bagot makes a first appearance in “The Carpet with the Big Pink Roses on It,” a story of intense longing for escape, experienced by daughter and mother, one from the physical boundaries of the house, the other from the normative strictures of the society that encloses it. The terse, almost static narrative seems to linger, as stubborn as the floral carpet that lies out on the lawn and refuses to carry Delia and the children up and away, “somewhere, even if it was only for the afternoon [...] To disappear for a little while” SA 233. A sense of

⁹² In his introduction to *Baroque Reason* (1994), Bryan Turner evaluates Weber’s “disenchantment of reality” as, “an important parallel with Marx’s study of human alienation and estrangement” (Buci-Glucksmann, 1994, pp. 17-18).

claustrophobia pursues Delia (reinforcing the notion of constricting domestic space), as she moves inexorably from the semi-public space of the back garden, towards the evermore sequestered space of indoors—through the communal parlour, hall and stairs, to the children’s room, where, with the blinds drawn, she climbs into bed beside her youngest daughter and gives herself over to a deep, private sleep. This diminishment of space can only be relieved, it seems, through the obliteration of sleep, something for which Delia longs, even obsesses, over the course of the brief narrative. Indeed, the word ‘sleep’ appears no less than thirteen times, despite its being the briefest of all fourteen of the Bagot-Derdon stories. Moreover, it connects to the leitmotif of mothers sneaking into their daughters’ beds in Brennan’s writing; a furtive, shame-filled act, it occurs in *The Visitor* and another of the Cherryfield Avenue fictions, “The Beginning of A Long Story”⁹³. Sleep, here, like the simple act of stretching, is coterminous with pleasure (vexed desires), and therefore bound up in the erotics of sensual, and sensory, gratification—at once off-limits (outwith the private space of home), and the subject of (and subjected to) the stringent (self-)regulation of women’s bodies (Gray, 2004, p. 2; Walter, 2013, p. 37). “What she needed was a good stretch,” we read,

“She would like to stretch herself, stretch her arms up, stretch all the weariness out of her body, but she could hardly start stretching herself here in the garden. Mrs. Finn next door would think there was something the matter with her” SA 234.

Delia’s physical and moral rigidity out of doors contrasts with the lavishly corporeal descriptions that follow in the bedroom, as her “arms,” “legs,” “back,” “shoulders,” “head” and “eyes” are catalogued in quick succession, while she “[pulls] out the pins and [pulls] her hair over onto the pillow where it [loosens] out, tumbling sleepily to its full length” SA 238⁹⁴. The narrative continues:

“She pressed her face into [the pillow] and drew her legs up on the bed and lay there. ‘O, this is very nice,’ she said, and she pushed off her shoes, first one and then the other” (p. 238).

⁹³ Published February 1961, the story takes place in the same house as the Bagot-Derdon narrative cycles. Here, however, there are three daughters with different names, and the parents are referred to only as ‘mother’ and ‘father’.

⁹⁴ Another example of Delia’s paranoia: “Don’t let me fall asleep, Lily,” Mrs. Bagot said. [...] Oh, I hope nobody comes to the door [...] They will think I am a madwoman, with my hair down in the middle of the day” SA 238-239. Indeed, the image is closely paralleled in the story “Family Walls”; see chapter four, “Feminine Space”.

In the private space of the (children's) bedroom, the female body regains the (sensory) instruments of sensuality that clearly imply danger and disruption out of doors, much as, in "The Rose Garden," "the passionate instruments of worship"—"the tongue," "the heart," and "the treacherous parting in the nuns' flesh"—represent a gateway to penetration; the means by which "the Devil yet might enter in" *RG* 188.

Yet, Delia's is clearly a fragmented body, less body than corpse—like the "Talking Corpse" of Ó Cadhain's *Cré na Cille*, that arguably suggests the sectioned corpus of the Irish language (Kiberd, 2017, pp. 53-56)—it resonates with the "womb-grave-body-parts" that Joyce substituted for the incomplete Irish identity (Herr, 1990, p. 7). Moreover, it forms part of an overarching theme of bodily fragmentation that runs throughout Brennan's Dublin stories, and which arguably bespeaks the "disjunctive, [and] fragmented" perspective of the Irish diasporic imaginary (Bromley, 2000, p. 8). Certainly, the characters are inordinately concerned with the regulation of the body. Hands are a notably refractory extremity for a number of the characters: "The Devil can always find work for idle hands," Sister Veronica admonishes the young Maeve in "The Devil in Us" *SA* 50; while, in Rose and Delia's case, the mouth is subjected to extreme scrutiny as a border-threshold, denoting a key point of entry/exit for—amongst other things—the consumption of food, and the expression of language⁹⁵.

When Delia finds Lily, her eldest daughter, lying face-down on the floorboards, searching for a penny that has slipped through the cracks, she tells her:

"[Y]ou'll never see that penny again. It's gone for good [...] It's happened before, and it will happen again. We were hardly in this house when I lost a sixpence. It fell out of my hand and rolled over there. I nearly had it and then it was gone, down under the house. The foundations of this house must be made of money" *SA* 235.

For the remainder of the story, Lily importunes her mother—even as she finally slips into welcome sleep in Margaret's bed—for the answer to a question that persists, unanswered, throughout Brennan's fiction. "When will we get it?" she asks *SA* 235; and if Lily is speaking of the lost penny, we divine therein a sublimated desire for the things that have somehow gotten away, and the things whose value is only understood after they have disappeared, much like the vista, in "Sixth Avenue Shows Its True Self," that possesses a quality, "which dooms it [...]"

⁹⁵ Nancy Scheper-Hughes speculates that the Irish population, alongside some Jewish and aboriginal cultures, exhibit "a rigid vigilance over bodily boundaries," leading to "a high degree of anxiety over both what goes in and what comes out of the body" (2001, p. 210).

to be loved only at the moment when [it is] being looked at for the very last time” *LWL* 165. As Lily peers down into the void beneath the house in the hope that it will suddenly give up its treasure, the story itself becomes a backward glance, blindly probing the past in the hope of retrieving its fugitive secrets. And if Lily is left waiting at the story’s end, even as she flies to Paris and Spain on the magic carpet that always returns to the same house, Delia too awaits a deliverance that never comes, and will never come to more than the bogus escape of sleep, where she “might [...] have been invisible, or enchanted, or [...] forgotten” *SA* 239. Though Delia herself suffers a kind of somatic explosion, the house remains intact, holding her and the children, as it holds, and will continue to hold, Lily’s penny and Mrs. Bagot’s sixpence. The house “might blow up but [it] would never blow up,” writes Brennan; “Never, never. That house never blew up” (p. 239).

Enchanted sleep, flying carpets, and an indestructible house: as an expression of fantasy, the story clearly transgresses the bounds of reality, and allows for the possibility of such disruptive exegesis. Zipes writes of the contemporary fairy-tale narrative:

“No longer [does it] interpret and portray fairy-tale texts [that] divert the viewer from the ugliness of the everyday world. On the contrary, contemporary artists have approached fairy-tale topics from a critical and skeptical perspective, intent on disturbing viewers and reminding them that the world is out of joint and fairy tales offer no alternative to drab reality” (2012, pp. 125-126).

As fictions, private and “cultural,” they are “written from the affective experience of social marginality; [...] Excess, dream and fragment shape these fictions,” writes Bromley; “constructing a third space [of] revaluation” (2000, p. 1).

The fairy-tale’s inherent escapism arguably allows for a space of creative re-imagining, both of the past and, by extension, the present, since the narrative is constructed to “fit in with the contemporary [life] of [the storyteller]” (Walter, 2013, p. 38). Within this “third”, diaspora space (Bromley, 2000, p. 1), Brennan was free to explore that same re-enchantment of past and present, to reinfuse the narrative space with illusion, as a mode of resistance against the alienation of the everyday world she inhabited (Buci-Glucksmann, 1994, p. 3). This she did, to paraphrase Salman Rushdie, in the full knowledge that she would “not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that [looking back], in short, [we] create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands” (2006, p. 428). In other words, once again the facts here are subordinate to the act of remembering. Indeed, there is a sense that Brennan writes with the fixity of purpose, and the scale of repetition, of one whose

objective is to *remember* first. Theodor Adorno wrote, “For a man who no longer has a homeland, writing becomes a place to live” (2005, p. 51). Certainly, home, in “The Carpet with the Big Pink Roses on It,” is arguably more real in the imaginary, “in-between space” of memory (Karim, 2003, p. 9), as the locus of division/(re-)attachment, than anything Brennan might possibly have understood as ‘home’ at the time of its composition, less than a decade before she would confess: “No place is home – it is as it should be” (*quoted in* McWilliams, 2014, p. 98)⁹⁶. Indeed, the curious imbrication (physical and metaphysical) of the carpet and the garden that occurs in the narrative—“The beige carpet with the big pink roses on it had been taken up off the floor of the front sitting room and dragged through the hall [...] and laid on the grass” *SA* 232—curiously prefigures Foucault’s heterotopic conception of carpets as “originally reproductions of gardens”—“the garden is a rug onto which the whole world comes to enact its symbolic perfection, and the rug is a sort of garden that can move across space” (1986, p. 26).

On the other side of the Atlantic, fantasy drives much of the fiction concerning Bluebell, Brennan’s black Labrador, in an arguably more pronounced way than that of her Irish-based fiction. “The Door on West Tenth Street” is an idiosyncratic account of a dog’s imagined perspective on urban and rural life, and the longest of five stories that comprise the Mary Ann Whitty/Bluebell sequence. It takes place between Manhattan and the lakeside location of Katonah in up-state New York. ‘Home,’ here, collides with the fairy-tale narrative in a revealing way, interpellated as the voice of control and regulation, and the (human) body at the end of Bluebell’s leash; in effect, both a solicitous and disruptive force. Home, in this story, is a kind of no-place—a veritable *eutopia*—from which Bluebell/Brennan long to be far away. The narrative voice, indeed the human voice more generally, is consciously subordinated to the voices of the animals who speak here, fictive and real, alive and dead. The “Fish King,” who holds court twenty-thousand fathoms below the sea, “never speaks,” we learn, “not even to say ‘Now’ or ‘At once’” *RG* 264. And yet, “[h]is words are made of thunder and they reverberate at his will” (p. 264). A dead sparrow, which Bluebell finds in Washington Square Park, notionally responds to Samuel Butler’s postulate that, “life is more a matter of being frightened than of being hurt,” with the riposte: “But Mr. Butler, being frightened hurts” *RG*

⁹⁶ Taken from a letter to Howard Moss. The letter is undated, but McWilliams speculates that it was likely written sometime in the 1970s, possibly on a trip home to Dublin (2014, p. 98).

268. Sea gulls, cats, and a series of insects that are found crawling across Bluebell's rug in her Greenwich Village apartment, are all included to some extent. But it is Bluebell who speaks most extensively and eloquently, in a spectrum of emotions, about home and longing, which are inevitably one and the same.

Trapped in the city, Bluebell is so haunted by the memory of her past home—her true home, where the earth, sand, and water restore her “powerful sea legs” and “webbed paws,” so that she swims at the “exquisite speed” of her “true cousin, the dolphin” *RG 263-264*—that she searches frantically for the very specific door on West-Tenth Street, behind which “a cliff [drops] into the Atlantic Ocean”:

“The house on West Tenth Street looks like a real house and no one passing it would dream that all of Montauk lies behind it – the cliff, the sand, and the ocean. Everything worthwhile is there behind that door, which Bluebell knows is closed only to hide the sea from dogs who are not going there” *RG 266*.

There is a playful, tender quality here, evident in fact throughout much of the story. Yet, it bears a striking similarity to Brennan's three-cornered shadow in “A Blessing,” and to the two-way mirror-window in “The Shadow of Kindness.” Here again, the focus returns to the space of distinct liminality, the space of shadow and mirrors that echoes Foucault's heterotopia by destroying the syntactical aporia of the here/there and then/now dualities (Foucault, 2012, p. xix; Knight, 2017, p. 142). Just as Brennan's shadow exists at the intersection between past and present, memory and reality, the door on West Tenth Street becomes a similar gateway to the constant (eternal) memory of home, which is to say the ideal of home that, as an impossible ideal, cannot find “a place of residence” (Brah, 2016, p. 1), cannot exist except in language, literature and memory. Like so much of her writing, the story is a scarcely-concealed lament for home. Yet, if it is written from the point of view of the mercurial Bluebell, there is a pronounced familiarity in her expression of longing: “She has not seen that door for a long time now,” we read:

“[B]ut she has not lost hope. She watches for it, and she looks for it everywhere, on all the streets east and west of Fifth Avenue, and along Fifth Avenue, and along University Place, and on Fourth Avenue, and on Seventh Avenue, and on little Gay Street and on Cornelia Street and even on Bleeker Street, behind the stalls of vegetables and fruit, but she is never confused into thinking that a strange door is the one she wants. There is only one door on West Tenth Street, and she will know it when she sees it” *RG 266-267*.

The exhaustive detail here serves to emphasise a sense of intense longing, becoming a prayer-like litany of procedure, and the reified cartography of an obsessive mind. Indeed, there is more than a suspicion of mania here, in a narrative that already treads a fine line between whimsy and borderline-psychosis. Moreover, it is not difficult to substitute Bluebell for Brennan, as ‘she’ recounts her own compulsive search for the very particular home that would later manifest itself in the three-cornered shadow on Forty-second Street. As Bluebell will know the “one door” when she sees it *RG* 267, the Long-Winded Lady, too, the narrative implies, will recognise her very particular shadow “at once” *LWL* 267. Whilst home is perhaps at its most tangible in this story, personified as Bluebell’s unnamed mistress—unnamed, that is, except as the capitalised ‘Home’—it remains an ambiguous and mutative artefact, whose ever-presence is a source of comfort and regulation at one and the same time. “Most of all,” writes Brennan, “she would like to get away from Home. Yes, she would very much like to get away from Home, who now marches along behind her, holding her leash” *RG* 273. The image implies a quiet acknowledgement of the narrator’s own subjection to home; indeed, of home as a constant force of subjugation, even a capricious keeper, who speaks a language—“Good dog. Nice walk [...] *Bad, bad!*” (p. 273)—that cannot be understood, and whose very existence precludes the possibility of freedom, even as its instinct is to harbour, to protect. Home in this (fairy-)story is represented as a kind of benevolent captor, a contradiction in terms that allows for the final prophetic paradox: “Yes, Bluebell is going away from home, and Home is going with her” *RG* 274. If, in “The Carpet with the Big Pink Roses on It” home is concretised as the house that “would never blow up” *SA* 239, in “The Door on West Tenth Street” it has become the home that conceivably never existed, further extending and complicating the gnomic portrayal of home in Brennan’s writing.

Indeed, Brennan’s conception of home, as a diasporian, was necessarily confounded by the city’s resistance to—its inability to sustain—the insularity, the very “ourness,” of the home-place, which is to say ‘home’ in its provincial, non-urban signification, as Brennan herself had once experienced it in the Dublin suburbs. As I discuss in chapter one of this thesis, Brennan experienced the city as a stranger, as a place where the strange(r) was commonplace, where the strange literally implies the familiar (Felton, 2012, p. 130)⁹⁷. The city, writes Felton, requires (but does not necessarily engender) “a ‘creative competence’ [...] manifest in tolerance, openness and civility to others” (p. 129). Indeed, it is the very unboundedness of city living

⁹⁷ For more on the ourness-otherness dialectic in relation to Brennan’s understanding of the home-space/urban space, see chapter one, “Urban Space,” pp. 42-45.

that essentially precludes the parochial notion of the trespasser—notwithstanding the persistence of urban private property; the liminal spaces of private ownership for public consumption, or what Foucault saw as, “sites of temporary relaxation - cafes, cinemas, [etc.]” (1986, p. 24)—that ultimately coloured Brennan’s schizoid sense of home. Writing ‘home’ from the other side of the Atlantic, a world away from the Cherryfield Avenue house that had once given her the senses of identity, belonging, and safety which she now coveted, now eschewed, by turns, Brennan, too, like Bluebell, appears to be trapped in a frenzied search for a home that is always, inexorably, at the guiding-end of the leash.

Devouring Mothers

This image of the absent, or “lost,” home accords with Declan Kiberd’s theory of Ireland (here, *homeland*), post-independence, as a “missing or lost mother” (2017, p. 70). It was, he writes of the period following the establishment of the Free State, “as if the desired being were not really there” (p. 70). Indeed, the cult of toxic motherhood, already discussed in chapter one of this thesis, continues, and in many ways intensifies, in Brennan’s Irish-based short stories, notably those concerning Rose Derdon and her son (Father) John. Though the motif of devouring, divine mothers runs like a pathogen through Brennan’s work, it is also equally a conspicuous theme in early- to mid-twentieth century Irishwomen’s fiction (Fogarty, 2002; Wan-Lih Chang, 2015; Keane, 1988).

Conscious of the insidious power that certain Irish mothers could (and did) hold over their children, in her influential ethnography on the rural communities of southwest Ireland, Nancy Scheper-Hughes makes the flagrant claim that, “With the Immaculate (and bleeding) Heart of Mary as their role model, Irish mothers are artists in the guilt-inducing techniques of moral masochism” (2001, p. 281). Moreover, Anne Fogarty, in her illuminating work on the mother-daughter theme in contemporary Irishwomen’s fiction, sees in the (Irish) narrative, “a space of alternative imaginings,” in which “the figure of the mother [...] becomes associated with the trauma of a past that can neither be buried nor resolved” (2002, pp. 85-86).

The archetypal influence of divine mothers may be presupposed, given the dominant status in pre-Christian Ireland of what Maire Cruise-O’Brien sees as, “the great, all-powerful Mother Goddess” (1983, p. 26). Indeed, Joyce’s mother-figure in *Ulysses* (1922) serves as an early avatar of such an evangelising/avenging angel, or vampiric mother, enacting a symbolic call to conversion—national, linguistic and religious—to the young Stephen Daedalus, when she bids

him come pray at her deathbed (McWilliams, 2013, p. 35)⁹⁸. Brennan offers an interesting variation on this trope when, in *The Visitor*, Anastasia King refuses to carry out Nora Kilbride's dying wish. Instead of slipping the wedding ring onto her finger in the coffin, "[hiding] it over with the rosary" V 52, as the old woman asks, Anastasia refuses to pay her respects to the deceased, taking a bus instead to an old flooded quarry outside the city, "said to be bottomless" V 71, into which she casually tosses the ring, "[to] fall forever with the falling stones, past and to come" V 72. In so doing, she enacts a repudiation of her filial allegiance to mother/-land—even a surrogate mother/-land, as is represented by Nora Kilbride, and the Ireland to which Anastasia has lately returned from Paris. By rejecting this symbolic union, or marriage, with the deceased mother-figure, Anastasia repudiates the vampiric corpse of mother Ireland, that reaches a desiring hand, possessive and incestuous, from the grave-soil. Just as Nora Kilbride imagines her hands in death, entwined with rosary beads, the desirous hand of the devouring, divine mother(-Ireland) is similarly draped in chains of religious fealty⁹⁹. Indeed, the ghost of Anastasia's own mother is earlier described as holding the rosary—"gathered" in her hands V 28—whilst the formidable Mrs. King "[kisses] each separate bead of the rosary eagerly" V 57, even while she refuses to allow the body of Anastasia's mother to be repatriated from Paris for burial alongside her husband.

The mother-corpse's covetous grasp—here, a metonymy for maternal desire—"threatens to be a founding gesture," writes Buci-Glucksmann, which "transgresses the [...] (symbolic) incorporation of the body" (1994, p. 146). "[T]here should be a body," she avows, writing of the Biblical Salome's lubricious dance; Christian orthodoxy "requires" it, "[t]he body of Christ crucified, the body of the Church, the body of the sacramental host" (p. 146)¹⁰⁰. Yet, at the

⁹⁸ Abigail Palko speculates that Dorothy Macardle's contemporary gothic novel *The Uninvited* (1942) may have influenced Brennan to write *The Visitor*. In the novel, the portrait of the maternal spirit that haunts the protagonists' newly purchased home, appears "saintly, [with] Madonna-like echoes" (Palko, 2010, p. 13), and, according to Palko, "evokes [...] a figure of moral rectitude, not a maternal presence [...] like an avenging angel, tall and shining, her eyes filled with blue fire" (p. 13). The image foreshadows that of the spinster Nora Kilbride's formidable mother in *The Visitor*, a woman of such a dominating, possessive nature that she referred, in life, to her daughter as "Other Self" V 40. When Anastasia visits Nora in her home, she turns her mother's portrait, with its "large suspicious blue eyes" V 39, to face the wall, adding inscrutably: "Do you see what I've done?" V 41.

⁹⁹ The metaphor of (divine) acquisitive mothers appears again in "The Barrel of Rumours", where the Poor Clare nuns (mothers of a spiritual kind), whose petitionary voices whisper prayers through the grille to overhearing visitors to the convent, are said to sleep in their coffins. They receive the 'offering' of the young Maeve's baby brother Robert through the revolving barrel SA 30-36.

¹⁰⁰ Part of a larger exegesis, Buci-Glucksmann discusses the Biblical figure of Salome as depicted in Wilde's play *Salome* (1894), and in Moreau's paintings: *Salome and the Apparition of the Baptist's Head* (1876), and *Salome Dancing before Herod* (1876) (1994, pp. 145-146).

same time, she continues, “there should not be a body – or [...] it should be cast off or doomed” (p. 146). Indeed, there must, I argue, be a sacrificial female body, the disembodied body of female/maternal desire, of which there are at least two in *The Visitor*: that of Nora Kilbride, who sacrifices her life to her own vampiric mother, and that of Anastasia’s mother, who awaits repatriation, unburied, in Paris. If Stephen Dedalus’s mother in *Ulysses* is “complicit in casting the nets of ‘nationality, language [and] religion’” over her son (McWilliams, 2013, p. 35), in *The Visitor* it is Anastasia herself who risks being “cast off,” “doomed” to be sundered by the competing forces of maternal desire, the convulsive push-and-pull of mother and grand-mother driving her back to Paris and drawing her closer to Dublin at one and the same time. As she stands in the hall, awaiting the taxi that will carry her away from the home that has proven itself inadequate, intangible, Anastasia’s hands are described as “[holding] each other in a strong and comfortless grip” V 76, suggesting a resistance to the same rupturing forces of competing maternal desire. In *The Visitor*, then, the matriarchal corpse arguably embodies the stultified corpus of Irish cultural identity; the “womb-grave-body-parts,” surrogate symbols of a moribund language, religion, and nation (Herr, 1990, p. 7).

Indeed, it is possible that for Brennan herself there were similar resentments at play. Immersed as a child in the resurgent (Gaelic) Irish-language culture—the “linchpin of the movement that had brought [her] parents together” (Bourke, 2004, p. 102)—Brennan was schooled in Irish. Her earliest correspondence is replete with references to, and examples of, Irish language, and the cultural movement that complemented it—itsself a product of the Irish Literary Revival, of which her father was a moderately successful participant¹⁰¹. She may have fostered youthful ambitions of being a part of that Irish literary-cultural movement. She certainly hoped to establish a career for herself in Dublin, even after the family’s emigration to Washington D.C. in 1934. Yet, even then, she cannot have been unaware of the social and political unrest in Ireland, as the nascent theocracy of the newly conceived Irish (Free) state received its imprimatur in the form of Eamon de Valera’s Constitution (1937). Indeed, Bourke includes a

¹⁰¹ Bourke provides ample evidence of the young Maeve’s enthusiasm for her native language (mother tongue), and the theatre it spawned (2004, pp. 118-120). Though initially educated through English, she started up a secret society (at Cross and Passion) with her schoolmates; their purpose, “to teach themselves Irish” (p. 102). Moreover, she later attended Scoil Bhríghde, where she learned entirely “through the medium of Irish” for four years (pp. 104-106). Maeve’s father produced at least two successful plays: *Bystander* (1930) and *Good Night, Mr. O’Donnell* (1931). Both had successful runs in Dublin’s Abbey and Olympia theatres, respectively (pp. 103, 109). *Good Night, Mr. O’Donnell* was later translated into Irish (*Oidhche Mhaith agat, a Mhic Uí Dhomhnaill*) and produced by Taibhdhearc na Gaillimhe, the recently-established Irish-language theatre in Galway, in March 1932 (p.110).

letter received by Brennan from author and family friend Dorothy Macardle, presenting a disheartening image of the new Ireland:

“I hope you won’t encounter heartbreak and frustration when you come back here. The country is going through a phase when scarcely any body (*sic*) is interested in anything but money and factories. People who care about thinking and reading are getting desperate” (*quoted in* Bourke, 2004, p. 131).

The Ireland from which Macardle wrote, notes Bourke, was not the great egalitarian hope for which “she had worked and gone to prison” (2004, p. 131)—alongside, it should be noted, other Irish women nationalists, Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington, Louise Gavan Duffy, and indeed Maeve’s own mother Una Brennan (Palko, 2010, p. 2), who perspicaciously interpreted the regressive social and political changes that occurred after Independence as the “[forced] return to the domestic sphere” (p. 3).

As Abigail Palko notes, in the 1930s, “women qua mothers [were] enshrined in the fabric of Irish society, without any consideration of women’s needs” (2010, p. 3). It seems likely that Una Brennan would have understood something of the hostility that women faced in the new theocratic Ireland, which abrogated the “avant-garde” Free State constitution drawn up by Irishmen and -women in the spirit of “people’s rights” only fifteen years before (Cahillane, 2016, pp. xiii, 97). It had promised equal rights and equal duties to, “Every person, without distinction of sex” (Saorstát Eireann Act, 1922). Now, it was to be women’s “duties in the home,” which were laid down in law (Constitution of Ireland, 1937)¹⁰². The irony could not have gone amiss on the young Maeve either, whose first serious attempts at writing qua *The Visitor* would take (aim at) the concept of home as its central motif, and as the cynosure of patriarchal-feminist ideology embodied by Church and state. Bourke speculates that if Brennan had returned to Ireland after her studies, as she plainly hoped to do, she would have found a country that offered no place for her. Indeed, in *The Visitor*, Anastasia returns to Dublin only to discover that she has inherited just such a “no place” (Brennan *quoted in* McWilliams, 2014, p. 98); She has become, suggests Palko, the very embodiment of the

¹⁰² The Constitution of Ireland came into effect on the 29th December 1937. The Preamble clearly identifies the patriarchal, theocratic nation-state, which had emerged post-independence: “In the Name of the *Most Holy Trinity*, from Whom is all authority and to Whom, as our final end, all actions both of *men* and States must be referred / We, the people of Éire / Humbly acknowledging all our obligations to our *Divine Lord, Jesus Christ*, Who sustained our *fathers* through centuries of trial [...]” (Constitution of Ireland, 1937; *italics, my own*).

‘uninvited,’ as her grandmother’s apparent forbearance suddenly dissipates and Anastasia is ordered back to Paris, where nothing awaits her but a mother’s restless corpse, and the cold embrace of the nuns into whose care Mrs. King has entrusted her (Palko, 2010).

The sense of disillusionment evident in Macardle’s letter, and echoed, no doubt, by a great many of her (Irishwomen) compatriots—Maeve’s own mother amongst them (2010, p. 2)—is equally conspicuous in Anastasia’s desperate attempts to recapture a home that is, in a sense, not there; as chimeric as the fantasy of home for which Bluebell searches with dogged persistence in “The Door on West-Tenth Street”; as illusive as the shadows that haunt the Manhattan pavements that will carry Brennan ever-further from the memory she longs to reclaim. As Palko observes:

“the recovery of something that reminds one of home, proves more unsettling than a total lack of referente [...] because it simultaneously induces the memory of home and the realization that this is not home, thereby reproducing the separation from home” (2010, p. 10).

If there is a message, then, in both Macardle’s letter and in Brennan’s novella, it is a cautionary message against the danger of hope; its bleak implication that, staying or going, the outcome is much the same: “No place is home” (Brennan *quoted in* McWilliams, 2014, p. 98).

Nancy Scheper-Hughes speculates that, “The death of a culture begins when its evaluative institutions – the source of all moral energy [–] fails to provide a compelling sense of pride and dignity” (2001, p. 300). Indeed, when Anastasia strips herself of “the accoutrements of respectability – purse, hat, gloves, stockings, and shoes – and [sings] loudly in the street,” at the end of *The Visitor* (Palko, 2010, p. 22), it is both a denunciation, and an acknowledgement, of the travesty of respectability that surrounds her. She has returned to Ireland in the hopes of burying her mother, yet she discovers that Ireland itself has become a kind of necropolis, a nation of the dead, or half-dead—unconscious of the purgatorial loop in which they exist, unable to go backwards, and unwilling to move forwards, like the talking heads in Becket’s *Play* (1963), or the “Talking Corpse[s]” (Kiberd, 2017, p. 53) of Ó Cadhain’s *Cré na Cille* (1949). All three principal characters in *The Visitor* are inordinately concerned with the act of burial, either their own or, in Anastasia’s case, her mother’s. Mrs. King is so consumed by the possessive desire for her deceased son that she openly defies Anastasia’s request to allow her mother to be buried in Ireland (next to her father)—“There’s room for only one more in the grave,” she tells her, “and my name will be on the headstone” V 57; while Nora

Kilbride's own self-interest drives her to inveigle Anastasia to attend upon her in death, despite their tenuous acquaintance—"When I'm dead, and I soon will be dead," she says:

"I want you to place [the ring] on my wedding finger and see that I'm buried with it on. Will you do that for me, Anastasia? It means more to me than Extreme Unction, God forgive me" *V* 51.

In a narrative suffused with death, Anastasia's ultimate transgression, it seems, is the mere act of recognition, both of the canker at the heart of the social order, and of a culture in terminal decline, substantiating Ahmed's claim that, "the act of noticing limitations can actually make life seem more rather than less limited" (2010, p. 70).

According to Heather Ingman, in classical mythology, the daughter's parabolic quandary lies in her having to "choose between identifying with the patriarchy's laws and obliterating the mother, or identifying with the mother at the cost of exclusion and self-destruction" (2007, p. 71). Palko supports Ingman's view that Anastasia, like Antigone, confronts a similar quandary in *The Visitor* (2010, p. 22). Yet, Brennan's novella may be understood as a disavowal of what Bourke calls "the myths of nationalism on which she [was] reared" (2004, p. 101). If Joyce could describe Ireland thirty years earlier as "The old sow that eats her farrow" (1979, p. 373), there is a sense here that the tables have turned, and the farrow is now gorging itself on the carcass of the old, dead sow. Anastasia's repudiation of motherland—standing in the street, denuded of the outward vestiges of patriarchal femininity ("purse, hat, gloves, stockings" [Palko, 2010, p. 22])—is itself a response to the somatic and sexual regulation of women in twentieth-century Ireland; her emigrant experience, an "exemplar" of "the familiar journey of so many other emigrant Irish heroines" (Palko, 2016, p. 108; Gray, 2004, p. 2). Yet, if the mother-figure can be understood as desirous in *The Visitor*, she becomes positively manic, the quintessence of the vampiric devourer (*devouresse*), in "The Poor Men and Women," the first in the Derdon cycle of short stories.

"The Poor Men and Women" is one of three short stories Brennan produced that focuses on the figure of the vagrant, or beggar¹⁰³. A source of enduring interest in Brennan's fiction, young Maeve in "The Old Man and the Sea," for example, admits to being "fascinated" *SA* 23 by the old apple-seller who comes selling his wares; while the fictional Ellen in "The Beginning

¹⁰³ A fourth story, "The Joker" (Dec. 1952), one of Brennan's American-based fictions that does not form part of a definite sub-category, was the first of her short stories to be published by *The New Yorker*, only months after "The Poor Men and Women" appeared in *Harper's Bazaar*. It, too, features a beggar – a "stranger [who comes] unbidden" *RG* 66 – who is taken in and fed, if for altogether different reasons than Rose's.

of a Long Story” evinces a similar fascination with the rain-drenched man who comes asking for an old pair of boots. Yet, the depiction of vagrants in “The Poor Men and Women” is especially significant, not least of all because it includes the only example of a begging woman, which, I contend, falls within the hag paradigm—or “sovereignty figure” (Moloney, 1996, p. 104)—of Irish nationalist rhetoric. This, in turn, initiates a further dimension of diaspora space within Brennan’s Dublin stories, and a more clearly defined, if subversive, connection to Celtic/Revivalist mythic-imagery than may at first appear to be the case.

The “Great Mother” in Celtic/Irish mythology, goddess and mother(-Ireland) who goes by many names—“a woman, a womb, a cave, a cow, a Rosaline, a sow, a bride, a harlot, and of course the gaunt Hag of Beare” (Edna O’Brien *quoted in* Bailey, 1976, 0:00:52)—may be traced back at least six-hundred years to the fourteenth-century Yellow Book of Lecan—the “Lebor Buide Lecain” (Terry, 2018, p. 33)—and the earliest incarnation of the hag, or *Cailleach* (Irish Gaelic for ‘witch’), better known in Irish literature (early and revivalist) as the *Sean Bhean Bhocht*, meaning ‘poor old woman’ (MacKillop, 1990, pp. 274, 385). In her earliest goddess form, this wailing or crying woman—“bean chaointe” (Terry, 2018, p. 34)—“enters a ‘divine madness,’” writes Margaret Terry, “through voice and body [helping] the entire community [to] express their grief” (p. 34). As the “gaunt” Hag of Beare, Ireland is an ancient witch or crone, bereft of her youth and the many lovers she has lost, as recounted in the mediaeval poem, “The Lament of the Hag (or Nun) of Beare” (Hull, 1927, pp. 226-227)¹⁰⁴. Her invocation further connotes old age and visions of winter: “There is scarce a little place today / That I can recognise; / What was on flood / Is all on ebb” (p. 227).

According to Eleanor Hull, native folk tradition surrounding the Hag/Cailleach had largely disappeared by the turn of the twentieth century. Yet, in the mould of Cathleen ni Houlihan (*Caitlín Ní Uallacháin*), the hag, or poor old woman of the roads, would be given new life in the eponymous play by Lady Gregory and W. B. Yeats, in 1902 (Hull, 1927, p. 236). As the “sovereignty figure” (Moloney, 1996, p. 104) and *Sean Bhean Bhocht*, Cathleen is “the uncastrated mother who bestows unlimited gifts” (p. 116). Closely associated with the (failed) 1798 Rebellion, she represents within Irish nationalist ideology, writes Tymoczko, “the coming of the French, the decay of the Orange, the rising of the yeomen, and the freedom of Ireland”

¹⁰⁴ The word *Cailleach* (witch) derives from the old Irish “*caille*,” meaning hood or veil. This allows, writes Hull, for the dual meaning: “an old woman with a hood [or] a nun who has taken the veil” (1927, p. 226).

(1994, p. 104). Cathleen wanders from house to house in search of stout-hearted young men to help her to reclaim the “four beautiful green fields,” which have been stolen from her by the “many strangers” in her house (Yeats, 2011, pp. 11, 10).

The concise, one-act play depicts Cathleen Ni Houlihan’s visit to the Gillane household near Killala, Co. Mayo, in 1798, squarely situating the action at the heart of the rebellion led by the United Irishmen in collusion with the French (Keane, 1988, p. 5). Cathleen enters the play a poor old woman, but leaves a young girl—the erstwhile betrothed Michael Gillane in tow—with, what we are told (but, importantly, do not see for ourselves) is, “the walk of a queen” (Yeats, 2011, p. 19). Yeats, in collaboration with Augusta Gregory, wrote the iconic role for his constant muse Maud Gonne, Irish revolutionary figure and sometime actress. Yet, Cathleen is arguably more devouring than nurturing or disenthraling as mother(-Ireland), acquiring vampiric qualities through Gregory’s intervention, who viewed Gonne’s influence upon Yeats as similarly parasitical, and taking for her inspiration the Gothic fictions of Irish writers Bram Stoker and Joseph Sheridan LeFanu (Merritt, 2001, p. 644; Terry, 2018, p. 70). In the course of the play, Cathleen tells the Gillanes: “They that [have] red cheeks will have pale cheeks for my sake” (Yeats, 2011, p. 16), evincing the Hag’s vampiric qualities, and extending the allegory of mother(-Ireland) as bringer of death. Cathleen “transforms into a young queen” writes Terry, through the same “blood sacrifice [...] required by vampires” (2018, p. 69). A “Celtic Kali” (Keane, 1988, p. 17), she becomes “the negative mother-goddess with a disturbing yet enabling power, the power of violence” (Moloney, 1996, p. 104). Indeed, Hull’s account of the Hag of Beare records the Cailleach’s reputation in the western province of Connaught at the turn of the century, as “very bad [...] in that district [where] They used to tell of all the fine young men that she had put to death” (1927, p. 236)¹⁰⁵.

It is this rendering of the ‘poor old woman,’ as desirous and devouring mother-figure, which resonated with Joyce, whose depiction of the hag as milkwoman in the opening section of *Ulysses* is clearly more pejorative than panegyric (Moloney, 1996, p. 104):

“He watched her pour into the measure and thence into the jug rich white milk, not hers.
Old shrunken paps. [A] witch on her toadstool, her wrinkled fingers quick at the

¹⁰⁵ Hull’s account, received from a parish priest on one of the Aran Islands, and embellished by a contemporary translation of Douglas Hyde’s, indicates the Hag of Beare’s (Cailleach Bheara) motivation as driven by a kind of maniacal ego, rather than any need to feed from the life-force of men; nevertheless, her insatiable hunger for mastery over all men leads to the deaths of innumerable young men in the local district (1927, pp. 236-243).

squirting dugs. [S]ilk of the kine and poor old woman, names given her in old times. A wandering crone” (Joyce, 1979, p. 13).

The “sovereignty” ascription here seems obvious, insofar as she is clearly named – “poor old woman,” “crone,” “hag”; and, as milk-giver, she is further aligned with the image of mother—Great Mother and Mother-Ireland. Yet, Joyce’s hag seems incapable of Cathleen’s rejuvenation: it is not *her* “shrunk paps” that produce the milk, but the “dugs” of the “patient cow” she exploits, itself a synecdoche for Ireland. By siphoning the cow’s milk in place of her own, it is as though the sovereignty paradigm has turned in on itself, scavenging the remains of its own metaphor in the hope of a last reprieve. The milkwoman is clearly a repudiation of what Joyce saw as “Lady Gregory’s ‘drivel’” (Moloney, 1996, p. 105). As sovereignty figure, she has been so thoroughly dethroned that she manages to mistake the Irish language for French, and the accent of the Englishman who speaks it to her as belonging to the West of Ireland (Joyce, 1979, p. 13). Moloney further notes that, in the ‘Proteus’ chapter of *Ulysses* “[Joyce] associates queens and hags with Queen Victoria in a counter-trope to Yeats’s famous myth of the old woman with the ‘walk of a queen’” (1996, p. 109). Without the possibility of either rejuvenation or a redemptive metamorphosis, the distinctly *unqueenly* hag/milkwoman “represents a ‘dead’ and destructive Gaelic Ireland only useful to [Joyce] as a joke” (Tymoczko *quoted in* Moloney, 1996, p. 104). She is, writes Keane, “sterile,” an incarnation of “Ireland incapable of being rejuvenated” (1988, p. 58). Yet, if Joyce’s hag/sovereignty figure, conceived in the years immediately prior to independence, could still be perceived as retaining a limited function within Irish nationalist rhetoric, Brennan’s Cathleen—here, literally, the “poor woman”—has arguably become a figure of still greater abjection, of obsolescence even, wandering the roads of post-Independent, Free-State Ireland, in the conspicuous company of a wild and mutinous daughter¹⁰⁶.

In a break with convention, the woman who calls to Rose Derdon’s door is young, though still “bedraggled, servile, and not far from witless” *SA 140*. More curious still, she is hardly described thereafter, except as an adjunct to the antics of the little girl she brings with her,

¹⁰⁶ In “The Old Man of the Sea,” the first of the three poor-vagrant stories, the young Maeve recalls an unfortunate apple seller who calls to the house repeatedly – much to her mother’s chagrin – noting of what was presumably a true account, “I was nine [at the time]” *SA 21*. This situates the narrative in 1926, or sometime in the years immediately following Independence, after the Irish Civil War (1922-1923). Although “The Poor Men and Women” and the other five Derdon stories are in essence undated (and ‘un-datable’), it seems reasonable to conjecture that both stories, thematically comparable as they are, would likely have been set in in the same era.

whose frenetic activities direct much of the action that follows in the brief *mise en abyme*. “The little girl was eight,” we read, “very small for her age, with a sly, worn face that had great spirit in it. She wore heavy boy’s boots on her little feet, and no stockings” (p. 140). From the outset, the “ragged” (p. 143) child appears impudent, ungovernable, and almost unresponsive to her mother’s violent hand and caustic tongue¹⁰⁷. She is curious and acquisitive in equal, near-insatiable, measure. “What’s up there?” she asks; her opening salvo. “This is mine!” she manages to say eight times in the space of less than three pages of text (p. 143). Yet, when her mother, either from exhaustion or disinterest, slaps her “sharply in the face,” (p. 141)—“[it] was blotched with the marks of her mother’s hand” (p. 141)—she appears insensible to the pain, “daring her [...] to give her another slap” (p. 141). If, in the few short years since her appearance as the milkwoman in *Ulysses*, the poor old woman/*Sean Bhean Bhocht* has succeeded in driving the “many strangers” (Yeats, 2011, p. 10) from her house, (and regaining possession of three of her four beautiful fields), she is clearly no less “bedraggled” *SA 140*, no less dejected in the post-Independent Ireland¹⁰⁸. She wanders still, exhausted, with little or no capacity to care for, to protect, or to offer love to her recalcitrant progeny, born of the fire and fury of rebellion. This injured little girl, the narrative implies, “[with] neither love nor shame in her smile” (p. 143), whose “fingers were like twigs, [whose] eyes were sharp as thorns” (p. 143), is the broken, loveless child of the new Ireland. Significantly, when offered milk by Mrs. Derdon, she refuses it, choosing to drink tea instead as an equal of the two women, neither of whom offers a satisfactory model of mother(hood).

Having raced upstairs to see Father John’s old room, the two women find her, face pressed to the bedroom window, staring out at the street below.

“There’s the gate we came in at,” she cried to her mother, beckoning excitedly.

[...] “And there we are, Mam, coming up the street. Look at us out there.”

A little girl with long shining ringlets and a pink coat walked up the terrace, and with her a lady wearing a fur scarf on her shoulders.

[...] “The lady there is you, Mam, and that’s me with the coat and curly hair.” [...]

“Go on with you,” she said, smiling sheepishly at Mrs. Derdon.

¹⁰⁷ Curiously, Mrs. Derdon’s own hands are described as “violent” *SA 128*, in the opening paragraph of the story.

¹⁰⁸ The “four beautiful green fields” (Yeats, 2011, p. 11), whose loss Cathleen Ni Houlihan bemoans in Yeats’s play, represent Ireland’s four provinces. The 1920 Government of Ireland Act established six of the nine counties that make up the northern province (Ulster) as a distinct and separate territory to the rest of Ireland (consisting of the other three provinces and the three remaining Ulster counties). Since 1921, and the passing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, Northern Ireland has remained a part of the United Kingdom (Pelling, 2002, pp. 71-72).

The child pulled violently and cried out with temper.

“There we are!” she screamed. “Look at us out there.”

“Shut up your mouth [...] the mother cried, giving her a hard slap. The child grinned quickly up at them before the tears had gone back into her eyes *SA 142*.

If there is a sense here that the child is blind to the divisions of class and social position that distinguish her from the ringleted girl on the street below, or indeed from the cosseted boy who once occupied the room from which she now looks, there is yet the inescapable fact of her frantic covetousness; the child who owns nothing but claims everything she sees, offers little hope for the new Ireland but the rapacious want that would come to define the country in the decades that followed its foundation, substantiating Macardle’s prescient claim that, “scarcely any body (*sic*) is interested in anything but money and factories” (*quoted in Bourke, 2004, p. 131*). Of potentially greater significance is the ironic play on the old woman/hag’s transformation. As the queen in *Ulysses* is no more idealised than in the corpulent, colonial figure of Queen Victoria, in Brennan’s account the hag transformed is less queen than middle-class housewife. Indeed, the poor woman/(*Sean*) *Bhean Bhocht* may be, the narrative implies, indistinguishable from a “lady” clothed in fur, yet by implication she (Ireland) has merely supplanted one (foreign) middle-class with another (native) one; and in place of a sovereign dominion, she has inherited an empire of *things*, emblematised by the lady’s fur scarf, the countless objects the little girl has already laid claim to, and in the end the “elaborate brooch of gold and blue enamel,” that mother and child—both “experienced conspirator[s]”—obtain from the unsparing Mrs. Derdon *SA 143*.

“Mrs. Derdon regretted her brooch before she had the door well shut on the two hastening backs. It was a brooch that had come to her at her mother’s death [...] Some of her own earliest memories depended on it” (p. 143).

By accepting the brooch, the hag—now, literally left begging for jewels—further debases her sovereign birthright, whilst severing the maternal cord between Mrs. Derdon and her own mother, thereby enacting a metaphorical, and paradoxical, castration of motherhood¹⁰⁹. After the poor woman’s visit, we read, “[t]he only thing remaining to [Mrs. Derdon] out of her past was the patchwork quilt on the bed above” *SA 143*. Rose Derdon has been robbed of her

¹⁰⁹ Moloney contends that Joyce’s hag “corresponds to the psychological concept that [...] the hag represents the child’s ability to dominate or castrate the mother” (1997, pp. 105-106). Like Joyce’s, then, Brennan’s hag – enacting a similar castration – further perverts the image of Caitlín Ní Uallacháin as the “uncastrated mother” (p. 106).

inheritance, cultural and material, by the very agent that promised it, by the “bestow[er of] unlimited gifts” (Moloney, 1996, p. 116).

According to Margaret Terry:

“By reclaiming his identity through the dignity of these stories and traditions, the native becomes invigorated towards a new nationalism. The storyteller figures prominently, in that she or he becomes the repository of the new nationalism” (2018, p. 59).

Yet, like Joyce, Brennan appears to be working against the familiar trope. Denuding nationalist mythologies of the dissembling queen, Brennan’s poor woman wanders still after Independence, burdened by the recalcitrant issue of her inglorious victory, who will not, and conceivably cannot, be brought to heel¹¹⁰.

It is not within the ambit of this thesis to conjecture to what, if any, extent Brennan’s relationship with her own mother might have informed the complex mother-child depictions in “The Poor Men and Women.” Yet, it is perhaps worth considering the portrait that Bourke presents of Brennan’s attitude towards her mother, and the notable efforts she made, through her writing, to understand her after her death. Bourke writes of the story “A Young Girl Can Spoil Her Chances” that, while much of its “raging bitterness [...] is directed at mothers [generally],” the author’s fury and impatience seems pointedly aimed at her own mother, while Maeve herself would go on to pursue, “a life that [would] abandon all pretence of following in her footsteps as quiet homemaker or gardener” (2004, pp. 145-146). It would seem to be unwise, however, to view Brennan’s relationship with her mother as anything more (or less) than ambiguous. After her death, she obsessed in knowing “what [her mother] was” (p. 236). For all their monstrous qualities, Brennan’s fictional mothers (Rose Derdon, Delia Bagot, Mary Lambert, etc.) possess an unbounded capacity to care, if only for their animals, for the splendour of a rose, or the plants they tend without and within the home. Brennan was able to write of her mother, in a letter to William Maxwell: “She gave me everything, and now she has given me the city” (p. 233). For Brennan, this was significant. It implies that her claim to the city (as *flâneuse*) comes through her mother, an inheritance from the woman whose “garden [was] unimaginably beautiful,” who sacrificed her youth for a better Ireland than the one she (and all Irishwoman) got, and who sacrificed Ireland itself, her home, imperfect as it was, to

¹¹⁰ Not without precedent, however, her most explicit abjection occurs, according to Keane in *Finnegan’s Wake*; in the guise of Kate Strong, Cathleen has become a “scavenger and widow wheeling a ‘dungcart’ to her ‘filthdump’”; a “raving slut / Who keeps the till” (1988, p. 3).

offer her children a different world view, and perhaps the chance of freedom that she had hoped for but never knew herself.

Power and Incest

The first three words of “The Poor Men and Women”—“The Priest’s mother” *SA 128*—establish Rose’s subordinate and nameless position within a narrative that is ostensibly broken, digressive even, unified only by the titular poor man and woman who call to the door for alms of one kind or another. “[She] was distracted with herself,” the sentence continues; “wakeful, impenitent, heated in every part by a wearisome discontent that had begun in her spirit very young” (p. 128). The opening sentence unequivocally sets the febrile tone of much of what follows. Yet, the narrative takes a surprising shift only a few paragraphs in, departing from the linear account promised in the opening lines to a kind of montage of memories, that includes an evening spent gazing at the late-afternoon sky from a chair beside her bedroom window, two separate visits from a begging man and woman, and a fraught encounter between Mrs. Derdon and her son John, not long after he has left home to join the priesthood. It is to this encounter that I wish to turn now, since, viewed as a discrete episode, it presents an interesting intersection of the critical themes of bodily fragmentation, religion, and the devouring (incestuous) mother in Brennan’s Irish fiction.

Although he is mentioned in three of the six Derdon stories (and originally featured in a fourth, “Family Walls”) Father John—Rose and Hubert Derdon’s only child—makes his only appearance in “The Poor Men and Women”¹¹¹. What starts out as an impromptu social call, quickly descends into a delirium of tension that is both hostile and sexual by turns. The mother’s molestations begin the moment John enters. “She shouted joyfully at the sight of him,” we read, before “[beginning] to unbutton his raincoat with her accustomed rough anxiety. He let her pull him out of it, and he struck lightly at her, laughing” *SA 137*. The chaotic emotions here—joy, anxiety, and laughter, coupled with a just-perceptible carnality—suggests a destabilising of power dynamics (Diplacidi, 2018, p. 250): It is John who submits to his mother’s assaultive hands [“her dry violent hands” *SA 128*], immediately indicating a

¹¹¹ Bourke notes that, in early drafts of “Family Walls,” “John’s personality is more clearly drawn than anywhere in Maeve’s published work,” and it is to him, not Rose, that Hubert directs his “instinctive and memorable recoil [...] ‘When John appeared in the doorway Hubert felt such dislike that he smiled’” (2004, p. 262). Yet, by the time it finally appeared in *The New Yorker*, John had been completely excised from the story.

subversion of gendered (sexual) interplay, and an imbrication of violence and desire with sexual expression.

Moreover, Rose's impiety is immediately apparent: she notes that his priestly clothes gave him "a bad air," and that "[h]e was not the same" *SA 128*. Indeed, in a later story, we are told that John "had vanished forever into the commonest crevasse in Irish family life—the priesthood" (p. 148)¹¹². When John goes upstairs "to wash his hands" (p. 128), Rose follows him, suddenly appearing "close behind him and [taking] his hand" *SA 138*. It is the second reference to hands in a story manifestly obsessed by them; indeed, there is such a superfluity of hands in "The Poor Men and Women," that the word appears (singular or plural) an astonishing thirty-seven times, evincing a morbid fascination with the violence they are capable of sustaining and/or inflicting—so, the ragged little girl's face appears, "blotched with the marks of her mother's hand" *SA 141*, while the old man exhibits his "deformed" hand, "maimed, crushed into a hard veiny lump, the skin of it cured a tender red, a boiled colour" *SA 135*, which is "turned to flaming glass by the wet and cold" *SA 136*, as he stands begging at Rose's door. Hands are given prominence again as the acquisitive hands of the little girl, laying claim to everything she touches; and, at the end of the circuitous narrative, in the hand that Rose, compelled by her isolation, extends in friendship to the decrepit old man, who recoils, because "[h]e was too far gone in want" *SA 147*.

Yet, it is here, in the unsettling, tempestuous exchange between mother and son, that hands—"a 'perverse' metonymy of desire" (Buci-Glucksmann, 1994, p. 148)—are most visible, and arguably at their most violent.

"She had strong, dry *hands*; it was impossible to forget their grasp. She captured his limp *hand* and fell down on her knees to kiss it and force it with her mouth. She petted it along her cheeks, along the hard curve of her jaw, and into her neck, so that he could feel that warm hair springing stiff and strong above it, and the soft hollow of her flesh below. Out of this dream he snatched away and hurled on her, half in laughter.

'Mother, Mother, how often must I caution you. My *hands*. Mother, my *hands*.'

'Ah, Glory be to God, the consecrated *hands*,' she cried, covering her mouth with her fingers, mocking him with her dismay. She screamed with laughter, squaring back on the floor with her knees spread out and her eyes staring up from under a scalding water of pain and rage.

¹¹² "An Attack of Hunger," the second of the Derron stories, was published on Brennan's forty-fifth birthday, a full ten years after "The Poor Men and Women" *SA 357*.

‘I forgot about your *hands*, son. Wasn’t it naughty of me. Wasn’t it naughty. Such impertinence, touching the almighty *hands* of a priest. I know you dislike me to touch your precious *hands*. Oh, I know it very well.’

‘Not only you, Mother. Anyone, you know very well. A priest’s *hands*, as you know very well—’

‘Oh, I know, I know. I knew it before you were born. Don’t harp on it now. All I wanted was your blessing, John. That’s all, that’s all I wanted.’ She snapped at him pettishly, scrambling to her feet, very much exerted, brushing off her dress.

‘I’ll give you my blessing, Mother, a hundred blessings. There’s nothing I wouldn’t give you, if I had it to give. Do you want me to give you a blessing?’

She straightened like a housekeeper, with her *hands* under her chest. ‘Never mind about that, now,’ she said sharply. ‘But hurry yourself and come on down to the table.’

She came a step towards him.

She said, ‘Oh, love, what’s the matter with me. I’m all nerves. Don’t mind what I say.’
SA 138-139 (Italics, my own).

This extraordinary passage, which bears transcribing in full, illuminates the extent of Rose’s pathology, of the aberrant dynamic between mother and son, and of the arguably incestuous desires at play. Notable here is the corruption of traditional kinship roles, since John, as priest, acts as both son and Father (spiritual) to Rose, who in turn performs the dual role of mother and daughter. Rose’s sexual transgression therefore becomes a twofold repudiation of patriarchal authority—that of the father and son, and of the Catholic Church—and its persistent “anxieties over [...] female sexual agency” (Diplacidi, 2018, p. 251).

“[M]others are assumed incapable of assaulting their sons,” writes Jenny Diplacidi, “because ‘they lack the sexual equipment necessary for direct sexual agency or assault. Without a penis [they] are assumed to be the acquiescent objects, not the active agents, of sexual acts’” (2018, p. 248.) And yet, Rose, in her capacity as “unnatural” mother (McKinnon, 1995, p. 40), clearly effects a violation of the body—hers and her Father/son’s—through a familiar (bodily) fragmentation that parallels the mental disintegration experienced by Delia Bagot in “The Carpet with the Big Pink Roses on It,” and which, here, spawns the aberrant act of filial molestation¹¹³.

As Buci-Glucksmann avers, “‘women have no name’ [but the] pile[d-] up forenames shaped by male desire” (1994, p. 115). In the role of “The Priest’s mother,” *SA 128*, wife (Mrs. Derdon), and (spiritual) daughter, Rose too clearly remains nameless. A “*Namenlose*”, she is

¹¹³ The litany of body parts – “hand,” “knees,” “mouth,” “cheeks,” “jaw,” “neck,” “hair,” “flesh” *SA 138* – in one short paragraph, echoes that of Delia’s lavishly corporeal description in “The Carpet with the Big Pink Roses on It” (see p. 101).

“‘without an essence’, ‘without identity’, ‘without a soul’, ‘non-logical’ [...] a non-subject” (p. 128)—and, Buci-Glucksmann might well have added, ‘without a home’ (1994, p. 115). The transgressive act, therefore, becomes one of naming desire, conceivably aligning Rose Derdon with the revolutionary-Biblical figure of Salome. By subverting “all divine, social [and] human law” to the expression of sexual desire, Rose too “[joins] a whole line of ‘excessive’, dangerous women” (p. 147). Indeed, by desecrating the priest’s hands, and subverting the maternal contract to her own sexual agency, Rose further enacts a symbolic dismemberment of the fetishised hands. As the severed head of John the Baptist becomes a “‘perverse’ metonymy of desire”, the Father/son’s hands, “detached from the living body [become] a fetish object of lack” (p. 115)—Rose’s lack of identity (*Namenlose*), her lack of agency; indeed, for the absolute inadequacy of her life, characterised by “want” as it is *SA 128, 147*. The perversion of gender and power dynamics, here, arguably mirrors that of the *Sean Bhean Bhocht*’s solipsistic desire for power, an empowerment (female) that seems to necessitate male death. By (di)splaying her genitals, Rose embodies the definitive “male fear-fantasy of the devouring goddess,” the Sheela-na-gig (“*Sile na gCíoh*” [Irish Gaelic]), another (divine) iteration of the hag/*Cailleach*, whose iconography sees her splaying “grotesquely large genitalia [to] reveal a cave-like womb entry” (Terry, 2018, pp. 70-71)¹¹⁴. The “scalding water of pain and rage” *SA 138* that accompanies Rose’s carnal display appears to similarly confound the sexual with the fertile¹¹⁵. If, as the text suggests, dismemberment from the male *qua* Father/son implies a loss of power/identity, the (unfulfilled) coital act—a distortion of childbirth—arguably implies an attempted subsumption of the same subject into the “cave-like womb” (birth canal), and consequently a repossession of lost agency. This image of suffocating desire is in fact taken to its logical conclusion later in the narrative cycle, when Rose becomes preoccupied with images of John’s death.

“It was more a vision than a daydream [...] [John] had not gone away at all, he had died. [...] In the second dream [Mrs. Derdon] visited his grave every day, and sat beside it for hours, and wore black, like a widow. When she cried, everybody sympathised with her [...] Everyone marvelled at her devotion when they saw her going to the grave

¹¹⁴ Comparing the figures of Salome and *Sile na gCíoh*, Keane writes of the “[F]in-de-siècle Decadance [of] Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley – meet[ing] the primordial world of Sheela-na-gig [and] Heaney’s ‘mouth devouring heads’” (1988, p. 20).

¹¹⁵ For more on the Sheela-na-gig as reclaimed feminist icon and fertility symbol, see Rachel Lynn Shanahan, 2015, pp. 24-29.

every day, rain, hail, sleet, or snow [...] even Hubert would hardly have the heart to reproach her for her long face” *SA* 158, 159.

While circumventing the facts (of his death,) Rose envisages a grave as a convenient surrogate for the absent son. The message is clear, however: it is better that John had died than joined the priesthood; death is preferable to the truth of her son’s volitional absence. A pseudo-“bean chaointe” (MacKillop, 1990, p. 34), or wailing woman, Rose valorises her grief by sacrificing her son, entering a “divine madness” (Terry, 2018, p. 34) that further aligns her with the sovereignty figure/Cathleen Ni Houlihan, since, through John’s death, she acquires public recognition, and a form of sanctioned visibility otherwise unavailable to her as a middle-class, middle-aged housewife.

Diplacidi notes that “mother–son incest [combines] the queerness of female desire with the queerness of male passivity and the queerness of incest [itself]” (2018, p. 250). Sexuality in Brennan’s writing is generally obscured, often stilted and, as in “The Poor Men and Women,” of a transgressive nature. The few discernible instances of female desire in her Irish-based fiction generally bespeak women’s subordination to the patriarchies of church and family, and to a lesser extent, the limited form of queer resistance the characters themselves embody. In “The Springs of Affection,” for example, Min Bagot’s conflicted attitude towards her younger brother Martin is characterised by a desire that is both covetous and, at times, vaguely incestuous. In spite of her hopes of becoming a teacher—she being “the one who helped her mother” *SA* 326—Min is “sentenced to a lifetime of sewing” (p. 326), whilst,

“[a]ll the chances in the family [went] to Martin because he was the boy, and because he had the best brains, and because he was the only hope they had of struggling up out of the poverty they lived in” (p. 327).

Yet, through her desire to *become* her brother, to enjoy the chances otherwise unattainable for women, Min finishes up simply desiring him, wearing Martin’s wedding ring after his death—“[o]n the fourth finger of her left hand” *SA* 320—and wasting her retirement regretting his lack of attention to her: “He could have taken a walk about the town with me, [she] thought. It would have set me up, in those days, to be seen with him, show off a bit” *SA* 344.

“The Rose Garden,” though ostensibly a stand-alone work of fiction, arguably belongs to the Derdon sequence of stories, since it can convincingly be argued that the principal characters, Mary and Dom Lambert, are in fact Rose Derdon’s parents, and that, by extension, the little girl depicted in the story, so beguiled by her father, and so thoroughly ravaged by his death, is

in fact Rose's younger, still-hopeful self. The more interesting, then, that it too should be troubled by what Bourke identifies as "the shadow of incest" (Bourke, 2004, p. 214). Indeed, Bourke's biography includes a lengthy excision from the final published text of "The Rose Garden," made at editor William Maxwell's behest. Without it, she writes, "the story's preoccupation with sex is less overt" (p. 213). The deleted passage—"nearly one fifth of the total" (p. 210)—hints at a possible sexual liaison between the younger Mary and her Father when, aged thirteen, he took her to a lake, the enormity of which she had not been prepared for, and which, when frozen over:

"She wanted to feel [...], to stroke [...] until it burned her, and then, maybe, to secretly poke a hole [...], and lay her face down alongside the hole, and spy down into the cold and dark at the smothering there below. [T]he thought of the powerful water, swelling and straining, bursting inside its tight binding sheet, maddened her, and she wanted to speak about it, but there was no one to speak to" (p. 213).

In spite of the excision, the published text retains a number of sexual references, some more oblique than others. The cloistered convent garden that Mary so desperately covets is described as:

"Red with too many roses, red as all the passionate instruments of worship, red as the tongue, red as the heart, red and dark, in the slow-gathering summertime, as the treacherous parting in the nuns' flesh, where they feared, and said they feared, the Devil might yet enter in" *RG 188*.

When Dom Lambert asks to be allowed to crouch by Mary's bed in the middle of the night, for fear of her father's dead body, still warm in the next room, she throws him her "great black skirt" *RG 193* to save him from the cold, eventually admitting him under the blankets beside her. She tells him how one of her father's lodgers had once come into her room in the dark of night, admitting: "I thought for a minute it was my father getting in the bed beside me, and then didn't I realise it was the [lodger]" (p. 193). Her astonishing acquiescence is repeated moments later when, responding to Dom's submission that it might well have been her father after all, she replies, "I'd have known him by the feel of the shirt he had on him. Anyway, my father hadn't that much interest in me" *RG 194*.

Despite the persistent suggestion of incest, "The Rose Garden" is, Bourke avers, "an astonishing assertion of female sexuality" (2004, p. 212). It presents a subversion of gendered roles at odds with (daughter) Rose's aberrant relationship to her son in "The Poor Men and Women", which is necessarily impossible to render in any more favourable terms than the

egregious abuse of power it appears to be. Mary Lambert is described as “solid,” “wide” and rancorous, to Dom’s “small,” “meek,” “anxious” nature *RG 186, 191*. A sexual liaison emerges between them not because Dom sheepishly climbs onto her bed during the night, but because, we read, “[Mary] had as much ordinary courage as any other human being” *RG 194*.

The upending of gender roles is given remarkable expression in the latter part of the narrative, when Mary, following a bitter exchange of words earlier that evening, physically takes Dom in her arms as they lie together in bed: His body grown “larger and heavier against her,”; Mary held him, we read,

“[feeling] herself filled with strength. [S]he felt strong and able enough to encircle the whole town, a hundred men and women. She could feel their foreheads and their shoulders under her hands, and she could even imagine that she saw their hands reaching out for her, as though they wanted her” *RG 201*.

Conclusion

Diplacidi notes that “[Gothic] models of sexuality and power [...] allow writers not merely to rearticulate, but also to literalise the political structures of oppression through incest” (2018, p. 247). It is my contention that Brennan’s hags—the many *Cailleach*-figures (mothers and spinsters) that people her Irish-based fiction—evinces the same destructive and vampiric qualities as those found within the sovereignty paradigm. A further dimension of diaspora space, Brennan’s devouring (divine) mothers arguably embody the parasitic force of nationalist ideology, which drained the life-force of a nation forged in the bloody years of her infancy, and which grew fat on the lifeblood of the children weaned on its jingoistic mythologies. The “shadow of incest” (Bourke, 2004, p. 214) that hangs over these texts betokens the misplaced hopes of a generation of Irishwomen, and the placeless dreams of the generations that followed. As Min Bagot confuses her desire for power with desire itself, so Mary Lambert’s (sexual) acquiescence is derived from a virulent need for possession: self-possession and the possession of others. And, in “The Poor Men and Women,” Rose Derdon too, in her manifest impotence, confounds the need for power with its abuse, the need for demonstrativeness with lechery, and the desire to retrieve that which has been lost, and lost irretrievably, with the urge for destruction.



References Cited:

- Abensour, L. (2013). Liminal space, manic writing. In *Psychotic Temptation* (pp. 136–152). Taylor & Francis Group.
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ed/detail.action?docID=1125210>
- Adorno, T. W. (2005). *Minima moralia: reflections on a damaged life* (E. F. N. Jephcott, Trans.). Verso.
- Ahmed, S. (2010). *The Promise of Happiness*. Duke University Press.
- Anzaldúa, G. (1999). *Borderlands =: La frontera* (2nd ed). Aunt Lute Books.
- Bachelard, G., Jolas, M., Danielewski, M. Z., & Kearney, R. (2014). *The Poetics of Space*. Penguin Publishing Group.
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ed/detail.action?docID=6042956>
- Bailey, D. (1976). *Mother Ireland* [Documentary; Digital]. BFI.
<https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-mother-ireland-1976-online>
- Bolick, K. (2016). *Spinster: Making A Life of One's Own* (Paperback). Corsair.
- Bourke, A. (2004). *Maeve Brennan: Homesick at the New Yorker*. Jonathan Cape [u.a.].
- Brah, A. (1996). *Cartographies of diaspora: contesting identities*. Routledge.
- Brennan, M. (1998). *The Springs of affection: stories of Dublin*. Houghton Mifflin.
- Brennan, M. (2000). *Rose Garden: Short Stories*. (Paperback). Counterpoint.
- Brennan, M. (2002). *The Visitor*. Atlantic.
- Brennan, M. (2013). *Bluebell: Erzählungen* (H.-C. Oeser, Trans.; 1. Aufl). Steidl.
- Brennan, M. (2016). *The Long-Winded Lady: Notes from The New Yorker* (Paperback). Counterpoint.
- Bromley, R. (2000). Introduction:: The Third Scenario. In *Narratives for a New Belonging* (pp. 1–16). Edinburgh University Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctvxcrp8n.5>
- Buci-Glucksmann, C. (1994). *Baroque Reason: The Aesthetics of Modernity* (Hardback). Sage Publ.
- Cahillane, L. (2016). *Drafting the Irish Free State Constitution*. Manchester University Press.
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ed/detail.action?docID=5719406>
- CONSTITUTION OF THE IRISH FREE STATE (SAORSTÁT EIREANN) ACT, 1922., (1921).
<https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1922/act/1/enacted/en/print>
- Cruise O'Brien, M. (1983). The Female Principle in Gaelic Poetry. In S. F. Gallagher (Ed.), *Woman in Irish Legend, Literature and Life*. Barnes and Noble.

- DiPlacidi, J. (2018). *Gothic incest: gender, sexuality and transgression*. Manchester University Press.
- Fogarty, A. (2002). The Horror of the Unlived Life: Mother-Daughter Relationships in Contemporary Irish Women's Fiction. In A. Giorgio (Ed.), *Writing Mothers and Daughters: Renegotiating the Mother in Western European Narratives by Women* (pp. 85–118). Berghahn Books.
- Foucault, M. (2012). *The Order of Things*. Taylor & Francis.
<http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=240649>
- Foucault, M., & Miskowiec, J. (1986). Of Other Spaces. *Diacritics*, 16(1), 22–27.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/464648>
- Gray, B. (2004). *Women and the Irish Diaspora*. Routledge.
- Constitution of Ireland, 25.5.2° (1937).
- Heineger, A. (2019). The British Empire's Lost Slipper: Dangerous Irish Cinderellas. In L. Brugué & A. Llompart (Eds.), *Contemporary Fairy-Tale Magic* (Paperback, Vol. 129, pp. 63–76). Brill.
- Herr, C. (1990). The Erotics of Irishness. *Critical Inquiry*, 17(1), 1–34.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1343723>
- Hull, E. (1927). Legends and Traditions of the Cailleach Bheara or Old Woman (Hag) of Beare. *Folklore*, 38(3), 225–254. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1256390>
- Ingman, H. (2007). *Twentieth-century fiction by Irish women: nation and gender*. Ashgate.
- Jackson, A. (2004). *Home rule: an Irish history, 1800 - 2000* (paperback ed). Phoenix.
- Joyce, J. (1979). *Ulysses*. Lerner Publishing Group.
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ed/detail.action?docID=5444999>
- Karim, K. H. (2003). *The media of diaspora*. Routledge.
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=93063>
- Keane, P. J. (1988). *Terrible Beauty: Yeats, Joyce, Ireland, and the Myth of the Devouring Female* (Hardback). University of Missouri Press.
- Kiberd, D. (2017). *After Ireland: writing from Beckett to the present* (Hardback). Head of Zeus.
- Knight, K. T. (2017). Placeless places: resolving the paradox of Foucault's heterotopia. *Textual Practice*, 31(1), 141–158. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2016.1156151>
- MacKillop, J. (1990). *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*. Oxford University Press.
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ed/detail.action?docID=431087>

- McKinnon, S. (1995). American Kinship/American Incest: Asymmetries in a Scientific Discourse. In S. Yanagisako & D. Carol (Eds.), *Naturalizing Power: Essays in Feminist Cultural Analysis* (p. 321). Routledge.
- McWilliams, E. (2013). *Women and exile in contemporary Irish fiction* (e-book). Palgrave Macmillan.
- McWilliams, E. (2014). “No Place Is Home—It Is as It Should Be”: Exile in the Writing of Maeve Brennan. *Éire-Ireland*, 49(3–4), 95–111. <https://doi.org/10.1353/eir.2014.0015>
- McWilliams, E. (2016). ‘A sort of Rathmines version of a Dior design’: Maeve Brennan, Self-Fashioning and the Uses of Style. *Women: A Cultural Review*, 27(1), 42–61. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09574042.2015.1122488>
- Merritt, H. (2001). “Dead Many Times”: “Cathleen ni Houlihan,” Yeats, Two Old Women, and a Vampire. *The Modern Language Review*, Vol.96((3)), p.644-653.
- Moloney, C. (1996). The Hags of “Ulysses”: The “Poor Old Woman,” Cathleen Ni Houlihan, and the Phallic Mother. *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.34((1/2)), p.103-120.
- Murray, T. (2017). Joyce, Dubliners and diaspora. *Irish Studies Review*, 26(1), 98–110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09670882.2017.1412279>
- Murray, T. (2018). Rafferty’s Return: Diaspora and Dislocation in Edna O’Brien’s “Shovel Kings.” In J. Devlin Trew & M. Pierse (Eds.), *Rethinking the Irish Diaspora: After The Gathering* (1st ed. 2018, pp. 229–246). Springer International Publishing : Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan.
- O’Connor, F. (2004). *The lonely voice: a study of the short story*. Melville House Pub.
- Palko, A. L. (2010). From The Uninvited to The Visitor: The Post-Independence Dilemma Faced by Irish Women Writers. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 31(2), 1–34. <https://doi.org/10.1353/fro.2010.0008>
- Pelling, N. (2002). *Anglo-Irish Relations 1798-1922*. Taylor and Francis.
- Rogers, D. (2013). The Poetics of Cartography and Habitation: Home as a Repository of Memories. *Housing, Theory and Society*, 30(3), 262–280. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14036096.2013.797019>
- Rushdie, S. (2006). Imaginary Homelands. In G. Griffiths, H. Tiffin, & B. Ashcroft (Eds.), *The Post-colonial Studies Reader* (e-book, pp. 428–434). Taylor & Francis.
- Scheper-Hughes, N. (2001). *Saints, Scholars, and Schizophrenics: Mental Illness in Rural Ireland* (20th anniversary ed., rev.expanded). University of California Press.

- Schjeldahl, P. (n.d.). *Edward Hopper and American Solitude*. The New Yorker. Retrieved August 25, 2020, from <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/06/08/edward-hopper-and-american-solitude>
- Shanahan, R. L. (2015). *Grotesque Sheela-na-gigs? A Feminist Reclaiming of Borders in "The Spirit of Woman" Posters* [Master's Thesis]. University of Colorado.
- Terry, M. M. (2018). *Channeling Cathleen: Crossing the Threshold from Mother Ireland to Spinster Sean Bhean Bhocht* [Doctoral Thesis]. Drew University.
- Tymoczko, M. (1994). *The Irish Ulysses*. University of California Press.
<https://www.degruyter.com/isbn/9780520330245>
- Walter, B. (2013). Personal lives: narrative accounts of Irish women in the diaspora. *Irish Studies Review*, 21(1), 37–54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09670882.2012.759711>
- Wan-lih Chang, A. (2015). A Woman Alone: The Depictions of Spinster in Irish Women's Short Stories. *Estudios Irlandeses*, 10, 44–57. <https://doi.org/10.24162/EI2015-4924>
- Yagoda, B. (2000). *About town: the New Yorker and the world it made* (1. publ). Duckworth.
- Yeats, W. (2015). EASTER 1916. *The Poetry Ireland Review*, 116, 54–55.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26509660>
- Yeats, W. B. (2011). *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* (Digireads.com).
<http://www.vlebooks.com/vleweb/product/openreader?id=none&isbn=9781420942224>
- Zipes, J. (2012). *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: The Cultural and Social History of a Genre*. Princeton University Press.

Chapter Three:

*Manic Space**Introduction*

Madness looms large in much of Brennan's Irish-based fiction, accounting for a great deal of its magnetism, and its ineffable power, or what Bourke cites as "the reckless despair that seems to lie behind" its searing portraits of resentment, loneliness, anger and hurt (2004, 263). An excrescence of (Irish) diaspora space, madness gives rise to a space of relentless incoherence, a space as manic and intractable as the space of the text itself, or the corpus of the feminine body, which Walter Benjamin saw as "the other side of madness," (*quoted in* Buci-Glucksmann, 1994, p. 139). Deeply embedded in the themes of post-coloniality, manic space is the shadow-side of diaspora space, and a corollary of what Paul Delaney cites as the "shame and schizophrenia [of] the colonial condition" (2003, p. 193). Tacitly acknowledged by Henri Lefebvre—"[e]ven illness and madness are supposed by some specialists to have their own peculiar space" (1991, p. 8)—the embodied space of madness looms large in Ireland's colonial past, and—following the War of Independence in the first decades of the twentieth century—its more recent post-colonial history. Lefebvre avers that, "physical space has no 'reality' without the energy that is deployed within it" (1991, p. 13); indeed, the socio-political space of the newly constituted Irish state was arguably suffused with an "energy" of psychosocial malaise—"the madness of death" (Buci-Glucksmann, 1994, p. 147)—which inevitably attended the events of a decade of revolution that culminated in the Irish Civil War (1922-'23) (Jackson, 2004). According to Delaney, the newly-partitioned state (of the North-South divide) engendered a coetaneous split in the Irish identity, such that, after the war:

"The island of Ireland was to remain culturally and politically sundered, with its indeterminate and imagined boundaries continuing to shift between the Thirty-Two

County nation and the Twenty-Six County state. Such ambivalence helped to encourage an enduringly ‘schizoid’ model of identity” (2003, p. 211).

This ‘schizoid’ identity is arguably inscribed within much of Brennan’s Dublin fiction, notably the semi-fictional accounts of her childhood, in which Ailbhe McDaid discerns a potent legacy of conflict. She writes that the Brennans’ concern over young Derry’s health in “The Clever One”—“[R]emember when you were six or seven and almost got St Vitus’s dance?” *SA* 57—is symptomatic of “early twentieth-century anxiety around the mental health of Irish people, primarily women and children, during civil and violent unrest” (pp. 83-84). McDaid goes on to adduce Robert Brennan’s “ghostly and slight” presence (p. 86) as a further symptom of the prevailing social dis-order—“deftly summed up,” she writes, “in Robert’s utterance in the final lines of ‘The Lie’: “‘What’s going on around here now?’ my father asked, bewildered” (2003, pp. 86-87).

Manic space is a contested space, as diaspora space itself is contested (Brah, 2005, p. 205). Despite the evidence in favour of a routinely embodied mania in post-colonial Irish writing, little has been written on the subject of madness in Irish fiction—less still on that of madness in Irish diaspora writing¹¹⁶. What has emerged, however, is a recent body of work on madness in Afro-Caribbean diaspora writing (notably women’s writing). In the absence of an adequate body of intrinsically Irish source material, it is to these works that I have turned in writing the present chapter. Yet, in making use of such sources, I am conscious of a possible intersection in the occurrence of madness within both Afro-Caribbean and Irish subalternity. As an Irishwoman—albeit a (white) middle-class Irishwoman—born a subject of the British Empire, Brennan can conceivably be situated within a subaltern tradition that arguably assimilates a great many contemporary Irish writers, including Kate O’Brien, Edna O’Brien, and John McGahern¹¹⁷.

¹¹⁶ Geraldine Fogarty (2009) has produced an interesting work on madness in early Irish fiction, while Ian Miller (2015) and Damien Brennan (2018) have both written about clinical madness in the Irish race. The most recent scholarship, however, has been produced on diaspora writers in the Afro-Caribbean and Asian-American cultures, and it is upon this literature that I have depended in my research.

For further reading, see: *Madness in Anglophone Caribbean Literature* (2018), ed. Bénédicte Ledent, Evelyn O’Callaghan, and Daria Tunca; *Madness in Blackwomen’s Diasporic Fictions* (2017), Caroline A. Brown, and Johanna X. K. Garvey; *Disturbers of the Peace: Representations of Madness in Anglophone Caribbean Literature* (2013), Kelly Baker Josephs.

¹¹⁷ Although it is not within the scope of this thesis to examine any such convergence, it should be noted that theorists including Bronwen Walter and David Lloyd have written extensively on the unique liminality of Irish subalternity (Walter, 2000; Lloyd, 2005).

Sarah Hardy and Caroline Wiedmer advocate an expansion in our understanding of space, “to include not just material spaces but discursive fields whose logic impacts the arrangements in which others find themselves” (2011, p. 8). Manic space, as I conceptualise it, is just such a ‘discursive field’, encompassing the spaces of madness—body, mind, home, nation—endemic to Brennan’s writing. Often insidious, manic space transcends classification (fiction and non-fiction), place (Ireland and America), and time, cutting through the fabric of the text to claim a space as distinct and important as any other in Brennan’s work.

Whilst Johanna X. K. Garvey upholds the “subversive potential” of madness, notably “in the postcolonial context,” becoming, she suggests, “a refusal of assimilation to order/sanity/control” (2017, p. 294), Caroline A. Brown sees “madness [as] a site of powerlessness and erasure that underscores women’s marginalization, not their sociopolitical agency” (p. 3). Indeed, whilst acknowledging the resistant potential of the characters’ normative ‘failures,’ I would echo Brown’s contention, particularly in relation to Brennan’s own experience of mental illness, that “[t]he woman on the street [is] not a metonym” (p. 4). Liliane Abensour notes of the ‘manic’ writing observed in some of her psychiatric subjects, “It never stops, it involves only here-and-now ‘actual-ness’ and it is an attempt at fighting against the gradual slipping away of the world” (2013, p. 213). In this way, Abensour’s account of manic writing accords with Doreen Massey’s understanding of space as, “always in the process of becoming”:

“[It] can never be that completed simultaneity,” she continues, “in which all interconnections have been established, in which everywhere is already [...] linked to everywhere else. There are always loose ends in space. It is always integrally time-space” (1999, pp. 283-284).

As is the case with many of Brennan’s *dis*-enchanted fables, the manic writer, “blocks off all temporality, which is [then] supplanted by the uninterrupted presence [...] of oneself and of the world” (Abensour, 2013, p. 213). Manic space is, therefore, out of time, yet at once deeply rooted in time; it is at all times “in the process of becoming” a moment in time (present), disjoined from, yet ever-contingent upon, the past. Just as the disillusioned protagonists of the *Derdon* and *Bagot* stories can neither escape the past nor bring themselves to acknowledge the present, so manic space itself appears to be caught in a circuit of palimpsestic presents, each as unsatisfactory as the one before. Although Brennan newly-incarnates the paradigmatic *home-space* of no. 48 Cherryfield Avenue, time and again she cannot help but yield the same

disconsolate result—no matter the family, no matter the story¹¹⁸. Taking account of the junction of individual and social circumstances, I wish to consider the sheer scale of madness in Brennan’s oeuvre as a function of, and an adjunct to, diaspora space.

Anastasia King inhabits manic space, when stripped of the accoutrements of civility, singing childish lyrics in the street at the end of *The Visitor* (2000). Brennan’s earliest known writing efforts, *The Visitor* foreshadows many of the themes of her later work, as Anastasia’s actions in the final pages betoken the cant that Brennan would continue to denounce, the normative principles she defied through her writing and in her personal life, and the tenuous line of reason she continued to straddle with ever-greater incaution in the decades that followed¹¹⁹. If anything, Anastasia’s fate, implied though it remains, makes clear the heavy price of moral probity in the (new) Ireland of the 1930s, when the outcome for a young, unmarried woman like Anastasia, who violates the social contract by facing down the pietistic conservatism represented by her grandmother and Noon Square itself, would likely have been worse than the forced exile she rails against at the novella’s end. Indeed, the complex “structures of madness” explored in *The Visitor*, give rise to what Brown posits as “the ultimate question: Who or what is (more) mad, the individual or the dysfunctional sociopolitical system creating the very classificatory systems [themselves]?” (2017, p. 8). At a time of great expansion in Ireland’s mental hospital system, Anastasia’s manic behaviour may well have left her vulnerable to psychiatric incarceration, such as that experienced by Brennan’s own aunt Tess, and indeed by Brennan herself in the latter part of her life (Brennan, 2018, p. 133; Bourke, 2004, p. 260).

Manic Antecedents

In the mid-1940s, when Brennan was drafting *The Visitor* (2000), Ireland’s mental hospitalisation rate was steadily climbing to an historic high that, once reached, would see the country ranked first in the world for psychiatric incarcerations, a title it would still hold more than a quarter of a century later in the mid-1970s, when Brennan’s long career at *The New Yorker* had effectively ended, and her own experience of psychiatric hospitalisation had well

¹¹⁸ Here, I conceptualise the notion of ‘home-space’ as that which comprises the home and garden, and the life and artefacts that occur therein.

¹¹⁹ For a discussion of Brennan’s editorial process in drafting the text that would later become *The Visitor*, see Chapter Four: Feminine Space pp. 192-197.

and truly begun (Brennan, 2018, p. 133; Scheper-Hughes, 2001, p. 24)¹²⁰. There is much disagreement over the contention that Ireland experienced a kind of epidemic of mental illness in the twentieth century, and which aspects of the country's recent (and potentially antecedent) history might have given rise to such a (theoretical) phenomenon (Scull, 1979; Robins, 1986; Brennan, 2014.) Ian Miller considers the deep "physical and psychological trauma" of Ireland's past, "the culling of its population during the Famine, mass emigration, [...] and deep socio-political tumult" (2015, p. 504), as possible factors contributing to an Irish epidemic, further noting that, "[m]edical researchers constantly highlight close links between [...] emigration and psychological disorder[s] and [between] civil conflict and mental distress" (p. 504). In his seminal study of Irish diaspora history, Donald Harman Akenson suggests that, after the Great Irish Famine (1845-1852), "Ireland became the most sexually repressed society in the modern world" (1993, p. 26)¹²¹. This, he conjectures, might have been a factor in the "extremely high rate of mental illness, particularly schizophrenia," observed in the Irish in the first half of the twentieth century (p. 26). Indeed, Nancy Scheper-Hughes, referring to psychiatric admission statistics from the mid-1970s, submits that,

"[one of the] most remarkable feature[s] of the Irish mental hospital population is its celibacy [...]. Eighty-two percent of all the patients are unmarried, [whilst] available epidemiological data indicate that the celibacy of Irish schizophrenics far exceeds that of schizophrenics in America" (2001, p. 138).

Of the pronounced expansion in Ireland's asylum numbers, Damien Brennan opines that, "[t]he complex economic interface between asylums and wider society [and] the wide-scale rise of a capitalist dynamic, both in the public realm and in the domestic family setting" might well have been contributory factors (2018, p. 135). The growth of cities alone, he avers, could not account for such an expansion in numbers; Rather, "the effects of the advent of a mature capitalist market economy and the associated ever more thorough-going

¹²⁰ Damien Brennan notes that, "by the mid-twentieth century Ireland had the highest rate of mental hospital bed utilisation in the world, the second and third highest rates being in the USSR and the US, respectively" (2018, p. 135).

¹²¹ Specifically, Akenson cites "the stem family system (which precluded subdivision of small farms) [...] and the high rate of marital fertility [that led to] a very high rate of emigration," amongst the principal deterrents to marital and non-marital love (1993, p. 26).

commercialization of existence” were possible factors underpinning the system’s sudden and expansive growth (Scull, *quoted in* Brennan, 2018, p. 135)¹²².

Amongst the most illuminating, if not plainly compelling of considerations, are the theories expounded by Akenson and, in particular, Scheper-Hughes, who adduce the statistics for Irish emigrant populations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, notably those of the Irish-Australian and Irish-American diasporas, in their teleological accounts of Irish mental illness. Psychiatric (and criminal) confinement rates in both countries, they argue, greatly exceeded those of the other immigrant and native populations (Akenson, 1993, p. 119). Scheper-Hughes cites admission statistics from New York State in particular, “showing excessively high admission rates of Irish immigrants to New York State hospitals at the turn of the century”(2001, p. 40), whilst Akenson notes that, “[in] the year 1911, and again in 1949-51, persons of Irish birth were found to have much the highest rate of mental hospitalization of any immigrant group” (1993, p. 119)—this, at a time when the Irish-born represented one in every five psychiatric inmates in the Australian states of Victoria and New South Wales, despite the fact of Irish immigrants numbering “less than [five] percent of the national population” (p. 119). These facts inevitably give rise to the questions: “[Did] the Irish have it coming and going, or rather going and staying? [Were] the Irish susceptible to schizophrenia [and] depression [...] wherever they live[d]?” (Scheper-Hughes, 2001, p. 143). Certainly, as Brenda Collins sees it, “Irish immigrant women carried their cultural baggage with them” (Collins *cited in* Akenson, 1993, p. 174)—and, indeed, there is little doubt that the Irish immigrant men who often accompanied them were ever (meant to be) excluded from Collins’s pronouncement¹²³. While Scheper-Hughes notes a marginal decrease in the “pathogenic stresses” (2001, p. 143) of Irish home life in the emigrant, much of her research would seem to contradict that contention, not least of all the data indicating that, “Irish vulnerability to mental illness has, in fact, crossed the Atlantic and that Irish immigrants and their descendants have psychiatric treatment rates far exceeding other ethnic groups in the United States”; much less that, “Canadian Roman Catholics of Irish descent have

¹²² It should be noted, however, that Brennan is essentially arguing against the “myth” of an Irish epidemic, and is eager to point out that the Irish asylum, institutionally-speaking, emerged in the early nineteenth century, “as a centrally administered national system,” before the more industrialised and modern(ising) Europe (2018, pp. 133-134). Miller, in turn, challenges what he sees as Brennan’s wholesale dismissal of “the biological and psychosocial fallout of [the] Irish historical [experience]” (2015, p. 504).

¹²³ According to Akenson, Irish immigrant women in the post-Famine period undertook their new-world journeys alone more often than not; the number of “[n]on-dependent women of marriageable age” accounting for more than half of all women who emigrated (in the 1870s) (1993, p. 173).

schizophrenia rates significantly higher than do non-Catholics of British descent” (2001, pp. 142-143).

Irrespective of possible causes, the numbers are axiomatic, in that the epidemiological data appear to support anecdotal if not empirical evidence of “Mad Ireland” (Auden, 1940) (Scheper-Hughes, 2001; Tracey, 2008; Fogarty, 2009; Miller, 2015). Just as Brennan herself suffered the devastation of mental illness (and, to a lesser extent, alcohol dependency), examples of manic space in her literature arguably correspond to the paradigmatic madness of the Irish at home and abroad, and are consilient with the concentric spheres of diaspora space. Moreover, the plurality of plausible explanations for the incidence of madness in the Irish (diaspora) is comparable to that of the instances of madness in Brennan’s fiction. The trauma of civil conflict and emigration were significant features of Brennan’s formative years, shaping the feelings of resentment and disillusionment that she, and many other Irish intellectuals—those “[p]eople who care[d] about thinking and reading,” as Macardle observed (Bourke, 2004, p. 131)—would come to experience in adulthood¹²⁴. Indeed, Bourke records Brennan’s “vitriol[ic]” attitude to the idea of “Irish nationalists ‘licking old wounds,’” (p. 148); conceivably a complement to fellow writer Sean O’Faolain’s later remarks about the Ireland that emerged post-independence:

“The kind of society that actually grew up [instead of a Republican form of society] was [one] without moral courage, constantly observing a self-interested silence [...] and in constant alliance with a completely obscurantist, repressive, regressive, and uncultivated church [...] a society in which there are blatant inequalities, and in which the whole spirit of ’16 has been lost” (*cited in* Lennon, 1967, 00:03:25).

Ailbhe McDaid cites a newspaper article which is roughly contemporaneous with the story “The Day We Got Our Own Back”: “If the present tension [...] continues for any length of time,” writes the author, “a large number of people in the city, especially women, would become nervous wrecks” (*quoted in* McDaid, 2019, pp. 83-84). Miller observes that, “[i]n contexts of conflict, the body—or at least its constituent parts—[seem] disposable; the emotional aspects of pain [require] stifling” (2016, p. 124). Indeed, such “legacies of conflict” and trauma are arguably in evidence in the very earliest of Brennan’s stories (McDaid, 2019)—in Mrs. Brennan’s disturbed laughter, in “The Day We Got Our Own

¹²⁴ In her interview with Kate Bolick, Yvonne Jerold, Brennan’s niece, notes: “[A]ll the family had mental scars form the violence of the time [...]” (2015, p. 270).

Back,” as she stands in the kitchen amidst the destruction wrought by “some unfriendly men [...] carrying revolvers” *SA* 37, through the ritual abnegation of the nuns’ bodies in “The Barrel of Rumours,” to the memory of fire that bedevils the very first of Brennan’s *New Yorker* stories, which McDaid interprets as “a tussle for authority with the father figure” (2019, p. 87), yet which clearly bespeaks a sense of urgent and encroaching danger.

To the extent that it is explored at all, sexuality in Brennan’s writing is implicit, secretive, and covetous. Sexual urges are abjured as a cause of shame, while sexuality itself is often sublimated into a desire for power. Characters in the Dublin stories are typically celibate, (voluntarily or involuntarily), whether priests—Father John Bagot, and the retired Bishop from Wexford; Nuns—the semi-fictional nuns from “The Barrel of Rumours,” “The Devil in Us,” and “Lessons, Lessons and then More Lessons,” or the fictional nuns from “The Rose Garden,” and *The Visitor*; They are spinsters—Min Bagot and Mary Ramsey; Bachelors—Charles Runyon, (potentially, Uncle Matt); And the many husbands and wives trapped in sterile, undemonstrative marriages, of whom Delia Bagot and Rose Derdon are the chief, but not the only, examples. The few (contrasting) examples of potentially demonstrative, loving relationships are complicated either by a troubling acquiescence, or the certainty of failure, which invariably takes the form of precipitous death(s), as in the examples of Mr & Mrs. Briscoe in “The Bohemians”, or Dom Lambert in “The Rose Garden.”

There is, moreover, a self-conscious, almost fetishistic attitude to commodities in many of the Dublin stories, which frequently dwell on the material possessions within the home—carpets, a new sofa, wallpaper, tiling, cut-glass vases, *etc.*—to which the characters, notably women *qua* mothers, are in thrall. Indeed, home itself, immutable cynosure of the narrator’s attentions, becomes something of a cell-like “*leprosarium*”—Foucault’s locus of confinement (2006, p. 71; Brennan, 2018, p. 134)—or the kind of ‘anchorhold’ described in chapter two, from which the characters are either unable, or unwilling, to escape¹²⁵.

In this section, I wish to demonstrate the interconnection of madness and diaspora space in Brennan’s writing, to show that, as Scheper-Hughes submits, “coming and going, or rather going and staying” (2001, p. 143), the protagonists exist in a manic space, which is to say a space of madness, physical and psychological, delimited by the spaces of body, home, and the “space of social order,” of which the characters themselves are invariably, painfully conscious

¹²⁵ See chapter two of this thesis, “Diaspora Space,” p. 89.

In his magnum opus on the *History of Madness*, Foucault positions the mediaeval leprosarium within a “landscape of the moral universe [and] the physical geography of haunted places” (2006, p. 71).

(Crampton and Elden, 2007, p. 72). The scars of civil conflict, and puritanical attitudes to sexual and social freedom, are writ large upon their lives, betrayed in the nervous shift of a hand, an ambiguous smile, or in one instance, in the “hysterical silence” that Hubert Derdon hears coming through the wall of the neighbouring house *SA 179*. The physical (domestic) space of home becomes a cell, or enclosure; its walls, frontiers that mark the boundary between reason and paranoia, illusion and reality. Trapped within the home, Brennan’s characters—women especially—experience symptoms of nervous illness that in many cases mirror those of Irish psychiatric patients affected by the *anomie* of the stagnant and pietistic social order of mid- to late-twentieth century Ireland.

The Poor, Natural Mouth

Scheper-Hughes has remarked upon the rural Irish “preoccupation with matters of ritual and sexual purity:

“[It] is often expressed through a rigid vigilance over bodily boundaries [...] a high degree of anxiety over both what goes in and what comes out of the body [and] Ambivalence toward ‘giving out’ or ‘letting go’” (2001, p. 210).

Brennan’s women, notably Rose and Delia, evince a similar preoccupation with the mouth as both a physical boundary and a dialectical locus of entry-egress. An archetypal orifice for all bodily apertures, the mouth in Brennan’s writing embodies the adjunctive polarities of “flesh/spirit, purity/pollution, guilt/shame [and] taking in/giving out” (2001, p. 214). As a channel for the ingestion (devouring) of food, and the expulsion (voidance) of confessions *qua* words, the mouth is subjected to stringent regulation, and serves to further equate the themes of sensuality/sexuality and death, which are rarely entirely divorced in Brennan’s work¹²⁶.

The first of the poor men and women to call to Rose Derdon’s door appears “like a corpse” *SA 136*.

“His eyes, blue, seemed weary enough to die, but still the poor natural mouth, obedient to its end, a mouth so lonely it appeared to have no tongue, opened itself to her in a thin, bashful smile of recognition and supplication” *SA 135*.

¹²⁶ In “The Rose Garden,” it is Mary’s father’s death that induces what is arguably the first sexual encounter between Mary and Dom, implied by the creaking of floorboards beneath their bed *RG 192-194*.

Without a voice, the old man depends upon his greatly disfigured hand for adjuration. Here, as so often in Brennan's fiction, the desirous hand betrays an oral fixation, as the unspeaking mouth begs to be filled—"Never mind, never mind, never mind, no blame to you nor to me nor to anybody, [it] said, only fill me" *SA* 135.

In the stories of Rose and Hubert Derdon, food becomes a means of control and conciliation. As a sensory indulgence, it becomes a substitute for the litany of sensory/sensual privations (intimacy and affection) suffered by husband and wife, for which the material commodities of the home act as palliatives. For example, in the appropriately-named "An Attack of Hunger," Rose Derdon observes of the persistence of household dust,

"It got on her hands and on her wrists, and no matter how hard she scrubbed her nails, there always seemed to be some of it left there under her nails. She told herself that she had the hands of a servant. Hubert's hands were soft and neat, but hers were big and rough, as though she were a person who worked with her hands. She had often caught Hubert looking at her hands when she was dealing with the food on her plate and looking at her when she put food into her mouth. She always ate a lot of bread, and she thought he must sometimes wonder how she could eat so much bread or why she ate it so fast. She couldn't help it—she felt there was something shameful about eating so much of bread or of any food, but she wanted it and she ate it quickly and there were times when she felt her face getting red with defiance and longing when she reached for the loaf to cut another slice" *SA* 153

Of note here is the litany of "part-objects" (Fogarty, 2009, p. 209), the rhythmical repetition of 'hands' and 'nails,' of 'eat' and 'ate,' and the thrice-repeated 'bread'; its compulsive scansion suggestive of Rose's attitude to cleanliness and food, her coincident need for, and resistance to, order and regulation. The passage is relentlessly carnal. And yet there is more of shame than resentment here, as though Rose herself is to blame for her gluttony, her very corporeality even, and not Hubert's passive hostilities. If, as has already been postulated, the hand represents desire, the mouth, then, surely stands for gratification, and by extension, for pleasure, guilt, and shame. Rose's furtive, almost febrile energy echoes that of the narrator in the story "The Devil In Us." In the loosely autobiographical account, a younger Maeve recalls an unpleasant confrontation with some of the nuns at her boarding school. Ordered to sing alone at the Benediction Mass (she and three of her schoolmates), they wither under the watchful gaze of the congregation, finally "only caw[ing]" when they had meant to sing *SA* 53. Afterwards, the narrator recalls,

“I felt mournfully elevated – I did not yet know why – and I ate a great deal of bread and butter, and marked the glances of fearful speculation thrown at me by the other girls at my table. Anything might happen to me now. I might even be expelled” *SA* 54.

Later in the narrative cycle, Hubert recalls the first Sunday he and Rose spent together in their new home (the immutable Cherryfield Avenue house)¹²⁷. After losing his temper over Rose’s precipitous tears—“He had been shocked by the terror and hurt on her face [...] she was beaten to her knees” *SA* 76—Hubert surprises Rose in the kitchen, as she stands by the sink eating the dinner she had earlier foresworn in his company: “Her plate was full in front of her, but she ate only a little of it, bowed toward it all the time like a punished child or a punished, furtive dog” (p. 76). Yet, Hubert is surprised to find her “standing by the sink finishing up what was left on her plate,

“and when he appeared in the door of the kitchen she [...] turned in a panic to hide the plate, to hide what she was eating, and he [...] turned and [went] back upstairs, pretending that he had noticed nothing” *SA* 76-77.

Indeed, Hubert’s disavowing, disapproving action—turning away while Rose eats—is itself part of a wider pattern in the *Derdon* sequence. In “Family Walls,” for example, we read that Hubert,

“could not stand the way [Rose] ate, or to know the amount of food she ate, which was a good deal more than he ever felt inclined to take. The word ‘appetite’ embarrassed him, and the knowledge he had of her appetite, which was so much greater than his own, made her mysterious to him, but not in a way that aroused his interest or affection. He thought her appetite was something to be ashamed of, and he did not want to think about it. He did not grudge her the food, but he thought she attached too much importance to it. He dreaded to see her eat, because he could not keep his eyes off her, and there had been times when he saw her turn red and swallow quickly when she caught him watching her” *SA* 176-177.

In spite of his protestations—“not in a way that aroused his interest or affection” (p. 176)—Hubert’s gaze appears decidedly prurient. He is repelled by Rose’s capacious mouth, as much as by the appetite that feeds it. “[F]antasies of the devouring, insatiable female,” writes Patrick J. Keane, “are more readily evoked in certain cultural contexts than others” (1988, p.

¹²⁷ “A Young Girl Can Spoil Her Chances,” the third in the narrative sequence, appeared in *The New Yorker* in September 1962, only eight months after “An Attack of Hunger” *SA* 357.

19). Indeed, the “quintessential” female Mother Goddess of pre-Christian Ireland, the multifarious Great Mother—virulent *Cailleach/Caitlín Ní Uallacháin*, and the Kali-like *Síle na gCíoh*—may account for Irish cultural “anxiet[ies] over women’s uncontrollable hungers [in the twentieth-century]”, much less the male response to ““the apparently aggressive overtures of sexually liberated women’ that conveys [the] message that women are voracious, ‘insatiable’ and ‘call[ing] up early fantasies’ of a ‘possessive, suffocating, devouring and castrating mother’” (p. 19). Yet, if Rose’s voraciousness bespeaks sexual/sensual want, Hubert’s abstemious attitude to food bespeaks an equal though more readily-suppressed desire, clearly evident in the passages pertaining to the earliest period of their courtship and marriage. When Rose and Hubert were married first, we learn, they lived in lodgings on a street by Stephen’s Green in Dublin. The account of the Derdons’ early romance—begun in “A Young Girl Can Spoil Her Chances,” and concluded in “Family Walls”—comprises a relatively expansive *mise en abyme*, that reveals a different, decidedly more demonstrative aspect to their relationship. Yet, it exposes, too, the nascent malaise within the marriage, and the protagonists’ at-times painfully misguided interactions, which have led, the narrative suggests, to the present impasse.

To mark the occasion of their two-month anniversary, Rose buys a slice of fruitcake, which she cuts into smaller pieces and lays out on a plate for dessert. At the end of the meal, a single morsel of cake sits on the plate between them—“Hubert knew she wanted the cake, but that she also wanted him to have it. He intended to give it to her, but he wanted to tease her” *SA 186*. Later, when Rose realises she has forgotten to mend Hubert’s socks, as he had asked her to, she falls into a state of instant and intemperate dejection. To placate her, Hubert offers Rose the last piece of cake, but when she refuses, he promptly swallows it, “cramm[ing] it into his mouth” before leaving the table abruptly (p. 186). Standing by the window, unwilling to look at her, Hubert is instantly regretful—“He felt ashamed of himself” (p. 187)—and wishes instead that “he had left her alone,” so that she could “have eaten the cake and then she would have been happier” (p. 187). The act of devouring, here, is both sexual and violent, if altogether inchoate; it produces a momentary shift in the power dynamic between husband and wife that leaves Hubert feeling shamed and contrite, as though he has unduly made free with, and conceivably even violated, Rose. The passage in turn is linked to a still-earlier episode when, in response to a teenage John’s habit of leaving one or another of his beloved “holy pictures” (p. 158) on the kitchen table—“prop[ped] against the sugar bowl or the milk jug so that [he] would see it” (p. 158)—Hubert casually places the image “on his bread:

“and smoothing it with his knife as though it were butter [...] bit[es] it,” before proceeding to “[tear] off a corner of it, along with some bread, [while sitting] there chewing it and smiling” *SA 158*¹²⁸.

Ironically, the action of disfiguring the holy picture makes Hubert less iconoclast than bourgeois conventionalist since, as a mass-going Catholic, consumed by outward appearances—his own, his family’s, his neighbours; even those of his customers and the people he encounters on the street and in the tram—his actions appear less nonconformist than coercive. Given the ‘devoured’ image is one of “St. Sebastian being tortured” *SA 158*, it signifies not merely martyrdom (Delia’s and, arguably, John’s), but also the obstruction of male desire, specifically homosexual desire, which Hubert may suspect in his son—“[the] poor example of a fellow, weak and timid”—that he would later adjudge him to be (p. 73). Indeed, it is also conceivably a clamping-down of his own latent desires. Jason James Hartford avers that,

“[T]here is an abundant queer iconography of one particular religious figure. From the late fifteenth century, artists [...] have consistently portrayed St. Sebastian with an aim to explore the beauty of the male body [and the] locus of homoerotic desire [making] him into an icon at once sacred and ‘sacred,’ both religious and sexual” (2018, p. 38).

Worth considering, here, are Bourke’s impressions of Robert Brennan’s “[Oscar] van Duyven” detective stories, which “carr[ied],” she writes, “a homoerotic charge” (2004, p. 83). Acknowledging the convention of unmarried fictional detectives to which the series may simply have conformed, she nevertheless remarks of one of the stories that it opens with (the thirty-five-year-old) van Duyven wrestling with his (seventeen-year-old) male protégé; In another, they share a hotel bedroom (p. 83). By no means incriminating, Bourke’s reflection simply adds colour to the portrait of Brennan’s father as a frequently absent figure (betimes interned in prison, or retained on diplomatic excursions), and a husband who, like the fictional Martin Bagot, had taken to sleeping alone in the box bedroom, ostensibly to avoid being woken by the children’s morning clamour. At an elementary level, the image of the penetrated male body—Sebastian, riddled with arrows—serves to further align the themes of sexuality and death in Brennan’s work.

¹²⁸ “An Attack of Hunger,” first published in *The New Yorker*, January, 1962.

In early- to mid-twentieth-century Ireland, sex and sexuality were heavily regulated by the Church, and to the extent that it operated as a “patriarchal theocracy” (O’Toole, 2015), by the State itself¹²⁹. As Scheper Hughes asserts:

“As late as the 1940s and 1950s, the ‘peasant priests’ of Maynooth seminary were trained in a moral theology so repressive that the sacrament of marriage was seen as an occasion of sin that necessitated constant supervision on the part of Mother Church. [C]elibacy [was seen as] the highest status in life, and [...] the married state [as] a problematic union of two concupiscent natures” (2001, p. 207).

“Sexual intercourse in marriage,” she continues, “was lawful, but only when indulged in modestly and for the purposes of procreation [while] [t]he clergy counseled such women to resist their husbands as a ‘virgin threatened with rape’” (2001, p. 207). Against this backdrop, Hubert’s attempt to “tease” *SA 186* Rose with the cake, bespeaks a stilted, jilted desire, as confused in its conception as in its expression. Indeed, if there is a sense that Rose does not wish to be seen gorging (literally filling) herself, Hubert’s preoccupation with her eating habits, his inability to look away, despite his revulsion, substantiates the onanism of both gesture (Rose’s) and gaze (his own)¹³⁰.

In light of the feelings of shame and regret that follow his gustative gesture in “Family Walls,” a different kind of violence is apparent in Hubert’s suppressive attitude to sensual (self-)indulgence, as echoed in “the raindrops [that] dashed violently against the window” *SA 186*. Indeed, there is an appreciably manic tone to Hubert’s actions; his “rigid vigilance over bodily boundaries” (Scheper-Hughes, 2001, p. 210) expressed in a grave concern for the loss of reason, both in himself and others. In “A Young Girl Can Spoil Her Chances,” having first dismissed a young begging woman and child he encounters by Stephen’s Green, Hubert is suddenly overcome with contrition, and worries that, “[a]ll the mourners [from the passing funeral] must have seen him, hurrying along making faces like a lunatic” (p. 93). Later, in “Family Walls,” he wishes that the mother and daughter living next door, whose garden “was

¹²⁹ Pat Rabbitte writes of the influence of John Charles McQuaid in the emerging, independent Ireland of the 1930s: “[H]e was a principal influence on Éamon de Valera when the 1937 Constitution was being prepared” (2018). Later, as Archbishop of Dublin, he would persuade Ireland’s “Department of Health to prohibit for a time the sale of new sanitary tampons for women. [Moreover] He had an army of lay enthusiasts – or moral vigilantes – who acted as his eyes and ears and brought ‘aberrations’ to his attention” (2018).

¹³⁰ Similarly, in “The Rose Garden,” the flowers watched over by the nuns, become a metaphor for onanistic pleasure (Mary Lambert’s *and* the [frigid] nuns), represented by the voluptuous language of the roses – “carmine, crimson, blush, rose, scarlet, wine, purple, pink and blood”, their “lips loose”, and the perfume that “steamed up out of them” *RG 189*.

a wilderness of ivy and nettles and neglected cabbage plants” (p. 179), and whose household he considers to be “disgraceful”, would both be “removed to some lunatic asylum” (p. 179). Of interest, here, is Hubert’s criteria for lunacy, much less for being carted away to an asylum. The daughter is specifically described as “middle-aged,” “unmarried,” and “easing her occasional rebellious rages with loud crying fits” (p. 179). The clear implication is that, as an unmarried woman, as a kind of public failure, the daughter is justified in her “unhapp[iness],” and in her “hysterical silence” (p. 179). Like the “wilderness” without, the domestic life within the house next door is an abasement of the normative social standards to which Hubert clings for stability, in the absence of any other foundations—“It was not possible that others could go from day to day, for no real reason” he conjectures in “The Drowned Man,” “or that others could put up the brave front that he put up, the brave, respectable front that was a front for nothing, and nothing but a front” (p. 202). Finally, in “A Free Choice,” as a young Hubert professes his affection for Rose, taking her hand, “as though they were about to dance, like the others,” he cautions her: “If we’re not careful, some of these lunatics will trample us underfoot” (p. 127), thus closing the narrative. It follows a similar observation, only moments before: As he searches for Rose, Hubert wonders at her child-like nature—“She often appeared to him like a child who walks through a madhouse and is not afraid because she does not know the difference between inside and out” (p. 126). “But she had every right to be afraid,” the narrative continues; “Anything might happen to her” (p. 126). Hubert’s concern for Rose is confounded by his own unruly, ineffable carnality. Anything might happen to her, precisely *because* of his lascivious impulses; such is the intensity of his feelings for her that Hubert considers himself capable of any action. “She is immortal,” he thinks, “...She made him think of the Forest of Arden” *SA 126*. Yet, notwithstanding the modesty of these images, he cannot help but notice her petiteness, or wonder at the size of her shoe, as she stands on the stair. When Rose receives her lost handkerchief from him, Hubert observes, “how her fingers closed around it once she had it in her hand”; the same handkerchief he reluctantly relinquishes as “[his] only hope of refuge in her country”—doubtlessly, a double-entendre (pp. 126-127). Indeed, when Rose greets him at the bottom of the stairs, remarking that he looks “very polite,” Hubert replies, “I was thinking I would like to take a bite out of you” (p. 126)—perhaps the clearest expression of raw desire, and a notable analogue to the (later) act of his taking a bite out of the likeness of St. Sebastian.

In *The Visitor* (2000), too, we encounter that same “rigid vigilance over bodily boundaries” (Scheper-Hughes, 2001, p. 210), compounded by an inordinate concern over attributions of

madness—“‘Good God,’ said [Anastasia’s] father. ‘You’ll drive me mad’”; and “‘You are trying to drive me mad,’ [Mrs. King] said distinctly”; Whilst, speaking of Anastasia’s mother, the same Mrs. King says, “You know that your mother disgraced us all, running off the way she did, like some kind of a madwoman” *V II*, 66, 15.

Yet, when Anastasia recalls her mother’s humiliation at the hands of her husband and step-mother, one morning over breakfast—‘Mary,’ said the grandmother, smiling, ‘you’re making a fool of yourself’” *V II*—her (childish) disquiet is confounded with a salivary desire for the buttered toast her grandmother wilfully (yet nonchalantly) offers her, in spite of the chaos she has incited—“One hand held the toast firm. The other spread a neat layer of butter.

Anastasia’s mouth watered [...] ‘Here, pet,’ [her grandmother] said, ‘have this nice toast’” (p. 11).

Once again, humiliation is apparently deliberately juxtaposed with oral (gustative) pleasure—what Buci-Glucksmann sees as, “a primitive oral drive in place of the totality of love” (1994, p. 148)—and the “maternal deprivation and oral fixations” observed in many twentieth-century Irish-American schizophrenics (Scheper-Hughes, 2001, p. 260).

In her ethnography of the rural communities of south-west Ireland, Scheper-Hughes provides a powerful illustration of the perils of sexual expression in the mid-twentieth-century: “The harmless ‘fools’ of the village of [Cloghan, Co. Kerry],” she writes, “are those referred to as ‘God’s own’ – the mentally retarded (*sic*), the simple and withdrawn, the eccentric who [...] are childlike, innocent, presumably sexless, and clean of heart” (2001, p. 153)¹³¹. Yet, she continues,

“[when] a hopeful suitor from west of Dingle, expresses his frustration and hostility at being shunned for every dance [...] by partially exposing himself to a group of girls, the line has been crossed, and who was once a ‘fool’ is converted into ‘lunatic’ and his behaviour must be censored” (2001, p. 154).

Once again, the distinction between reason and madness is mediated by sexuality; itself an inexorable form of deviancy, whose public (or premature) expression, Hubert believes, comes at the cost of being taken for a ‘lunatic’.

¹³¹ Curious to note, then, Elizabeth Bowen’s observation that, “sexlessness and a sublimated infantilism are the peculiar identifying traits of the protagonists of the Irish Big House novel” (Fogarty, 2002, p. 96).

Though Hubert's affective gaze remains something of a constant in the Derdon stories, what begins as concupiscence lapses into a kind of macabre voyeurism as the narrative progresses. In the final passages of "Family Walls," at the close of the narrative cycle, Hubert finds himself watching Rose through the dining room window, as she kneels, tending the flower beds in her garden. When she leans on the watering can to raise herself, his instinct, we read, is, "[to look] away from her and down at his own hands" *SA* 191. "There was," he professes, "no need for him to watch her to know how she got up. He had seen her often enough, raising herself after doing out the fireplace, by placing her hand on the edge of the coalscuttle" (p. 191). Yet, moments later, back on her feet, Hubert watches Rose,

"[raise] one hand to her hair, to smooth a loose strand up off the back of her neck into the thick bun she wore. She was wearing a white blouse with loose sleeves, and as the sleeve fell back, her upraised arm gleamed. Hubert saw her wrist and her elbow, and in that fragment of her he saw all of Rose, as the crescent moon recalls the full moon to anyone who has watched her at the height of her power" *SA* 192.

Death and sexuality, it seems, are conterminous here. For Hubert, the very act of noticing the body implies acknowledgement of its inherent decay. This sense of wasting, or passing away, is repeated in the valedictory image of evening with which the story ends: "That evening's light was helpless, the day in extremity, without strength enough to dissemble with sun and shade, with only strength enough left to touch the world as it withdrew forever from the world" *SA* 192. The presence of Rose's ageing body elicits the discrepant emotions of desire and disgust, so that Hubert's prurience appears to be actively amplified by the proximity of death—an illustration of what Scheper-Hughes sees as "the [Irish] preoccupation and fascination with death," which functions, she writes, "like the American preoccupation with sex – as a romantic fantasy" (2001, p. 215). Indeed, Hubert's mordant obsession, his rejection of the (living) flesh, suggests both a necrosis of sexual expression, and a quiescent *nec-rotics*, or erotics of decay¹³². This gruesome imbrication of death and desire finds an eloquent, ultimate, expression in Hubert's compulsion to gain access to his wife's bedroom only *after* she has died.

¹³² This same disavowal of the flesh (body), the marriage of the sensual and death, is – as has been mentioned earlier – arguably to be found in Brennan's depiction of the Poor Clares in "The Barrel of Rumours": "I had been told that [the nuns] were measured for their coffins the first day they entered the convent and that they never knew any other bed afterward" *SA* 31.

Of Benjamin's writings on the conjunction of painted bodies, fashion and prostitution, Buci-Glucksmann avers that, "[t]he ontological ageing of the body which appears in the erotics of the skeleton [...] is a distant precursor of Freud's images of *the uncanny*" (1994, p. 101). "In this de-idealized beauty," she continues,

"stripped bare by the appearance-destroying gaze [...], in this curious 'ontology' of woman's nothingness [...] the female body is robbed of its maternal body and becomes desirable only by going to the limits as dead-body, fragmented-body [...] It is as if the death of the organic body can be represented only in the feminine [...]" (1994, p. 101).

It is fitting, then, that the Derdons's story should end with Rose's death, or what might better be described as the void left by her death; an absence that Hubert aimlessly probes in the final (sequential) story, "The Drowned Man"¹³³. Geraldine Fogarty holds that, "[f]ragmentation of the self into bits, and the object into parts, parcels the anguish into more bearable bits [as] the inevitable result of the splitting propensities of the paranoid-schizoid position" (Fogarty, 2009, p. 209). Abensour further notes of the manic/psychotic writer, "[her] mind [...] is usually imprisoned inside a kind of thinking based on [...] abstract images of fragmentation, catastrophe or death" (2013, p. 122). Moreover, the fragmented body duplicates the fragmented nature of modernity, or what Bloch saw as "the fragmentary character of contemporary social experience" (Adorno, Benjamin, *et al.*, 2007, p. 10). Hubert's inability to see beyond the fragment, to appreciate Rose's body as a whole, rather than an analogue of the segmented moon, suggests a cognitive dissonance of the kind that Brennan herself experienced in "the clash of Irish postcolonial memory and American industrial modernity" (Pierse, 2018, p. 247). His voyeuristic gaze—what Schjeldahl sees as "the saddest excitement" (2020)—watching Rose through the window, reproduces, yet somehow reverses, the Hopperian paradigm; By placing Rose outside the home, Hubert is left (almost trapped) within, watching her, unseen, through a glass pane. The intercourse between the two characters is mere illusion, nothing but a simulation that betokens the disruptive, socially and

¹³³ A distinct anomaly in the chronology, "The Drowned Man" (1963) was the fourth of the six Derdon stories to appear in *The New Yorker*. Whilst the fifth instalment, "A Free Choice" (1964) – a flashback – does not necessarily conflict with the narrative arc, the final story, "Family Walls" (1973), appears to take place in the present, with Rose having been inexplicably restored to life. The irregularity may be explained, however, by the fact of "Family Walls" having existed in draft from as early as 1962, and that, barring more than a decade of editorial revisions, may well have been intended for publication prior to "The Drowned Man," thereby completing the sequence in the correct order – the order in which they were finally positioned in *The Springs of Affection* (1997) (Bourke, 2002, p. 262; SA 357-358).

emotionally alienating (screen) technologies—Baudrillard’s “simulated world of signs [...] divorced from, and no longer connected with, any sense of social reality,” where the “body and the whole surrounding universe becomes a control screen” (Buci-Glucksmann, 1994, p. 38; Baudrillard, 1983, p. 169)—A ‘world of signs,’ which was then taking hold even as Brennan penned the first of the Derdon stories in the early 1950s. The protagonists exist (and subsist), then, in separate “spheres” of solipsistic alienation (Wolff, 1985, p. 200), trapped in an existentialist sequence of moments of exquisite aloneness, or what Benjamin identified as “the eternal recurrence of barbarism, fragmentation and destruction” (Buci-Glucksmann, 1994, p. 98), and the kind that leave Hubert, at the end of the narrative, a living ghost, haunting his own mind, “silent,” with “nothing to say, and [...] no one to hear him” *SA 192*.

Famil(iar) Walls

The obsession with bodily boundaries inevitably gives rise to an obsession with the physical boundaries of home, those (family) walls that contain the characters and their stories, notably the female characters—wives and mothers—Rose, Delia, and Mary Lambert in “The Rose Garden.” Delia Bagot fears the censorious stare of her neighbour, yet longs for escape from the house: “[I]t would be very restful to get away from the house,” she thinks, “without having to go out by the front door and endure the ceremony of walking down the street, where everybody could see you” *SA 233*. Like Delia, Mary Lambert eschews the public gaze: “She always went to early Mass, when the streets were deserted, so that no one would have a chance to see her awful-looking back and perhaps laugh at her” *RG 187*. Rose Derdon, too, regards the world outwith the home with doubtful eyes, with a look she “wore [only when] outside the house” (p. 72). Her face, we read,

“wore a self-conscious, almost disdainful look [...] of one who has found nothing to criticise so far but who fears that at any moment she may find herself among people who are beneath her and who will try to be too familiar with her” *SA 72*.

While the sense of urgency with which Delia cleaves to the home, notably in “The Carpet with the Big Pink Roses on It,” indicates a probable, or latent, agoraphobia, one which is further complicated by the claustrophobia she experiences when indoors, it is Rose Derdon’s condition in the appropriately titled “Family Walls,” that reveals the extreme psycho-emotional disaffection, the neurotic constriction, engendered by the home-as-enclosure:

“Between [...] two sharp edges she made her way as well as she could. When Hubert first saw Rose, he thought how light and definite her walk was, and that her expression was resolute. He never learned that the courage she showed came not from natural hope or from natural confidence or from any ignorant, natural source, but from her determination to avoid touching the two madresses as they guided her, pressing too close to her and narrowing her path into a very thin line. She always walked in straight lines. [...] She kept close to the house. She might as well have been in a net, for all the freedom she felt” *SA 182-183*.

The (sub-)liminal space that Rose inhabits, gives rise to the liminalities of the unconscious wherein, writes Abensour, many psychotics live, “[a] place of non-contradiction, of non-differentiation between real and imaginary, between life and death, between past and future” (2013, p. 117); In short, a shadowland of diasporic (traumatic) memory¹³⁴.

Although it is my contention that all of her Irish-based fiction occurs within, or is affected by, diaspora space—those spaces of memory and longing, “‘inhabited’ not only by diasporic subjects but equally by those who are constructed and represented as ‘indigenous’” (Murray, 2018, p. 99)—there is little doubt that a great many of Brennan’s non-fictional, pseudonymous ‘Notes’ from *The New Yorker* originate (in) the same diaspora space, with its attendant themes of home, alienation, and madness. One such composition, “Howard’s Apartment,” published in November 1967, arguably evinces those schizoid, *anomic* qualities of manic space, which is to say the conceptual, literary space engendered by, and resistant to, the “gradual slipping away of the world” (Abensour, 2013, p. 213). Ostensibly, an account of the Long-Winded Lady’s stay at a friend’s apartment, the brief narrative is beset with disjunctive, paranoiac departures, (literally) earth-shattering language, and a sense of aloneness personified in, and compounded by, the schizoid walls of the home. “The apartment [...] has remained aloof,” the narrator confesses:

“‘We have no secrets,’ the two little rooms seem to say, ‘but we are his.’ And I think that when I leave, the day after tomorrow, the same toy voice, whispering out of the walls, will cry, ‘What has been going on here?’” *LWL 206*.

¹³⁴ Ledent, O’Callaghan, and Tunca discuss a similar, “ontological trauma” in “contemporary Caribbean neuroses regarding identity,” a legacy, they write, “[of] forced servitude, displacement, and violence [which is] still [...] articulated in literary, theoretical, philosophical, and political discourses” (2018, p. 5). Indeed, it is conceivable that the Irish today – owing to their history of “displacement [and] indentureship” – arguably share with the Caribbean peoples a sense of “dis-ease with who [they] are and where they belong” (p. 5).

The prosopopoieic conversion/conversation of physical (home) space betrays an incoherent, vaguely inimical quality that serves to amplify a distinctly auditive sense of aloneness, which threatens to rend both narrator and narrative. This devastating, “profound silence” is somehow concordant *and* discordant with the “violen[t],” “hammer[ing]” sounds of the diluvial rain which,

“has gathered the room and [the narrator] into the invisible world where there is no night and no day, and where walls and mirrors and trees and bridges are formed of advancing and retreating sound” *LWL 209*.

Indeed, sound here is arguably the foremost sensory faculty in a narrative replete with synaesthetic affects, where rain produces both “noise” and “colour”; where silence itself initiates space—“its force has turned this room into a cave that is real only because it is hollow – a sounding place in which there is only one sound [...] profound silence” *LWL 209*—and where even time itself can be displaced in the manic *dis-order* of the senses: “There is a new sound,” the narrator notes: “We had a cloudburst a minute ago, or maybe it was only a few seconds ago” (p. 208). This subtle disjuncture of time and space exposes a fissure-like opening—an affective “gap” (Ahmed, 2010, p. 42)—or what Martha Figlerowitz sees as, “[a] delay [...] between the moment when an affect begins to inflect a person’s mind and body and the moment when she becomes cognizant of its effects, if she ever does” (2017, p. 1). The act of (re)cognition—of the “cloudburst”—indeed, memory itself, supplants and forestalls the possibility of actuality; Whether occurring seconds or minutes before, perception (present) is mere mimesis. The disruptive force of manic space serves to exaggerate the dialectics of here and now, there and then, inside and outside, rendering the very fabric of mental space as permeable as the narrative margins themselves are porous. The boundaries of body and mind, like the physical boundaries (walls) dividing one apartment from the other, and the interior space of home from the outside space of the street, is constantly under threat of fragmentation and dissolution. “Howard’s Apartment” contrasts the Long-Winded Lady’s aloneness with the company of partygoers in the next-door apartment, becoming a kind of meditation on the simultaneity of lives; the narrator’s restless actions consciously aligned with, and curiously echoed in, the life occurring outwith the walls of the small living room:

“At the moment when I stood up to close the terrace door, the people in the front apartment must have hurried to close their windows” *LWL 209*.

“Outside, all the noise in the world is being hammered into the earth by the rain, and, inside, all the noise there is is effervescing at the cocktail party” (pp. 210-211).

The action of the (absent) landlord—who is known to “reach far out of the high front windows, and much too far out over the edge of [the] terrace,” when caring for his wisteria vine and ailanthus tree *LWL 210*—is mirrored in the narrator’s cognitive ‘outreach’; reaching beyond her isolation, beyond “the frontier” of the apartment walls that divide and unite the Long-Winded Lady and the people next door; an indoor-outdoor diremption, about which de Certeau writes:

“the points of differentiation between two bodies are also their common points. Conjunction and disjunction are inseparable in them. [...] The theoretical and practical problem of the frontier: to whom does it belong? The river, *wall* or tree makes a frontier. It does not have the character of a nowhere that cartographical representation ultimately presupposes. *It has a mediating role*” (1998, p. 127; *italics, my own*).

The porosity of physical barriers—the spatial *dis-integrity* that gives rise to the “cave[-like] hollow” of the room *LWL 209*—becomes an analogue for the hollows of the narrator’s perception, evinced in the final passages of the text in a sensory *dis-integration* that confounds sound and sight to the extent that the music of the phonograph, “catch[es] the pictures, the books, and the discolored white marble mantelpiece as firelight might have done,” while the Long-Winded Lady herself remarks: “I hear the music and I watch the voice. I can see it” (p. 211). Yet, there is arguably a still more profound and enduring ‘hollowness,’ beyond (and beneath) the narrator’s conceptual fragmentation, suggested in her sibylline description of the room as,

“the accidental setting of an enigmatic but not disquieting dream that I have dreamed before, in past rooms, and will dream again, in rooms I have not yet seen. It is a dream without people [...] where walls and mirrors and trees and bridges are formed of advancing and retreating sound. At this moment it is easy [...] to understand that the solid earth may shrink without warning to the vanishing point underneath our feet” *LWL 209*¹³⁵.

¹³⁵ Indeed, the sense of mania is apparent from the very outset of the narrative, which departs precipitously in a long excursus about “the Three Bears,” who whisper from the apartment walls to the Long-Winded Lady – as they whisper, in fact, “to anyone who lives alone” *LWL 206*. Though clearly intended as an elaborate metaphor for the narrator’s relationship to home (as a single woman), the conceit is no less unsettling in the

The rent (“hollow”) in the fabric of physical space—in the disjuncture of space-time—parallels the rent in narrative space, which in turn parallels a final rent, or split, in the narrator’s mind/body—the “sunder[ing]” of the Irish “schizoid [...] identity” (Delaney, 2003, p. 211). This tripartite disjuncture is then engendered in a potent synaesthesia—literally the “union of the senses” (Allen-Hermanson & Matey, n.d.)—which, in Brennan’s narrative, paradoxically signifies *dis-unity*, *dis-order* and the subtle *dis-integration* of linear structures of conformity, which were arguably integral to the Weltanschauung of an entire generation of (post-)colonial Irishmen and -women¹³⁶.

Stories of Africa

Returning to the Dublin stories, I wish to conclude this chapter with a close reading of a key text from the Bagot sequence, and an important example of diasporic feeling in Brennan’s Irish writing. “Stories of Africa” is, in a sense, a culmination of diaspora, and of diaspora space itself as a point of convergence for the contingent themes of home, exile and madness.

One of Brennan’s longer works of fiction, it recounts the visit of a retired Bishop from the missions in South Africa. He has come to visit Delia Bagot and her two young daughters at their Dublin home (again, the ubiquitous Cherryfield Avenue house). The Bishop and Delia’s father, childhood friends, grew up on neighbouring farms in rural Co. Wexford, where, we are told, some of Delia’s family live still, and where the children continue to spend their summer holidays. Yet, the Bishop’s homestead, Cooledearg, has long since disappeared, left in ruins in the care of his bachelor brother, who, the Bishop laments, eventually sold everything, stock and farm, to emigrate (and disappear) to America. The Bishop’s visit seems more pilgrimage than any kind of disinterested social call, as he surveys what parts of the house that modesty and limited mobility will allow him, and is apprised of the layout of the rest of the house, and of the intimate details of the home and family life, by Delia herself, who responds to the questions:

context of what appears to be a realist text. Both a figment of the author’s mind, and a manifestation of (home) space itself, the ‘Three Bears’ episode arguably betrays the looming psychosis that would begin to affect Brennan’s life in devastating ways, only a few short years after the publication of “Howard’s Apartment” in November 1967.

¹³⁶ Such challenges (however oblique) to systems of authority are intrinsic to yet another spatial component of Brennan’s writing, *Feminine Space*, which is the subject of the final chapter.

“as easily and as proudly as though she were conducting [the Bishop] around her garden, or walking with him along a street in a country that was strange to him, although it had long been familiar to her” *SA* 289.

It is as though by scrutinising Delia’s home, far from Wexford though it is, the old Bishop expects to find the fugitive ghosts of a home and a long-ago past that were once his own; as though he covets the simple pleasures of home and family life, which, as priest and as emigrant, he has had to forego, as all those who migrate “must forego forever the luxury of a settled sense of home” (Murray, 2018, p. 242).

Exiled from Wexford and from Africa, the Bishop suffers the displacedness and multiplacedness of the émigré. Sitting in Delia’s living room in Dublin, he watches her through “faded blue eyes [...] from far away, from Africa” *SA* 290. Yet, an exilic sense, still more profound, suffuses both character and story, as the Bishop and Delia suffer a shared ontological exile from the self, “[T]he kind of exile [...], living inside his own body and dragging along while the priest within him strode proudly, that was an entirely different kind of exile” (p. 295). Delia, too, experiences a sense of somatic separateness to the extent that she comes to see “herself” as a distinct and independent entity: “[A]s she spoke,” we read,

“her life, became visible [...] she had not spoiled anything along the way. Or at least this person, herself, who had come into being without warning and who was now so real in the room, this person, still unknown and yet well-known, at least to the Bishop [...] had done nothing wrong” *SA* 289-290.

As the Bishop perceives “the exile inside [him], or living with [him], hanging on to him” *SA* 296, so Delia perceives an absence of selfhood so profound that the Bishop, whom she has never before met, apparently knows her better by the superficial trappings of her home(life), than she knows her (decoupled) self—“[S]omeone who [though] well known to her [she] had never met” (p. 289).

As migrant and indigene, the Bishop and Delia are lost alike in the inexorable transience of diaspora space, which finds appropriate expression in the image of the maze that, together with the ruin, the library and the artifice, comprise what Benjamin understood as the aesthetic of modernity (Buci-Glucksmann, 1994, p. 8). The maze/labyrinth, “whose image has passed into flesh and blood in [the form of] the flâneur” (Benjamin *et al.*, 1985, p. 53), indelible symbol of the city, into which Brennan would lose herself and herself be lost, typifies the litany of missteps and wrong turns that have led both Delia and the Bishop to this place of

interminable transience. Lost, they depend upon the tenuous markers of the home's ephemeral artefacts for guidance, as the Bishop leans upon the chair given him by Delia to contemplate the dining room's gas fire, and the flowers "reflected in the wood of the table" *SA* 287; Invisible, the maze is perceptible only through its implacable resistance—"[it] had no center and no form and no secret – worst of all, no secret" (p. 295). The Bishop,

"moved through [the] maze that was formless until he made a mistake, and then in his mistake he touched something that made him draw back [...] something strong enough to prevent him from moving forward, something implacable" *SA* 296.

The metaphor is redolent of the "two madresses" that guide Rose Derdon in "Family Walls," "[P]ressing too close to her and narrowing her path into a very thin line" *SA* 183. Indeed, the Bishop's maze, like the maze of thoughts and images that separate Delia from "the wisdom she knew other people possessed" (p. 78), denotes the disturbing maze of modernity, of isolation and alienation; "the boundless maze," described by Adorno, "of indirect relationships [and] compartmentations into which human beings are forced" (Adorno, Benjamin, *et al.*, 2007, p. 22), compounded, in "Stories of Africa," by the placelessness of diaspora itself.

Indeed, the very title seems deliberately confused, for there are, in fact, precious few stories of Africa here. What stories there are—recollections or memories, most of them—are deeply rooted in Ireland, specifically Co. Wexford, the village of Oylegate, and more specifically still the mile of laneway that leads to the whitewashed house at Poulbwee, and the welcome that once awaited the young priest from Mrs. Kelly, Delia's grandmother, so much of whose character he imputes to Delia and her Ranelagh home.

The Bishop himself inhabits a curious intersection of colonising agent (religious and cultural) and colonial subject. He tells Delia, "I used to play a game with the children," ("the little small black children, very mysterious, very friendly and open" *SA* 292): "'Going to Poulbwee,' we called it. They got to know the lane nearly as well as I did, and every field along the way" (p. 294). In bringing the mile of laneway and the Wexford fields, much less the tenets of Roman-Catholicism, to Africa, the Bishop is complicit in the social, spiritual and cultural displacement of the (South African) indigene, even as he himself is displaced from a (former) colonial state, that has offered little more than bachelorhood and emigration to him and his bother—"Ireland [...] his country, where terrible pride and terrible humility stand together, two noble creatures enslaved, enthralled, by what defines them, the bitter Irish appetite for humiliation" (p. 296). Indeed, the relics of Ireland's colonial past are evident in,

and further complicated by, the chauffeur-driven car in which the Bishop arrives, in the chauffeur's uniform and "puttees" (p. 282), and in his companion, Mrs. Sheffield Smith, a physical relic of Anglo-Ireland—now little more than a waving, "grey-gloved hand and [...] scrap of veiled face" (p. 284), marooned in a "very important-looking car" (p. 282).

If the Bishop is, in a sense, immobilised by the trammels of regret, having "left his own brother to perish in a wasteland of bitterness" (p. 296), theirs is just *one* of the "small dark psychodramas of scapegoating and labelling within farm households that," according to Scheper-Hughes, "was driving so many young [Irish] bachelors to drink and bouts of depression" (2001, p. 103) even as late as the 1970s, a consequence of the "sexual amnesia" and "antieroticism of modern Ireland" (p. 23). "I went out to the missions," the Bishop explains,

"after I was ordained, and I didn't see Ireland again for fourteen years. My mother was dead and there was only my brother at home. He never married, and I suppose the loneliness got in on his mind. He lost heart. All the time I was there he kept talking about how he was going to sell up the place and go to America. [...] I tried to persuade him to get a hold of himself, and he said it was easy for me. [...] He said I was the favourite with my mother, and he may have been right, but she always intended the farm for him, although he was the younger. He was in a terrible way, catching a rabbit now and again for his dinner. He slept most of the day and most of the night. He was ashamed of sleeping so much and he didn't like anybody coming near the place, and gradually they all began to stay away. I never knew a place could go down as fast as Cooldearg [...]
[T]he day I left he walked as far as Oylegate with me [...] the tears were running down his face, and down my face, too. [...] I never saw him again. He sold up the place as he said he would and went to America. I never heard from him" SA 293-294

Whether accident or design, Brennan's brief 'psychodrama' of the Bishop and his bachelor brother is a faithful reflection of the *dis*-ease that was then endemic to rural Irish villages. The Bishop's brother might have been one of the innumerable and very real "young and middle-aged bachelor farmers [...] from small villages [and] the very heartland of Celtic culture and civilization," who were "particularly likely to be hospitalised" (Scheper-Hughes, 2001, p. 24) in the 1950s, 60s and 70s, even as Brennan was writing their story¹³⁷. Brennan's childhood was steeped in the culture of rural Ireland, in its conventions of bachelor- and spinsterhood, of cohabiting siblings, and of the idiosyncratic behaviour that was, and was not,

¹³⁷ "Stories of Africa" was published in *The New Yorker* in August 1968.

to be tolerated in rural communities. Both her parents were Wexford natives: her mother's family, like Delia Bagot's, came from Olyegate, where a whitewashed, thatched house—Coolnaboy, the real Poulbwee—stood at the end of a mile of gated laneway. Her father's family, in turn, came from Wexford Town, and a conjunction of two houses bifurcated by a winding stairs that would also “thrust its way, crooked and hard, up through the house” of Mary and Dom Lambert in “The Rose Garden” *RG 185*. On both sides of the family were bachelors and spinsters. Visiting Wexford as a child in the 1920s, Brennan would have encountered the unmarried great-aunts and -uncles that shared the farmhouse with her grandmother (Bourke, 2004, p. 10). Certainly, she knew of her aunt Tess, whose fate was to end up in St. Senan's Hospital, an enormous asylum that loomed over Wexford's Enniscorthy town (pp. 7, 260). She was familiar, too, with her spinster great-aunt Mary Kate Whitty, a redoubtable woman known to have stayed in bed for ten years and longer. “[R]etreating from life,” notes Bourke, “[became] known [amongst the family] as ‘doing a Mary Kate’” (p. 87)—an analogue of the countless, apparently pardonable eccentricities which were tolerated in rural communities; those venial foibles of the “saints,” and “fools,” who had not (yet) transgressed the rigid social and sexual boundaries that distinguished the ‘fool’ from the ‘lunatic’¹³⁸. Yet, Brennan considered them important enough to be memorialised (however [un-]sympathetically) in her fiction: Tess Brennan as Martin Bagot's sister Clare, consigned to the asylum by her elder sister Min, in “The Springs of Affection”; and Mary Kate Whitty as Mary Ann Whitty, the kind-hearted, somewhat domesticated surrogate for Brennan herself in the Bluebell/East Hampton stories. Illustrated in the fates of the two brothers, then, is the gravely circumscribed outcomes that awaited many young men and women—like those of her own extended family—from rural farming communities, in the decades that followed Independence.

Conclusion

For much of the twentieth-century, rural Ireland suffered a “social malaise” (Scheper-Hughes, 2001, p. 123), or *anomie*, reflected in the vast numbers of outward-migrants, in

¹³⁸ According to Scheper-Hughes, the term ‘saint’ was commonly applied to an “elderly and eccentric recluse” (2001, p. 154). Amongst the many examples she provides are, “the ageless bachelor Patsy [who] sweats and stammers and hides his face when forced to speak to a member of the opposite sex [...] (“[A] common problem but nothing serious”), and the bachelor “Michael O’Brien who sits up with his cows in prayer each evening” (2001, pp. 153-154).

rapidly escalating mental hospitalisation rates (notably for schizophrenia), and in record numbers of those signing up for what Brennan herself described as “the commonest crevasse in Irish family life – the priesthood” *SA 148* (Trew, 2018, p. 21; Akenson, 1997, p. 10; Brennan, 2018, p. 133; Scheper-Hughes, 2001, p. 24; Conway, 2011, p. 65). At a time when social and sexual freedoms, much less job opportunities, were few, the choices facing those that balked at normative social praxis was often little more than emigration, ordination, or (to the extent that it ever constituted choice) hospitalisation (Cowley, 2018, p. 221; Gray, 2004, p. 2; Scheper-Hughes, 2001, p. 100).

As the Bishop in “Stories of Africa” looks upon the lane “from Oylegate to Poulbwee as the only path” through a formless maze that had no centre, and no meaning beyond its inexorable quiddity *SA 294-295*, Brennan, too, looked upon the few rooms and small, ordered gardens of Cherryfield Avenue as her one constant, unchanged and unchanging, for better or worse, within the ever-more-complex maze. Even at her last, when living in a nursing home, having forgotten she had ever been a writer, she was able to tell an enquiring researcher, “[I’m] going home now’,” which, writes Bourke, “he took to mean that she intended to walk to Cherryfield Avenue in Dublin” (2004, p. 275). As the Bishop’s visit, and the story, draws to a close, the narrator suddenly interjects: “[Y]ou could say that an exile was a person who knew of a country that made all other countries seem strange” *SA 295-296*. Lost in the maze, guided always by its encroaching madness(es), Brennan clung to the ghosts of that familiar space that rendered all others “strange” (p. 296), and to the archetype of home, kindled by the hope of a chance to retrace those missteps, to redress those “mistakes” (p. 296), that thwarted her progression, and hindered her return to a time and a memory that were ever more irreconcilable—ever more impossible to retrieve. “Stories of Africa” typifies the use of fiction as a mediating influence in the “psychological complexities of migrant experience” (Murray, 2017, p. 99). In this way, the Bishop’s pilgrimage to Delia’s home becomes a palimpsest of Brennan’s pilgrimage to a past that, as the Bishop must discover, can never offer more than familiar shadows, or coloured reflections on a polished table.

“[T]he [...] truth is that all is vanity,” he tells Delia; “It is true that we walk this way only once. It is true. It is true. It is the truth. Indeed it is. It is the very truth” *SA 287*. And yet, despite his vehemence, in his fruitless efforts to regain the past, the Bishop fails to grasp the significance of his own words—and of the story itself—that, to paraphrase Jacob Bronowski, the arrow of time points always in the direction of diminishing hope. The message is one of inevitable decline, of the certainty, and certain release, of death, as Delia, seeing the closeness of death in the Bishop, “[Gives] him a smile of tremulous indignation, showing him

how, one morning, she [will] face her own death” (p. 283). It is this “madness of death” (Buci-Glucksmann, 1994, p. 147)—death and madness coalesced in a smile, as disjunctive and fragmented as narrative diaspora space itself—that shapes and compels the stories.



References Cited

- Abensour, L. (2013). Liminal space, manic writing. In *Psychotic Temptation* (pp. 136–152). Taylor & Francis Group.
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ed/detail.action?docID=1125210>
- Adorno, T., Benjamin, W., Brecht, B., Lukács, G., & Adorno, T. W. (2007). *Aesthetics and Politics*. Verso.
<https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=5649902>
- Ahmed, S. (2010). *The Promise of Happiness*. Duke University Press.
- Akenson, D. H. (1993). *The Irish diaspora: a primer*. P.D. Meany Co. ; Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University of Belfast.
- Allen-Hermanson, S., & Matey, J. (n.d.). *Synesthesia* | *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved April 14, 2022, from <https://iep.utm.edu/synesthe/>
- Baudrillard, J. (1983). *Simulations*. Semiotext(e), Inc.
- Benjamin, W. (1985). Central Park (L. Spencer & M. Harrington, Trans.). *New German Critique*, 34, 32–58. <https://doi.org/10.2307/488338>
- Bolick, K. (2016). *Spinster: Making A Life of One's Own* (Paperback). Corsair.
- Bourke, A. (2004). *Maeve Brennan: Homesick at the New Yorker*. Jonathan Cape [u.a.].
- Brennan, D. (2018). The myth of the Irish insanity epidemic. In B. M. Z. Cohen (Ed.), *Routledge International Handbook of Critical Mental Health* (ebook, pp. 133–140). Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group.
- Brennan, M. (1998). *The Springs of affection: stories of Dublin*. Houghton Mifflin.
- Brennan, M. (2000). *Rose Garden: Short Stories*. (Paperback). Counterpoint.
- Brennan, M. (2002). *The Visitor*. Atlantic.
- Brennan, M. (2016). *The Long-Winded Lady: Notes from The New Yorker* (Paperback). Counterpoint.
- Brown, C. A. (2017). Introduction: Women, Writing, Madness: Reframing Diaspora Aesthetics. In C. A. Brown & J. X. K. Garvey (Eds.), *Madness in Black Women's Diasporic Fictions: Aesthetics of Resistance* (1st ed. 2017). Springer International Publishing : Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Buci-Glucksmann, C. (1994). *Baroque Reason: The Aesthetics of Modernity* (Hardback). Sage Publ.
- Conway, B. (2011). the vanishing catholic priest. *Contexts*, 10(2), 64–65.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/41960210>

- Cowley, U. (2018). Placeless Patriots: The Misplaced Loyalty of “The Middle Nation.” In J. Devlin Trew & M. Pierse (Eds.), *Rethinking the Irish Diaspora: After The Gathering* (1st ed. 2018, pp. 215–227). Springer International Publishing : Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Crampton, J. W., Suite, G. H., & Foucault, P. (n.d.). *British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*.
- de Certeau, M. (1998). *The Practice of Everyday Life*. University of California Press.
<http://qut.ebib.com.au/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=922939>
- Delaney, P. (2003). D.P. Moran and The Leader: Writing an Irish Ireland through Partition. *Éire-Ireland*, 38(3–4), 189–211. <https://doi.org/10.1353/eir.2003.0008>
- Devlin Trew, J. (2018). Diaspora Engagement in Ireland, North and South, in the Shadow of Brexit. In J. Devlin Trew & M. Pierse (Eds.), *Rethinking the Irish Diaspora: After The Gathering* (1st ed. 2018, pp. 15–57). Springer International Publishing : Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Figlerowicz, M. (2017). *Spaces of Feeling: Affect and Awareness in Modernist Literature*. Cornell University Press.
- Fogarty, A. (2002). The Horror of the Unlived Life: Mother-Daughter Relationships in Contemporary Irish Women’s Fiction. In A. Giorgio (Ed.), *Writing Mothers and Daughters: Renegotiating the Mother in Western European Narratives by Women* (pp. 85–118). Berghahn Books.
- Fogarty, G. (2009). *Madness and Transformation in Early Irish Literature: A Psychoanalytic Perspective* [Ph.D., University of Toronto (Canada)].
<https://search.proquest.com/docview/910322179/abstract/D0FD0411593E4998PQ/1>
- Foucault, M. (2006). *History of Madness* (J. Khalfa, Ed.; J. Murphy & J. Khalfa, Trans.; e-book). Routledge.
- Garvey, J. X. K. (2017). Conclusion: Moving Beyond Psychic Ruptures. In C. A. Brown & J. X. K. Garvey (Eds.), *Madness in Black Women’s Diasporic Fictions: Aesthetics of Resistance* (1st ed. 2017). Springer International Publishing : Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gray, B. (2004). *Women and the Irish Diaspora*. Routledge.
- Hardy, S. B., & Wiedmer, C. A. (Eds.). (2005). *Motherhood and space: configurations of the maternal through politics, home, and the body*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hartford, J. J. (2018). A Cultural History of Queer Martyrs. In J. J. Hartford (Ed.), *Sexuality, Iconography, and Fiction in French: Queering the Martyr* (pp. 33–64). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-71903-0_2
- Jackson, A. (2004). *Home rule: an Irish history, 1800 - 2000* (paperback ed). Phoenix.

- Keane, P. J. (1988). *Terrible Beauty: Yeats, Joyce, Ireland, and the Myth of the Devouring Female* (Hardback). University of Missouri Press.
- Ledent, B., O’Callaghan, E., & Tunca, D. (Eds.). (2018). *Madness in Anglophone Caribbean Literature*. Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- Lefebvre, H., Nicholson-Smith, D., & Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The Production of Space* (33. print). Blackwell Publishing.
- Lennon, P. (1967). *Rocky Road to Dublin* [Documentary; Digital]. IFI Irish Film Institute.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66JpC_T3wFM
- Lloyd, D. (2005). The subaltern in motion: subalternity, the popular and Irish working class history. *Postcolonial Studies*, 8(4), 421–437. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790500375108>
- Massey, D. B., Allen, J., & Sarre, P. (Eds.). (1999). *Human geography today*. Polity Press ; Blackwell Publishers.
- McDaid, A. (2019). “As Important ... in My Childhood as the Catholic Church and the Fight for Irish Freedom”: Legacies of Conflict in Maeve Brennan’s Cherryfield Avenue Stories. *New Hibernia Review*, 23(4), 79–99. <https://doi.org/10.1353/nhr.2019.0042>
- Miller, I. (2015). Irish insanity 1800–2000. *Irish Studies Review*, 23(4), 503–504.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09670882.2015.1087083>
- Murray, T. (2017). Joyce, Dubliners and diaspora. *Irish Studies Review*, 26(1), 98–110.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09670882.2017.1412279>
- Murray, T. (2018). Rafferty’s Return: Diaspora and Dislocation in Edna O’Brien’s “Shovel Kings.” In J. Devlin Trew & M. Pierse (Eds.), *Rethinking the Irish Diaspora: After The Gathering* (1st ed. 2018, pp. 229–246). Springer International Publishing : Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan.
- O’Toole, F. (2015, May 29). Sexual politics in Ireland. *OpenDemocracy*.
<https://search.proquest.com/docview/1683984305/abstract/FF74E3658D5B4C0CPQ/1>
- Rabbitte, P. (2018, January 20). When theocracy, not democracy, ruled Ireland. *Sunday Business Post*.
- Robins, J. (1986). *Fools and Mad : A History of the Insane in Ireland*. Institute of Public Administration.
- Scheper-Hughes, N. (2001). *Saints, Scholars, and Schizophrenics: Mental Illness in Rural Ireland* (20th anniversary ed., rev.expanded). University of California Press.
- Schjeldahl, P. (n.d.). *Edward Hopper and American Solitude*. The New Yorker. Retrieved August 25, 2020, from <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/06/08/edward-hopper-and-american-solitude>

- Scull, A. (1979). *Museums of madness: the social organization of insanity in nineteenth-century England*. Allen Lane.
- Tracey, P. A. (2008). *Stalking Irish Madness: Searching for the Roots of my Family's Schizophrenia*. Bantam Dell.
- Walter, B. (2000). *Outsiders Inside: Whiteness, Place, and Irish Women*. Routledge.
- Wolff, J. (1985). The Invisible Flâneuse. Women and the Literature of Modernity. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 2((3)), 37–46.

Chapter Four:

*Feminine Space**Introduction*

In previous chapters, I have discussed the occurrences of three key spatial paradigms, the urban, the diasporic, and the manic, arguing for a multivalent conception of space in the body of Brennan's writing. Yet, in appraising the work of an important woman writer, an Irish woman no less, who was given a public voice (albeit a strictly delimited one) in the crucible of such momentous social upheaval as would permanently transfigure the structures of racial and gender politics in America and the wider world from the mid-1950s, I am conscious of the need of a fourth and final paradigm in the satisfactory assessment of its feminist attributes. However, that paradigm, I argue, may better be understood as *feminine*, rather than specifically feminist, in nature, for I contend that the feminine occupies a unique space in Brennan's literature—in both the theoretical and material sense of the word—one that folds into, and in many ways assimilates—Lefebvre's "multitude of spaces, each one piled upon, or perhaps contained within, the next" (1991, p. 8)—those spaces already examined in the first three chapters of this study.

Certainly, there are parallels here between the kind of resistant feminist space envisaged by Sara Ahmed (2017, p. 113)—the formation of which presupposes what Tiffany Tsantsoulas calls "incommunicative anger" (2020, p. 367)—and the somewhat plastic definition of *feminine* space as I conceive it, which evinces, and is at times structured by, similarly furious silences, such as those that occur in many of Brennan's Dublin stories. When Ahmed writes, "at home, every room of the house can become a feminist room," she manifestly agrees with a notion propounded by Stephani Derisi, who views feminine space as the synthesis of home, its constituent parts, and the feminine subject—often in the role of mother and/or housewife—

—who inhabits, governs, and becomes at once indivisible from, that space. Moreover, Ahmed’s contention that “the present is shaped by colonial histories” (2017, p. 5), is echoed in my submission that, by subverting the colonial-patriarchal act of mapping (the female body[-language]), the woman writer—in this case, Brennan—undertakes a feminisation of the colonised landscape.

In these and other respects, Ahmed’s conception of feminist space approximates that of *feminine* space as “an opportunity to explore new opportunities (a life beyond marriage, a life without children, a life with a career, or both)” (Derisi, 2012, pp. 3-4), which is to say a life in which the alterior potentialities of “strange temporalities, imaginative life schedules, and eccentric economic practices” become possible (Halberstam, 2005, p. 1). Although much of what I expound in the discussion that follows on the nature of feminine space—including the components of fragility, anger, post-colonial subjectivity, and the space of home—can conceivably be ascribed to feminist spatial theory, it is nevertheless my contention that *feminine* space, as a mutative, peculiar space at once different from, yet imbricated in, larger feminist concerns, better assimilates and engages with the ideas of the urban, the diasporic and the manic in surprising and often revealing ways. Whilst it incorporates the themes of home, mothers and motherhood, feminine subjectivity, and women in cities, themes already assessed at length in this thesis, feminine space, I contend, further encompasses the digressive concerns of the domestic and domesticity, fragmentation and dissipation, mapping (the space of) the body, and Irish patriarchal values, in ways that are specifically, even exclusively, *feminine*, rather than feminist, such that they elide and at once transcend the political and the public (the inexorable concern of feminism) in ways that privilege the depoliticised and the personal. In other words, whilst feminist space may be distinguished by a permanent acclivity, a propensity to elevate that which it comprises, *feminine* space, though equally capable of such elevation, is frequently indifferent, fragmentary, and inchoate in nature. Feminine space implies the interstitial, the rudimentary and the individual, as much as it does the collective, public manifestations of womanhood. It exists in the dialectics of failure and happiness, of body and body-language, of motherhood and spinsterhood, of home and domesticity, and it is this, its very ambiguity, figural and spatial, which makes it so relevant to the study of Maeve Brennan, a writer who resists definition and categorisation at many, if not all, levels.

As Angela Bourke indicates in her biography, Brennan neither purchased nor inherited any property in her lifetime. She came nearest to having a proper American home, writes Abigail Palko, in the few years she spent living at Sneden’s Landing, after her marriage to McKelway

in the mid-1950s (2007, p. 79). Yet, for the greater part of half a century, having left her parents' home for good in or around 1940, Brennan leased, borrowed, and vacated dozens of homes, homes beyond counting, or at least what can conceivably be documented, given the increasingly erratic nature of her movements from the mid-1970s¹³⁹. Correspondence kept by *New Yorker* editor William Shawn reveals that at one point in the 1960s, Brennan was tied into leases on three separate properties concurrently—this at a time when her financial affairs were in such disarray that she could hardly afford to maintain even one of them (Bernstein, 1968). Much of what has been written about Brennan since her critical and popular reclamation in the late 1990s emphasises the significance of home, both as concept and artefact, in her life and fiction. Justifiably so; for bound up in the complex psychology of home as Brennan understood it—the locus of bidirectional orientation; the start- or end-point of every journey (“[H]ome is to move towards” (Wiley & Barnes, 2021, p. xvi)—are some of the more condensed and immediately identifiable motifs of her work: the joyless marriages of her Dublin stories, the encumbered domestics of the Herbert’s Retreat sequence, the anxious, often obsessive mothers that people a great deal of her fiction, and by extension, the issues of fragmentariness, mania, (affect) alienation, and disenchantment that trouble them. In this chapter, then, I hope to challenge and complicate the notion of home as a fixed locus of materiality, and a repository for the female and the feminine. By examining archival drafts of *The Visitor* (2000), along with heretofore unpublished material from the Bagot and Derdon narrative cycles, I aim to further disclose the multifarious nature of feminine space in Brennan’s body of work, and indeed the subtle and disruptive ways that she subverted patriarchal norms to effect a feminisation, a symbolic and reified reclamation, of space—hegemonic, public, and private.

Affective Space

It is perhaps a curious fortuity that Brennan’s most celebrated story, “The Springs of Affection,” should lend its name to the posthumously published collection containing all but two of the stories set in her childhood home—notably the narrative cycles featuring the Bagot

¹³⁹ Bourke notes that Brennan disappeared for long periods from the late-1970s. Almost nothing is known of the last ten years of her life before entering the nursing home (which was to be her last home) in Arverne, New York, possibly sometime in the late 1980s. (Bourke, 2004, p. 275).

and Derdon families—so charged with affective import they appear to be¹⁴⁰. Indeed, following the narrative arc that loosely conjoins an otherwise disparate set of stories that nevertheless occur in the same domestic setting, the house itself appears to become a wellspring of the kind of *affective* alienation described by Sara Ahmed as the conversion of good feelings into bad—often by the mere act of noticing (2010, pp. 49, 86)—and an arguably conspicuous source of the conflict and estrangement experienced, time and again, by husbands and wives, and to a lesser extent, parents and children. In a statement that neatly encapsulates the quality of disaffection present in any one of these stories, Ahmed further explains:

“The experience of a gap between the promise of happiness and how you are affected by objects that promise happiness does not always lead to corrections that close this gap. Disappointment can also involve an anxious narrative of self-doubt (why am I made happy by this, what is wrong with me?), or a narrative of rage, where the object that is supposed to make us happy is attributed as the cause of disappointment. Your rage might be directed against the object that fails to deliver its promise, or it might spill out towards those who promised you happiness through the elevation of some things as good. Anger can fill the gap between the promise of a feeling and the feeling of a feeling. We become strangers, or affect aliens, in such moments” (2010, p. 42).

Indeed, there are many such moments in the Dublin stories where the accumulated objects of the home, invested with the characters’ impossible hopes and imagined responsibilities (to protect and regulate the stilted family life against a spectre of meaninglessness, whose depth and form are everywhere apparent beneath the paper-thin semblance of civility and domestic order they represent), expose such affective gaps between the desired object and the object of desire. Hence, the house’s many clocks, rigidly attuned to time as it governs the action within and without the walls of home, can no more exalt or restrain the unbroken hours—“She had been watching one clock or another all day, and all day she had felt she was losing time” *SA* 279—than the new sofa, of the eponymous story, can extend beyond the dimensions of its constituent parts to fill the many interstitial gaps that characterise the “empty” (p. 256) and alien(ating) space of home. Indeed, the house itself, as an aggregate of these objects,

¹⁴⁰ The Cherryfield Avenue home becomes the setting of twenty of Brennan’s twenty-five Irish-based short stories – eighteen of them appearing in *The Springs of Affection* (1997). “The Bohemians,” and “The Beginning of A Long Story” were later reproduced in *The Rose Garden* (2000), whilst the stories, “The Devil in Us,” “The Clever One,” “A Free Choice,” and “The Springs of Affection,” which form part of the earlier collection (1997), take place in whole or in part outside of Dublin.

leaves a conspicuous gap in the narrative, as an object whose promise inevitably gives rise to disappointment and anger.

There are countless instances of affective alienation, in which the protagonist, “literally kills [the] others’ joy with her affective comportment to the world; she gets in the way of happiness” (Tsanstoulas, 2020, p. 271). Referring to Ahmed’s proximate conception of the ‘Feminist Killjoy,’ Tsanstoulas nevertheless captures here the essence of discontent not merely of Brennan’s Irish women, but of her men too, who kill joy in these stories (theirs, and their families’) by what at times appears to be a wilful perversion of perception. Indeed, to paraphrase another of Ahmed’s concepts, if anything it is the specifically *feminine* kill-joy that predominates in these stories. Through a process of immasculation, or a kind of “de-essentialization of masculinity” (Pollock, 2011, p. 195), Brennan enacts a subversion of the patriarchal order of home, which neither elevates the status of woman, or home—nor of woman-and-home as a synergistic monad—but instead inaugurates a doubly-feminised home-space, where both women and men become affectively alien, from each other and themselves¹⁴¹.

The mere act of noticing, writes Ahmed, can effect a lasting, grudging alienation. Brennan’s stories, indeed much of her larger literary output, bristle with what she herself called “moments of recognition” *LWL* 3. At her most generous, they are moments of simple beauty and revelation: an old woman tossing the sheets of a letter from her high-rise apartment window, or a little boy crying “eloquently” on a busy New York street (p. 146); they are the “moments of kindness” (p. 3), which Brennan saw as the germ of recognition. When ungenerous, they are resentful and twisted, imputing to the merest word or gesture a manner of malignancy equalled only in weight and abjection by the albatross of private guilt or shame that hangs from the neck of every bitter protagonist. This grudging recognition is given singular expression in the story “Family Walls,” when Hubert Derdon returns home to find his wife Rose retreating into the kitchen, closing the door on him just as he steps into the hallway. He ruminates on, and fulminates against, her apparent betrayal. Can she possibly have seen him, and yet chosen not to acknowledge him?—“There had been only a second of time, and hardly more than a line of light that narrowed to a thread and then vanished. He

¹⁴¹ This doubly-feminised space theoretically makes lesbians of husband and wife, in the abstractionist sense suggested by Christine Buci-Glucksmann: as the “sister of the prostitute,” she writes, “[the lesbian] protests against the dominant interiority of the family scene, the reduction of love to family and pregnancy” (1994, p. 106).

might as well not have seen Rose at all, but he had seen her, and he wondered if it could possibly have been intentional – to shut the door in his face like that” *SA 172*. On this pinhead of a tenuous question, then, hangs a story so densely charged with resentment and misapprehension that it gives rise to one of Brennan’s most caustic, and arguably most powerful, images: “When Rose appeared in the doorway,” she writes, “Hubert felt such dislike that he smiled” (p. 174).

The smile, in fact, is amongst Brennan’s most potent and subversive of weapons; the first in a well-stocked armoury of affective defences. Conveying a mutable power in Brennan’s literature, the smile is rarely straightforward and almost never appears but that it carries overtones of scrupulous calculation. When, for example, in “The Day We Got Our Own Back,” the Brennan home is ransacked by soldiers, Mrs. Brennan’s response is “to tremble and smile” *SA 41*; whilst in “An Attack of Hunger,” Rose Derdon, we are told, often took to smiling “[i]n the presence of strangers [...] One minute she would produce a smile of trembling timidity, as though she had been told she would be beaten unless she looked pleasant, and then again, a minute later, there would be a grimace of absurd condescension on her face” (p. 151).

In a complete, heretofore unknown, short story, now held at the archives of Emory University, the idiosyncrasy of the smile (as Brennan conceives it) vividly intersects with the concepts of affect alienation and of home itself, in a startling fusion of neurosis and misapprehension—the hallmark of Brennan’s domestic, and arguably her finest, fiction. “What the Grocer’s Children Knew” belongs to the sequence of stories concerning Delia and Martin Bagot. Unpublished and undated, it picks up where “Family Walls,”—the last of her published stories—leaves off. Like Hubert Derdon in “Family Walls,” Martin Bagot *suspects* his wife; he suspects her when he notices her smiling an unaccountable smile that ignites a litany of strange and unfamiliar sensations in him over the troubling hours of an otherwise ordinary morning. On a damp, spring morning, when Martin is suffering from a bad cold, Delia appears in the hallway to urge him not to go to work in his condition: “One way or another he was going to get himself wet through and the cold would go down into his chest and where would he be then?” (Brennan, n.d.-g). Seeing him stare at her, Delia, we read, “turned her eyes away and smiled” (n.d.-g) If Martin thinks it at first “a shocking smile [...] an amazing smile” (n.d.-g), its significance and importunacy will evolve and intensify over the course of a narrative in which the word ‘smile’ appears a staggering forty-seven times, becoming a morbid fixation that leads him to question all the more frantically his wife’s

motivations, and, on at least three occasions, his own sanity¹⁴². The simple recognition of that smile—Ahmed’s act of noticing—is the apparent cause of Martin Bagot’s profound, unreasonable, and at times exasperating unhappiness. Taken literally, Delia’s enigmatic smile appears to strip Martin of the foundational senses of reality and perspective. Her smile, both as action and potentiality, opens up a gap, as narrow as the tapering shaft of light in “Family Walls,” that shines through the kitchen doorway into the hall when Hubert enters: “There had been only a second of time, and hardly more than a line of light that narrowed to a thread and then vanished” *SA* 172. Indeed, there is an obvious parallel between the narrowing aperture of the doorway in “Family Walls” and Delia’s smile in “What the Grocer’s Children Knew.” As Rose closes the kitchen door on Hubert, she is both physically and figuratively denying him access to her body and affections¹⁴³. She inaugurates, thereby, an affective gap that alienates the male figure from the space of the feminine body and the feminine body of home. This same process of disaffection is repeated in Delia’s smile, as the bisected mouth comes to suggest the vaginal orifice, capable of seduction or estrangement, and serving to remind Martin of the sexual privileges he no longer enjoys; reminding him of the fire that the ageing Delia is no longer capable of inspiring in a man who has long since retreated from the marital bed to a small, third bedroom at the back of the house. In both narratives, then, the gap—an impenetrable and minatory space—becomes a source of male disaffection, evincing in its genital semiotics a latent feminine desire that is at once threatening, potentially emasculating, and—somewhat antithetically—atrophying, allowing for the synthesis once again of the apparently discrepant ideas of (female) sexuality and death—“It is as if,” writes Buci-Glucksmann, “the death of the organic body can be represented only in the feminine” (1994, p. 101). The male protagonist confronts his own ontological decay through his coincident desire, and abhorrence of, the feminine *qua* mortal body; Or, as Linda McDowell and Joanne P. Sharp have written: “woman signifies death as well as the defence against it” (1997, p. 203).

¹⁴² In its nominal, verbal, and adjectival forms, ‘smile’ appears at least 47 times in the 23 typed pages comprising what appears to be a complete draft of a short story, “What the Grocer’s Children Knew.” This figure does not take account of several occurrences of the same word in the many hand-written notes, annotations, and fragments that accompany the draft copy (Brennan, n.d.).

¹⁴³ When Hubert stands in the (front) doorway, looking at Rose vanishing through the kitchen door at the far end of the hall, there is an odd mirroring effect, as both protagonists are observed whilst observing (clandestinely). The ‘reciprocitous’ glance, then, initiates a marginally heterotopic space, which Foucault describes as, “at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there” (1986, p. 24). The very act of recognition, here, it seems, serves to undermine reality.

Important here is the place(ment) of Rose's act of repudiation, and by extension Rose's placement within the home. When Hubert enters, Rose is positioned halfway between the kitchen and the hall, partially concealed behind the kitchen door. That it is specifically the kitchen door, not any other, which betrays the affective gap, is of significance, since the kitchen is perhaps the most distinctly designated-female space within an already overwhelmingly feminine space of home (Massey, 1994, p. 180; Wan-lih Chang, 2015, p. 49; Marotta, 2011, p. 17). Taking up Lefebvre's view that, "physical space has no 'reality' without the energy that is deployed within it" (1991, p. 13), Marsha Marotta contends that, "the kitchen is nothing, it has no meaning, without the energy of mothers deployed in it and the practices they engage in there to be 'good' mothers" (2011, p. 20). Like the kitchen in Brennan's real childhood home, the kitchen of the Dublin stories is positioned at the back of the house, an annex to the main living quarters. Perhaps the smallest room in the house, the kitchen is compact and serviceable, standing in sharp contrast to the grander proportions of the living and dining rooms (the sitting room and "back room", as they are referred to in Brennan's stories)¹⁴⁴. If the kitchen is denominated feminine by virtue of the energy deployed within it, then the so-called 'reception rooms' with their cornices, and high ceilings, the "Greek frieze" SA 256, and the ever-present "bow window" are clearly the domain of the husband-father figure (p. 257), who deploys a decidedly masculine energy of order and supremacy therein. When, for example, in "A Young Girl Can Spoil Her Chances," Rose Derdon sits in the "back sitting room" reading the newspaper, it is so much an alien act of indulgence that she feels compelled to hide it from her husband:

"When she heard Hubert's key in the lock she quickly closed the paper and folded it to look as though it had not been opened at all. [...] When [Hubert] got down into the back sitting room Rose was sitting in her chair working on her crochet.

'I put the paper in your chair,' she said.

'Is there anything in it?' he asked.

'No,' she said doubtfully. 'Oh, I don't know. Maybe there is'" SA 95.

The opposite also holds true, in that Hubert is almost never found in the kitchen, except when consuming his breakfast there, as Rose obediently "wait[s] on him" SA 63¹⁴⁵. It is perhaps no

¹⁴⁴ The tiny third bedroom, which Martin Bagot has taken to sleeping in on the return, is a possible contender for the smallest room in the house. It, too, is a feminine space of sorts; see pp. 187-188.

¹⁴⁵ Methodical in his habits, Hubert takes breakfast in the kitchen, but often suppers in the 'back room' by the fire. Wherever he eats, Rose serves him; habitually, it appears, without his having to ask.

coincidence that in the vernacular of the Victorian and Edwardian home, the kitchen was relegated not merely to the back of the house but, as an appendage to the main structure, to the periphery of the domestic sanctum. In many practical ways, the housewife of middle-class (and later working-class) homes simply replaced the domestics of the past, arguably in status as well as in service (Cieraad, 2002, p. 265). Until the advent of open-plan living in the 1960s, the kitchen, and the housewives who inhabited them, were, writes Irene Cieraad, “either situated at the back of the house or in the basement [as part of] the notorious hierarchy of upstairs-downstairs” (p. 265). Indeed, Brennan often identifies the “three steps” that separate the kitchen from the ground floor, inhibiting the housewife in the performance of her duties, and placing her, literally and figuratively, at a (three-step) disadvantage to the superior quarters of the home¹⁴⁶. Though Rose inhabits the already doubly-marginal(ised) space of the threshold and (liminal) doorway, the three steps compose an arguably heightened boundary that further divides her from Hubert’s control and understanding. According to Janson and Tigges, “[T]he impact of the threshold is reduced by means of uniform floor levels and the harmonization of materials, [such that] distinctions are abolished” (2014, p. 332). As a threshold, then, the three steps down serve to emphasise—and concomitantly render more “meaningful” (p. 332)—the boundary between the interjacent space of the hallway and the distinctly feminine space of the kitchen¹⁴⁷. In “What the Grocer’s Children Knew,” when Delia comes running “up from the kitchen” into the hallway to “remonstrate” with Martin (Brennan, n.d.-g), giving him greater cause for suspicion as she does so—“‘You’re making me think I’m worse than I am’ he said accusingly” (n.d.-g)—Delia appears to carry that force of (feminine) *dis*-affection with her, up from the kitchen, imbuing the space of the hall to such an extent that Martin grows conscious of a sense of alienation, both from Delia and the house: “When he was latching the gate he looked back and nodded at her, as though he had been paying a call and was not sure how to take his leave” (n.d.-g). Later, as he continues to ruminate on Delia’s smile, he is further affected by a sense of estrangement, explicitly linking the disaffecting action of Delia’s smile with the physical space of home: “It wasn’t fair, for her to smile like that. It made him reluctant

¹⁴⁶ The steps are mentioned eight times throughout *The Springs of Affection* (1997).

¹⁴⁷ Curiously, in the final passages of “A Free Choice,” when the young Hubert Derdon is lost in desire for Rose, standing in the hallway of Mrs Ramsay’s house, the language is instructive: “When she reached the third step from the bottom,” we read, “[Rose] stood still and looked at him” SA 126. It is at this moment, as Hubert stands below Rose in the hallway, that he feels sufficiently aroused to confess, “I was thinking I would like to take a bite out of you” (p. 126).

to walk into his own house” (n.d.-g). On the synergistic relationship of bodies, architectural and human, Janson and Tigges write:

“My body occupies space; it does not end at the surface of my skin, however, but extends via my clothing (we say: I stand on the floor, not: I stand on my socks), or through implements, things, [through] *the interior of a house*” (2014, p. 38; *italics, my own*).

Just as Rose and Delia embody the house, the house too comes to embody “[the] fluid, changeable, powerful and life-giving properties [of women’s bodies], long been constructed as threatening by men” (McDowell and Sharp, 1997, p. 201). Christina Stevenson locates that “feminine subjectivity on the surface of the room—in the [walls’] ‘overcharged’ ‘bricks and mortar’” (2014, p. 118). “Femininity (dis) composes space,” she continues; “Both a threat to identifiable borders and the object of secure containment, women sit in rooms, they decorate them, and they constitute its symbolic manifestation” (p. 118). Thus, Rose and Delia’s femininity composes domestic space, before acting to subtly undercut, or ‘discompose’ it, by threatening to destabilize—and thereby render porous—the house’s borders, its walls¹⁴⁸. This dis-composition of physical space, or what might usefully be termed the ‘shadow affect’ of the (female) protagonist’s psychosomatic *dis-integration*, is arguably a principal cause of the intrafamilial conflict in many of the Dublin stories.

As an intermediary space, a “passageway” SA 307, and the dialectical locus comprising the point of entry-egress and the public-private sphere within the home, the hall is of particular significance in Brennan’s Dublin fiction. It gives rise to a prophetic excursus in a late story, “Christmas Eve,” when Martin Bagot stands at the bottom of the stairwell listening to Delia upstairs settling the children for bed¹⁴⁹. In a rare instance of direct-address narration in Brennan’s Dublin stories, the narrator briefly steps outside of an otherwise linear narrative to observe of the hallway:

“[It is] a passageway—not to fame and not to fortune but only to the common practices of family life, those practices, habits, and ordinary customs that are the only true realities most of us ever know, and that in some of us form a memory strong enough to give us something to hold on to to the end of our days” SA 307.

¹⁴⁸ Indeed, so porous are the walls that, in the aptly titled “Family Walls,” we are told that Hubert routinely “thought he heard [the neighbour’s] daughter’s hysterical silence” through them SA 179.

¹⁴⁹ Bourke speculates that “Christmas Eve,” the penultimate story in order of publication, was in fact the last written of Brennan’s published works of fiction (2004, p. 262).

The hall, in fact, becomes the setting of decisive interchanges in no less than three of the six Derdon stories, and at least as many from the Bagot sequence¹⁵⁰. Cieraad writes that, “between kitchen and front door [the hallway] symbolises a ritual passage in connecting the non-profit labour of a housewife as performed in the private domain of her kitchen to the public economic activities of suppliers and bill collectors” (2002, p. 274). Indeed, the scarcity of money, and the housewifely economies it necessitates, is arguably part of that pall of disquietude that seems to linger at the margins of every Dublin story—whether relating to Mrs. Derdon, Mrs. Bagot, or the lightly fictionalised Mrs. Brennan in the author’s childhood stories. It is worth reproducing Cieraad’s longer treatment of the subject here. “[T]he doorstep,” she contends,

“is not only a physical border between public and private, but also a symbolic border between two main economic spheres: on the one hand the non-profit domestic services of a mother and housewife and on the other, the commercial services of suppliers. Therefore money, the currency of the public domain, was paid on the doorstep, for it did not belong in the domestic, non-profit domain of the house [where] Love and dedication are [the] currencies.” (2002, p. 274).

Ailbhe McDaid skilfully explores this concept of the “physical border” of the door-hallway in Brennan’s autobiographical story “The Old Man and the Sea.” “[In] the legacy of conflict,” she writes:

“[A] traumatic echo of the very recent past [...] the hammering at the door originates from a more nefarious source than a wizened old man eager to sell his apples. [...] As Maeve looks around the kitchen door to see his hand through the letter box, the Brennans should be comforted, but they cannot shed the instinctive reaction to the disturbance: ‘We knew very well that the slot gave only a limited and indistinct view of the hall but we were unreasonably startled to realize that he had found an opening in the house’” (2019, p. 98)

In the (post-)revolutionary years of Brennan’s childhood, the threshold of the doorstep signifies a bulwark, or first line of defence, against the inimical forces of the outside world, while the hallway becomes the corridor that separates, and at once connects, the space of male conflict

¹⁵⁰ In “A Free Choice,” when the young Hubert Derdon is finally reconciled with Rose, it is in the hallway of Mrs. Ramsay’s house; Rose’s first encounter with Hubert in *The Springs of Affection* (1997), takes place in the hall of the Cherryfield Avenue house, when in “A Young Girl Can Spoil Her Chances,” she ‘surprises’ him there; in “The Poor Men and Women,” Rose once again deceives Hubert in the hallway, leading to later friction. Within the Bagot sequence – “Christmas Eve” aside – the hall is of significance in “What the Grocer’s Children Knew” [*unpublished*], and “The Sofa.”

to what in this instance is the uniquely female space of the kitchen, where the young Maeve and her two sisters are found hiding from the importunate apple seller, alongside their clearly distraught mother.

Waking the Witch

In Brennan's Dublin stories, we see a great deal of that tension between the public currency of commerce and finance, and the private, domestic currency of what Cieraad identifies as "love and dedication" (2002, p. 274), yet which is arguably an elision of what Silvia Federici, in her seminal feminist monograph, *Caliban and the Witch* (1997), sees as the "wage slavery" of women's domestic labour (Dalla Costa *et al.*, 2019, p. 31), denoting obligation in Brennan's fiction as much as, if not more than, any inadequate recompense for the largely unremunerative work of the domestic-familial upkeep. Federici writes of women's labour in the home: "[It] has been the pillar upon which the exploitation of the waged workers [...] has been built" (1997, p. 8). In "The Poor Men and Women," the first-written of Brennan's Dublin stories, we encounter just such a conflict of currencies—public-private; male-female—as it weekly occurs in the hallway of the Derron home. There, "every Friday morning," we read, Rose receives the housekeeping money from Hubert:

"She would waylay him as he came down the stairs buttoning his waistcoat, ready to leave for the office, and ask him for the money. She would hurry up the three steps from the kitchen, where the dirty breakfast things were, to catch him on the way out"
SA 128-129.

The language here, subtly instructive, is replete with the indignity of the "upstairs-downstairs" divide (Cieraad, 2002, p. 265), as the commercial incursion into the sanctum of domestic space obstructs the "gender divide between the female domain of the house-wife and the public domain of [the] male supplier"—here, the husband-as-employer—(p. 274), displacing, in the process, the locus of exchange from the (masculine) doorway to the (feminine) hallway¹⁵¹. Descending the stairs, adjusting his clothing in preparation for the outside world, Hubert encounters Rose in a position of clear subordination, hurrying up from

¹⁵¹ Arguably a concern of Brennan's from the outset, the exchange occurs three paragraphs into "The Poor Men and Women," the first of her Dublin stories, written in 1952, almost a decade before the publication of a sequel, "An Attack of Hunger".

the kitchen where the burden of domestic duty awaits her—“the dirty breakfast things” *SA* 129. Yet, when “[o]ne morning she closed the kitchen door and waited behind it to see what he would do,” Hubert simply withholds payment, quitting the house, we read, “without a pause,” leaving Rose outsmarted and feeling compelled to “ask [him] for [the money] point-blank,” as he sits by the fire that evening (p. 129)¹⁵². Rose’s subordination, her humiliation, and deprecation as house-keeper and wife, arguably emblematises the “master-slave dualism” between man and woman (Chattopadhyay, 2017, p. 161), or what Federici identifies as “the thinking head and the body-machine” (1997, p. 148); which is to say, between rational man and insensate, sensuous woman, immured within the margins of a ‘body-machine,’ which is at once “a source of identity and at the same time a prison” (p. 16). In *Caliban and the Witch* (1997), Federici examines the witch trials that silenced, or violently dispatched of, hundreds of thousands of women—mostly “single, widowed women, and [...] women who dared to speak or protest” (Chattopadhyay, 2017, p. 165)—during the middle ages, opining (amidst a great many far-reaching conclusions) that, “the body has been for women in capitalist society what the factory has been for male waged workers: the primary ground of their exploitation and resistance” (1997, p. 16).

Indeed, something of that master-slave bifurcation is evidenced in a hand-written supplement to the typescript of “What the Grocer’s Children Knew”. As Martin Bagot wonders what could possibly be behind Delia’s bewildering smile, he despairs at her reckless, almost animal mind:

“[H]er *thoughts*, Her
thoughts. It was laughable
 except that it was too sad for
 laughter, to attribute *thought* to
 that poor, fragile, gentle, kind
 wandering brain. There were times
 when they were first married when
 Martin had been afraid to leave
 Delia alone in the house for fear her
 soft head would run away with
 her. There was no knowing what she
 would do. Ask one of the begging if (*sic*)

¹⁵² Parenthetically, Rose’s furtive behaviour here and in the opening pages of “A Young Girl Can Spoil Her Chances,” allows for the possibility that in “Family Walls” she may indeed be dissembling at the beginning of the story.

wretches who came to the door to come in and live with them, that was the least of what she might do. She was capable of any madness, in those days. She filled the house with stray animals, well, two stray cats and the kittens of one of them. He had had to put his foot down there” (Brennan, n.d.-g; *Brennan’s italics*).

By identifying Delia with the frail, helpless “stray[s]”—human and animal—that come into her care, and further equating the conventionally feminine act of caring itself with “madness”, Martin asserts dominion over his wife’s apparently precipitous mind and body, and ensures her double subjugation as a woman both dehumanised and animalised. Martin’s continued alienation from Delia’s body—physical and figural—nevertheless inaugurates a prurient concern for the systematic governance of the (feminine) body, and its corporeal processes. As Federici notes, “While [in the process of primitive accumulation] the individual was increasingly dissociated from the body, the latter became an object of constant observation, as if it were an enemy” (1997, p. 153). Indeed, Hubert’s conviction, in “Family Walls,” that “[Rose’s] appetite was something to be ashamed of” *SA 176-177*, prefigures Martin’s “fear and repugnance” of Delia’s corporeality (Federici, 1997, p. 153), and the carnality it inevitably engenders. “Particularly repugnant,” writes Federici, “were those bodily functions that directly confronted ‘men’ with their ‘animality’” (p. 153). By identifying Delia’s “animality”—the alien presence of the non-(re)productive body—Martin paradoxically acknowledges his own; and in so doing becomes ever more alienated from himself and the (feminised) space around him.

Possibly a secondary consequence of Mrs. Bagot’s affinity with animals (the frequently humanised white terrier Bennie, and the cats Minnie and Rupert), is an instantiation of Federici’s central postulate concerning the mystic abilities—Buci-Glucksmann’s “angelic spheres” (1994, p. 65)—of women in the pre-Enlightenment “rationalisation of space and time” (Federici, 1997, p. 143). Moreover, both Delia and Rose share an affecting solicitude for the plants and flowers that grow in their small gardens front and rear, and appear to commune with the delicate ferns that grow in the ‘bow window’ of the Ranelagh house in almost every Dublin story. Federici observes that, “[w]ith the persecution of the folk healer, women were expropriated from a patrimony of empirical knowledge, regarding herbs and healing remedies” (p. 201). Arguably, Rose and Delia’s consecration of home and garden

(the *homespace*) to the equal care of children, plants, and animals, re-introduces the healing powers of the witch (which is to say the capacity to re-enchant the rigidly mechanised, rationalised, masculine world), and a quality of animism; the same that precipitated the mediaeval witch-trials that “deepened the divisions between women and men, teaching men to fear the power of women” (p. 165)¹⁵³. A possible epilogue to the Bagot sequence, also unpublished, and held at the archives in Atlanta, Georgia, appears to reinforce that same animistic sense, or what might better be termed the primacy of the natural order, which is to say the exaltation of the non-human over the human.

“Mrs Bagot’s Legacy” recounts the experience of young Delia Bagot—grandchild of Mrs. Bagot, and daughter to Margaret Bagot, who herself appears as a child in a number of the published Dublin stories—as she helps her mother to clear out her grandmother’s house (the ubiquitous Cherryfield Avenue home) for the very last time. Predominantly an account of Delia’s memories of her older namesake, the story’s duality is suggested from the outset by an alternative title (later discarded), “This Hate Comes Straight from the Heart.” It is a hatred uniquely expressed by the now adult Margaret Bagot, whose enduring resentment, epitomised in the frenzied uprooting of her mother’s beloved garden, sounds a discordant music above the tender grandmaternal devotion evinced by her youngest daughter Delia. There is a clear polarity in the characters’ attitudes to the *homespace*, as a physico-spatial embodiment of the elder (now deceased) Delia Bagot. That *homespace*, which to young Delia denotes (grand-)maternalistic stability, protection, and endurance, to Margaret stands for oppression, unhappiness, and if endurance, then strictly of a kind that challenges her resolve to destroy it. Indeed, Margaret’s jaundiced memories, and even (as the title suggests) heart-felt hatred of her mother, gives rise to a systematic assault on the garden, the house, and its furnishings:

“As she hurried about the little house, throwing clothes into boxes and tearing up papers and pulling bed (*sic*) and chests of drawers and even the sideboard away from the walls as though to make sure to herself that their separation from the house had

¹⁵³ Even Hubert’s jibe “Always the martyr, Rose,” when she complains that, not having received her housekeeping money, she might have “run short” SA 129; even this subtly admits of the possibility of Rose’s primitive witchery. Indeed, Rose’s seemingly exaggerated concern over the shortage of money may be borne out in the second of the Derdon stories, “An Attack of Hunger,” where the weekly exchange in the hallway, already described in “The Poor Men and Women,” is set out once again: “Hubert was a frugal man. [...] He had calculated that the household could be run on such and such a sum, and that was the sum he produced every Friday morning. He always had it ready in his hand, counted out to the penny, when he came downstairs on his way to work.” (p. 149).

begun and would be final, all the time she kept thinking it was her own long unhappiness she was destroying” (Brennan, n.d.-d).

Yet, as Margaret’s hands are engaged in the disfigurement of her mother’s carefully ordered back garden—one by one, we read, “she snapped the flowers off, or tore, or pulled at them until they gave up [...] and where she had passed the beds were defeated, all spirit gone” (Brennan, n.d.-d)—the same garden that, time and again throughout the narrative cycle, affords Mrs. Bagot (and Mrs. Derdon in the concurrent narrative sequence) one of a very few expressive freedoms; as Margaret’s hands wreak a bitter, futile vengeance, Delia, upstairs, applies herself to a wholly more synergistic interplay with the natural elements of home. Standing at the window, she reaches down into her grandmother’s prized Virginia Creeper, the same that distinguished Mrs. Bagot’s house from all others on the street, “and put her hand in among the leaves. The leaves that were cool and tender. Their stalks slid away from her hand and she felt the rough, tenacious vine” (n.d.-d) There, she lets loose a single thread of her grandmother’s shawl which she has carefully retrieved from the hinge of an old wardrobe, releasing it, “to cling or to blow away, whichever happened” (n.d.-d). Later, in the half-emptied bedroom, still palpating, still discovering by touch and not by sight—“[s]he put her hand in on the shelf [and] moved it around slowly as though she was smoothing the wood” (n.d.-d)—still groping in the dark, as it were, Delia uncovers the titular ‘legacy’; carefully wrapped in tissue paper at the back of the wardrobe, she finds Bennie’s collar, “worn, rubbed leather with an old brass buckle fastening that had not been allowed to grow dull” (n.d.-d). Moved almost to tears by memories of the little white dog so devoted to her grandmother, Delia slips the collar, paper and all, into her pocket and catching herself in the mirror then, observes: “The pocket still lay quite flat. No one could tell she was hiding two people in it. Mrs. Bagot and Benny (*sic*), quite safe” (n.d.-d). The curious elevation of Bennie to personhood concomitantly initiates a bestialised image of Mrs. Bagot, memorialised here in the mute devotion of a domestic animal, and the decorative collar, symbol of its eternal subordination. Delia’s find casts a poignant and subtly discomposing light on her grandmother’s ‘legacy’, at once diminutive and naturalistic. Mrs. Bagot’s custom of ascribing value to the valueless—“[L]ook at those rags [Margaret cried], and she folded them up and put them away as though they were worth something” (n.d.-d)—effects a legacy of affection—“Everything she touched, she touched with admiration [Delia thought] Everything except herself” (n.d.-d)—yet one that ultimately finds expression in the

(voiceless) animal, apparently eliding the human, filial affection bitterly regretted by her daughter Margaret, who concludes:

“All my life [...] she was there, smiling, hopeful, watching and waiting for a sign from me, and I never gave her the sign she wanted. I couldn’t stand her, and I couldn’t stand hurting her, but she asked for it” (Brennan, n.d.-d).

Indeed, this animalistic primacy is perhaps best illustrated in the fact that Mrs. Bagot’s legacy of love is quintessentially embodied in Bennie the white terrier, not the infant boy lost in childbirth, whose memory dominates a number of the Bagot texts (“The Eldest Child,” and “The Birthday” [*unpublished*] amongst them), and who arguably comes to define and (mis)shape the constrained relations between Mrs. Bagot and her husband Martin, the father and grandfather who is hardly more than an afterthought in this already postscript-like story. Of course, the wider implication of the narrative’s (presumptive) title, is that it is the living, not the dead, that suffer the consequences of Mrs. Bagot’s legacy, which is clearly one of profound disaffection between mother and daughter, and to a certain extent between woman and “MotherSpace” itself (Marotta, 2011, p. 16), as expressed within and through the feminine space of home¹⁵⁴. Margaret’s apparent estrangement from her mother has clearly given rise to the mannered exchanges she shares with her daughter Delia, who evinces an affection for Mrs. Bagot quite at odds with Margaret’s clear antipathy. Like her grandmother in name and nature, young Delia is prone to bemused silences—“She was a silent girl, especially in her mother’s presence. It always seemed to her that what her mother said was unanswerable, or not worth answering [...] It was better not to speak”; She exhibits the same passive acceptance in face of her dejection—“She thought ‘It doesn’t matter’ [...] She kept saying ‘It doesn’t matter’ as though she was consoling somebody” (Brennan, n.d.-d). And, though perhaps more like Rose Derdon than Mrs. Bagot, Delia expresses a tragically short-sighted need to be thought “a good child” (n.d.-d)¹⁵⁵. Yet, of greater significance still is

¹⁵⁴ Sarah Hardy and Caroline Wiedmer conceptualise ‘MotherSpace’ as the “ideological space where practices [of how to be a “good” mother] are constituted and carried out” (2005, p. 21). A discursive space, it encourages proscribed processes of motherhood, “which [are] based on the normalizing gaze [where] MotherSpace is linked with seeing and being seen” as ever-attentive, ever-subservient (p. 19).

¹⁵⁵ In this and other respects, young Delia Bagot has more in common with Rose Derdon than with her own grandmother, Mrs. Bagot (analogous though both women are generally considered to be). Rose’s strained relations with her own mother (depicted in “A Young Girl Can Spoil Her Chances” and “The Rose Garden”) resembles that of Margaret’s to Mrs. Bagot, and if demonstrably less egregiously, young Delia’s to Margaret. Rose’s knowledge that “she must be a good child” SA 182 is echoed, in “Mrs. Bagot’s Legacy,” in Delia’s desire to remain “as she was, as she had always been, and as she always would be, a good child” (Brennan, n.d.-d).

Delia's sensibility to the complex realities of the (feminine) *homespace*, expressed in an ability to commune, as Mrs. Bagot is often observed to do in the published texts, with the physical space of the house and the objects that fill and surround it—a feminine prerogative that Margaret Bagot arguably eschews and (vainly) subverts in her attempts to dis-integrate house and garden. The “two people” (her grandmother and Bennie) now safely in Delia's pocket, and having covered over the upstairs windows and shut the internal doors of the house that had once represented to her “a warm place, contentment” (n.d.-d), she withdraws through the front door a final time, conscious as she goes of a resignation, external, yet equal to her own: “[S]he felt the house no longer minded that she was abandoning it. She felt the house had stopped hoping” (n.d.-d). Already indistinguishable from the fleshly figure of her grandmother, the house becomes a channel for Delia's own thoughts and affections, enunciating the torpefying disaffection that tethers her to (the spirit of) Mrs. Bagot: “It doesn't matter (that is what the house said now, coldly, indifferently, even inimically, and the house had the last word” (n.d.-d).

Derisi avers that, “[t]he relationship women have with inanimate, and particularly domestic, objects shows how time (the past and the future) manipulates freedom in the present moment” (2012, p. iv). Indeed, the house has come to occupy a mediate position between the older and younger women (Delia *and* Margaret), who share in the distinctly feminine legacy of the maternal and the domestic, a feminine bond unyielding as the vine that clings “tenaciously” to the house (Brennan, n.d.-d), binding all three women to each other, and each, in turn, to the “socially imposed obligation[s]” of womanhood (Wan-Lih Chang, 2015, p. 52), as epitomised in Mrs. Bagot's thralldom to home and family. So synergistic is Delia's connection with the *homespace*, that the wardrobe, which has always stood in her grandparents' bedroom, becomes in its dislocation, an analogue for Mrs. Bagot herself. “Dust from the wood, and rust from the hinge”—Delia's vaguely liturgical thought as she pictures the coffin-like fixture's removal—“The old wardrobe was about to take its final journey. It would not last through another lifetime. It would splinter when they took it down the stairs” (Brennan, n.d.-d).

Yet, instead of “grow[ing] out of their expected roles” (2012, pp. 3-4) by “merging” with the objects of the home (p. 4), as Derisi proposes, the young Delia and Margaret Bagot appear to be doubly time-bound, oppressed by the memory of Mrs. Bagot's feminine subjection as much as, and conceivably as a cause of, their own. Moreover, this is just as true of Mrs. Bagot herself, whose recurrent fixation with “inanimate [...] domestic” objects (p. iv)—the sofa of the eponymous short story, the carpet in “The Carpet with the Big Pink Roses on It”,

and the big clock in “Stories of Africa”—offers not “freedom” (p. 4), but accountability¹⁵⁶; For Rose and Delia are as time-bound by the many clocks in the house as they are duty-bound to beat the carpets, tend the fires, and attend to the general upkeep of the home. Indeed, they are ultimately house-bound by a confused and infrangible (self-)identification with the home and its furnishings.

Of course, there are tragic echoes in the lives of the two Delia Bagots. By taking Bennie’s collar, carrying it on her person out of the house, young Delia arguably appropriates the weight of bondage—Bennie’s *as well as* Mrs. Bagot’s—that it symbolises. Although the advent of affordable, labour-saving domestic appliances from the late 1930s onwards (Williams, 2018, p. 107) meant that young Delia, in her own lifetime, would not have been expected to thrash carpets and tend fires as her grandmother had done, she would arguably find that, like her counterpart across the Atlantic—the “wealthy, white American [house]wife” (Traister, 2016, p. 45)—she was to be “relieved of her responsibilities for at-home production,” only to become “responsible for scrupulously maintaining a domicile that serve[d] as the feminized inverse of the [...] bustling, masculine public space” (p. 45). Certainly, Delia’s elegiac leave-taking of the house, both as a physical space and reified ‘Mother-Space,’ suggests that she nurtures a nostalgia for, and an arguable desire to reproduce, the feminine model of hegemonic domesticity embodied by her grandmother and by Rose Derdon¹⁵⁷.

Yet, Delia’s withdrawal from the house is not intrinsically an unhappy one. There is hope, however tenuous, for the young woman who is capable of standing in her grandmother’s bay window, “in full view of the houses opposite,” untroubled by the neighbours’ judgements—“she didn’t care” (Brennan, n.d.-d)¹⁵⁸. As she stands in the hallway—the same in which

¹⁵⁶ Even if we are to take Derisi at her most literal, any such “sense” of freedom achieved is merely that, a simulacrum of freedom (2012, p. 4).

¹⁵⁷ In her exposition of “MotherSpace,” Marotta avers that, “the messages to mothers are clear: this is where you belong, this is where it is appropriate for you to be, this is how you should think about yourself” (2011, p. 17). Certainly, this seems to be true of Brennan’s domestic stories, which arguably respond to the socially-stratified image of woman, notably woman’s domestic life. The Dublin stories in particular expose the isolation, aloneness and (affect-)alienation that mothers – like Brennan’s own mother – doubtlessly experienced in early twentieth-century Ireland. Indeed, many of the circumstances of Brennan’s life may be read as a reaction to, and a rejection of, the perpetuation of those social strictures in mid-twentieth-century urban America.

¹⁵⁸ By contrast, Rose Derdon, in “The Poor Men and Women,” “could see the clouds easily from the windows of her house, but then she considered the neighbours. It disgusted her to think they might see her standing looking out, and perhaps imagine she had some interest in what they did, so she kept away from the windows except when she had to clean them” SA 131. Unlike Rose, however, Mrs. Bagot often stands looking out of

Martin Bagot unhappily observes his wife's penetrating smile in "What the Grocer's Children Knew"; the same that separates Hubert Derdon from his apparently dissembling wife Rose in "Family Walls"—Delia notes, "the doors into the back sitting room and the front sitting room were closed" (n.d.-d). The house's two formal reception rooms, which is to say its public and consequently masculine rooms, are already, and even now, closed off to her. By contrast: "to the back, three steps [down] the kitchen [...] door stood open there" (n.d.-d). Yet, Delia is as incurious about that same kitchen—she literally "turn[s] away, without raising her eyes to see more" (n.d.-d)—as she is about the two drawing rooms, withdrawing instead through the front door, and arguably yielding to the masculine (public) space of the home, while yet rejecting the prototypically feminine space of the kitchen as she goes. There, in the public space of the front garden, Delia acknowledges the house's "last word" (n.d.-d), its ipseity and alterity:

"the house had the last word. And it was the very last word, so much the last and the final word that it even held fast to its own echoes. For whatever it was or would be, the house contained itself now, itself, its emptiness, and its lament" (Brennan, n.d.-d).

No longer the house "that *might* blow up, but that would never blow up" (*SA 239; italics, my own*), as it had been in the first published of the Bagot Stories ("The Carpet with the Big Pink Roses on It," published 1963), the house has become, for Delia at least, a hermetic monad; its sphere of influence so diminished as to make it seem capable now of little more than its own self-containment.

If there is a sense in which Delia, standing before the house, has taken from it all that she needs to move beyond it, Margaret Bagot, still stuck in the back garden, offers a countervailing impression, one with disquieting echoes of her childhood as depicted in the published story, "Christmas Eve". Despite her outward repudiation of the *homespace*, when the narrative concludes Margaret is no less dominated, no less defined by the caprice of home as the embodied Mother-Space—as the empty, brick-and-mortar expression of a blighted mother-daughter legacy. As Margaret prods and pokes at the rock garden that had grown so strong that "it could have been called a fortress garden" (Brennan, n.d.-d), she tests, we read, "the solidity of the bigger stones, as curiously as though she was confronted by a large animal that she had always feared and that was now dead" (n.d.-d). As a final image of the adult

windows – though rarely quite as confidently as young Delia Bagot, and apparently never in the front bedroom windows.

Margaret, it is a bittersweet one, for it recalls the vivid evocation of “family life” in an earlier story, “Christmas Eve” *SA* 307. In it, Brennan writes:

“It is a matter of love, and whether the love finds daily, hourly expression in warm embraces and in the instinctive kind of attentiveness animals give to their young or whether it is largely unexpressed, as it was among the Bagots, does not really matter very much in the very long run. It is the solid existence of love that gives life and strength to memory, and if, in some cases, childhood memories lack the soft and tender colours given by demonstrativeness, the child grown old and in the dark knows only that what is under his hand is a rock that will never give way” *SA* 307.

The same story concludes with the rather ominous image of the young Margaret Bagot and her sister Lily (not mentioned in “Mrs. Bagot’s Legacy”) fingering their Christmas parcels in the dark—“They went over each parcel with their hands, getting the outline and trying to make out from the shape what was inside” *SA* 307. Pawing at the rocks in her mother’s garden, the bewildered, now adult Margaret appears to confound the narrator’s wisdom, suggesting that the stilted silence of the Bagot household, its suffocating and paradoxically undemonstrative atmosphere, manifestly matters a very great deal. Indeed, while it is tempting to read into Margaret’s fear of the “large animal” (Brennan, n.d.-d) that same primal rebellion of the witch-woman (Chattopadhyay, 2017, p. 163)—the feminine body *re-composed* “of its occult forces” (Federici, 1997, p. 140)—there is little doubt that her spectral animal, “now dead” (Brennan, n.d.-d), is altogether more temporal than any metaphysical call to feminine agency. Margaret attempts to doubly subdue Mrs. Bagot’s legacy, by (once again) dehumanising her—obliquely reinforcing young Delia’s equation of her grandmother with the little white terrier Bennie—and, in desecrating the generative space of the garden, reinforcing the ironically masculine subjugation of the feminine body, which, as Chattopadhyay insists, “become[s] the terrain [...] from where [it is] summoned, disciplined, marked, exploited, forced, humiliated and even annihilated” (2017, p. 169). In attempting to repudiate her mother’s legacy, then, Margaret arguably regresses to that benighted child-like state, groping her way in the shadows cast by a childhood bereft of the “instinctive, [animal] attentiveness” (Brennan, n.d.-d) so intrinsic to the feminine subject that in “What the Grocer’s Children Knew,” Martin Bagot ascribes to his daughters, even as children, that same (potentially inimical) animalism:

“They seemed to be always in the way [he thought]. Not in the way, exactly, but present with a commanding animal presence that never wearied and that seemed to be aware and watchful even while it slept” (Brennan, n.d.-g).

Anne Fogarty avers that, “the quest for autonomy and selfhood is depicted to be eternally at odds with the [Irish] female experience of filial dependence and the maternal prerogative to nurture” (2002, p. 88). Margaret’s repudiation of that maternal inheritance of paganistic magic—her rebel witch—is not merely “matrophobi[c]” (p. 113), but inevitably matricidal. For in prodding the fearful animal’s corpse in her mother’s garden, we cannot escape the possibility that Margaret has (finally) killed her mother, and in doing so severed the “motherline” (O’Reilly, 2004, p. 212)—the feminine heritage that “roots [the] daughter in a gender, a family, and a feminine history” (p. 212). In her mother’s beloved garden, Margaret uproots the bonds of maternal heritage, leaving herself still more bewildered, and literally surrounded by the now-decaying bounty of her mother’s careful industry.

Irish Identity

Notwithstanding the foregoing, I do not mean to suggest that the space-place of home—that home “as a woman’s place” (Massey, 1994, p. 180)—is intrinsically feminine, or in fact anything but a social “construction” (p. 180); indeed, that the suburban home was (or is) *ipso facto* anything akin to a safe, woman-only space ensuring her safety from (typically male) aggressions¹⁵⁹. As Elizabeth Grosz writes, “The myth that the home was a safe place for women and children was also challenged by analyses of the gendered power relations and male dominance that created home as a ‘man’s castle’” (1997, pp. 263-264)—she might also have cited the dubious example of ‘the man of the house.’ Supporting this claim, Hardy and Wiedmier aver that “home can also be space that creates oppressive expectations for mothers who do not conform to conventional [...] narratives” (2011, p. 6). Nevertheless, in Brennan’s domestic idiom, home echoes the terminal ambivalence of her (feminine) bodies, such that the house acts as both a “source of identity and [a] prison” for Rose and Delia (Federici, 1997, p. 16). Yet, within this paradigm, there is no clearly gendered ascendancy—beyond the ascendancy of the feminised (and feminising) space of home. Despite outward concessions to gendered codes of conduct, Brennan’s men—Martin Bagot, especially—occupy an ‘Other’

¹⁵⁹ In chapter one, I treat of the inimical living condition for women living in New York in light of the sweeping urban renewal schemes that fundamentally changed the character of the city from the mid-1940s. See “Urban Space,” pp. 22-23.

place within (and, as we shall see in due course, without) the home¹⁶⁰. This ‘Other’ place is clearly circumscribed, often interstitial, and in spite of the male protagonists’ conspicuous efforts to ‘hegemonise’ the feminine subject within the home, at a clear remove from patriarchal hegemony. Like Rose and Delia, Brennan’s men occupy liminal spaces, and are often observed to falter at thresholds within the *homespace*. Indeed, they are frequently either unaware of their own eviration, or if aware, so confounded by a sense of otherness as to be rendered immobile, unable to proceed, and in this, once again closely aligned with their bewildered wives. Ironically, then, the Cherryfield Avenue house becomes a comprehensively feminizing, and consequently subjugating, space, usurping the patriarchal privilege of colonisation, and thereby allowing for the possibility of home as a *refractory* feminine space. Whilst nature and the feminine body are frequently conflated in the Dublin stories, Brennan’s treatment of a time-worn convention that crosses cultural and epochal divides is often unorthodox, oftener subversive, and, I argue, in constant dialogue with the larger theme of hegemonic masculinities in the post-revolutionary Irish state (Lewis *et al.*, 1997, p. 201). Consequently, I think it prudent to dwell a little longer on the themes of women’s bodies, the garden as a metonymy for (feminised) nature, and the subjugation, marked exploitation, and arguable colonisation of both *bodies*, in the specific context of post-colonial Irish identities. Catherine Nash notes that, “the shift from colony to independent nation did not entail the redundancy of the discourses of male power; rather these were transposed and translated into new forms within Irish nationalist discourse” (1994, p. 229). As the daughter of an Irish revolutionary, and in later life a critic of jingoistic nationalist rhetoric, Brennan was almost certainly familiar with such discourses¹⁶¹. The decades preceding Irish independence (the same that preceded Brennan’s birth) witnessed an amplification in debates concerning Irish identity. Of particular concern (amongst nationalist writers) was the long-standing ascription of femininity to the subjugated Irish male, endorsed by cultural critics like Matthew Arnold and Ernest Renan—“M. Renan’s *infinie délicatesse de sentiment qui caractérise la race Celtique*, [...] Sentimental, if the [Irishman’s] nature is to be characterised by a single term, is the best term to take” (Arnold, 1867, p. 100; Nash, 1997, p. 236)¹⁶². According to Sara Gerend, “the

¹⁶⁰ By “gendered codes of conduct,” here, I mean that both husbands, Hubert and Martin, are the breadwinners, whilst Rose and Delia perform the conventional, housewifely duties within the home.

¹⁶¹ For more on Brennan’s attitude to nationalism, see the “Introduction” to this thesis, pp. 9-12.

¹⁶² “M. Renan’s infinite delicacy of feeling that characterises the Celtic race” (Arnold, 1867, p. 100; *translation, my own*).

Substantiating such claims of femininity, Arnold regarded the Irish as “romantic and attractive” but also – moments later – as “undisciplinable, anarchical and turbulent” (p. 109).

English empire described Irish men, in particular, as emasculated [...] compared to superior English imperialists” (Gerend, 2011, p. 44)¹⁶³. Moreover, Ian Miller holds that early republicans, eager to counter such imperialist depictions of Irishmen as “somewhat effeminate [...] adopted a characteristically masculine form of political activism that endorsed manly, soldier-like qualities” (2016, p. 122). Notwithstanding the persistence of synecdochic and metaphoric depictions of Ireland as a (contingently young and beautiful) woman—notably within the concurrent “[Literary] Revival project of Irish self-fashioning” (Doyle, 2010, p. 33)—nationalist writers reimagined the Irish race as distinctly Gaelic, rather than Celtic, in nature (Nash, 1997, p. 236)¹⁶⁴. Roused by Douglas Hyde’s “vigorous program of de-anglicization” (Delaney, 2003, p. 192), the Irish Ireland movement espoused by D. P. Moran advanced the qualities of “the Gael [as] the matrix of the Irish people” (2006, p. 30). Moran’s philosophies of Irish Ireland, writes Nash:

“asserted masculinity as the essential characteristic of the ‘Gael.’ While the idea of ‘woman’ remained the embodiment of national spirit and the allegorical figure for the land of Ireland, this land now became the domain of the overtly masculine” (1997, p. 236).

Yet, the versions of Irish masculinity that emerged during and after the War of Independence were no less contested than those that preceded it, defined as much by what Miller sees as “pain and torture” (2016, p. 118), as by a lingering sense of emasculation. For, in the post-colonial transition from “Slave to master, Margin to Centre, Other to Self” (Smyth *quoted in* Nash, 1994, p. 241), the Irishman arguably found himself burlesquing the actions of his former oppressor, unfastening his own bonds of servitude, whilst reinforcing those of the now doubly-subjugated Irishwoman. Smyth writes of the Irishwoman’s plight in the aftermath of Independence: “[P]owerless under patriarchy, [she was] maintained as Other of the ex-Other, colonized of the post-colonialized” (p. 241). Consequently, the tension between definitions of Irish masculinity and femininity increased, as one sought to define itself in growing

¹⁶³ Bronwen Walter attests that, in nineteenth-century America, the influx of Irish women domestics was so great that the names “‘Mary’, ‘Norah’ and ‘Maureen’ were all understood to indicate the Irish population as a whole” (2000, p. 62). Although, she continues, no such naming processes occurred in the same period across the Irish Sea in Britain, it is arguably an example of the broader feminisation of the Irish male. Moreover, Sara Gerend asserts that, “During English colonial rule, Ireland was continually represented as a feminine, deficient, and backward space” (2011, p. 44).

¹⁶⁴ Although *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* (written in 1902 by Yeats and Lady Gregory) engages in the “woman-nation” tradition, Maria-Elena Doyle cites (male) Revival authors Synge, Martyn, Yeats and AE as having “opted to depict active male heroes who either protected passive heroines [...] or overshadowed more harshly drawn villainesses” (2010, p. 33).

opposition to the other—echoing, thereby, the (British) colonial model of ‘othering’ the (Irish) subaltern.

Terminal Thresholds

I have already touched on the importance of thresholds in Brennan’s writing. Indeed, the Dublin stories abound with them. When young Rose and Hubert are finally reunited at the end of “A Free Choice,” Hubert feels Rose “hesitate” at the entrance to the drawing room *SA 127*. Brennan’s fiction contains many such moments of hesitation, such as in “Family Walls,” when Hubert thrice hesitates at doorways within the space of one page. Having decided to make peace with Rose after the earlier misunderstanding in the hallway, he readies himself to wash his hands in the upstairs bathroom before joining her for dinner in the kitchen—“[B]ut even so,” we read, “he hesitated before opening the door” (p. 189). There is no apparent cause for his irresolution—“once the door was open he was upstairs like a shot and into the bathroom” (p. 189)—yet, moments later, Hubert hesitates a second time at the kitchen door; and finally, seeing the back door wide open, he hesitates a third time at the threshold between the kitchen and back garden, noting that, “[Rose] had gone out there, and he could not follow her” (p. 190). Hubert’s refusal to cross the threshold between the (already adjunctive) space of the kitchen and the rear garden (the same that the adult Margaret Bagot will one day mutilate), sits uneasily, if instructively, with an earlier liminal encounter from the same story. Thinking of the very first lodgings he and Rose had taken in Dublin, Hubert recalls that, in his “self-conscious” (p. 183) excitement to open the front door,

“he nearly fell through the doorway ahead of Rose, but Frank grabbed him and held him back, and Rose went in first. ‘Ladies first!’ Frank shouted, loud enough to rouse the whole neighbourhood” *SA 183*.

This apparently slight occurrence nevertheless exposes the rigorous spatial boundaries that Frank Guiney, as an agent of social conformity, blithely *re-enforces*:

“Frank made a great display of trying to pick Hubert up and carry him around. ‘This is a remarkable parcel, Madam,’ he said to Rose, while Hubert struggled. ‘It has delusions of grandeur. It thinks it’s alive’” *SA 184*.

The spatial interdictions of the home—even a home made of just “two rooms” *SA 183*—are mapped on to the “body-subjects” that inhabit it (Grosz, 1997, p. 237). The inscribed body

becomes a “living significatio[n]” (p. 237) “a boundary between the individual subject and that which is Other to it” (Lewis *et al.*, 1997, p. 3). When Hubert finally catches sight of Rose, raising herself awkwardly from her knees in the garden, it is through the window of the back sitting room. As the final (published) Dublin story comes to a close, Hubert stands watching Rose through the glass, at a physical remove from the natural space of the garden. There, he sees her raise an arm to fix her hair, and as she does so, Hubert “[sees] her wrist and her elbow, and in that fragment of her he [sees] all of Rose, as the crescent moon recalls the full moon to anyone who has watched her at the height of her power” *SA 191*¹⁶⁵. The erotics of the body, now carnalised within the feminine space of the garden, is indistinguishable from “the ontological ageing of the body [represented in] the erotics of the skeleton” (Buci-Glucksmann, 1994, p. 101)—Rose literally has to wipe the earth from her hands *SA 191*. And Hubert remains besieged within the home, trapped between desire (past), and revulsion (present).

In the Bagot household, too, we see examples of that same liminality, that same “sense of displacement and crisis of identity” of the male protagonist within the feminine *homespace* (Nash, 1997, p. 238). In “What the Grocer’s Children Knew,” we encounter Martin Bagot considering the interjacent space of the small “boxroom” he sleeps in (Brennan, n.d.-g). Brennan writes,

“Martin liked [the room] because it was off the landing, halfway up the stairs, and did not seem (sic) to be a part of the real house, because it was separate from the real upstairs and the real downstairs” (Brennan, n.d.-g).

Martin’s bedroom could hardly be more liminal. Like Hubert Derdon standing at the window in “Family Walls,” Martin remains at a physical remove from, and within a countercurrent to, the life in the house; sequestered in an anti-space of such intermediacy that, in “Mrs. Bagot’s Legacy,” young Delia Bagot simply passes over the boxroom, as she goes about covering over the upstairs windows of her grandparents’ house one final time— “[T]he shade had not been drawn over the window, but Delia left it so. She did not go into the [box]room” (Brennan, n.d.-d) Laurent Stalder writes that, “people who move continually between various thresholds,

“no longer know the difference between inside and outside, but exist in a permanent in-between; no longer experience boundaries, but only possible margins; no longer

¹⁶⁵ Yet another nature-woman parallel, here the lunar metaphor also recalls Wilde’s use of the moon as a symbol of subversive femininity in *Salomé* (1894).

experience transition, but only a continual passing through” (*quoted in* Janson and Tigges, 2014, pp. 334-335).

Such spatial aporia, by no means peculiar to the male protagonists in Brennan’s fiction, nevertheless bespeaks their “double displacement” (Higgonet and Templeton, 1994, p. 13). Already subverted by the feminising *homespace*, Brennan’s men are nevertheless signally dependent upon women to validate their masculinity, but also to insulate them against the encumbrance of a bewildering and, in many ways, ungovernable masculine identity. What emerges in Brennan’s fiction, then, (notably her Irish fiction) is a kind of shared sympathy for men as casualties of a patriarchy coincident with that of the strictures of patriarchal femininity, which, in *The Visitor*, Anastasia King is everywhere brushing up against. In other words, the feminised male of Brennan’s domestic fiction, as coequal of women, finds himself equally disadvantaged, equally uneasy in his prescribed identity, and equally incapable of distinguishing any other self than the ordered sense of self conferred by, and inextricably linked to, the institutions of home, marriage, and family.

At the heart of a great many of these stories is a fear of what Elke D’hoker describes as “the nothingness and emptiness at the heart of the domestic ideal” (2016, p. 62). The “nothingness” that transfixes Delia Bagot in “What the Grocer’s Children Knew” (Brennan, n.d.-g), also transfixes Martin Bagot, who is no more capable of understanding it than he is capable of understanding Delia herself. For, as Christina Stevenson writes, “The woman is known only insofar as she is unknowable” (2014, pp. 123-124). Indeed, the unknown—the ‘unknowable’—is an important source of shared disaffection, affecting both husbands and wives (and, as we glimpse in “Mrs. Bagot’s Legacy,” mother and daughter) in both narrative cycles. Yet, despite their continual and at times frantic search for a cause, a justification, a solution to their existential longing, Hubert and Martin are made to persist in a state of constant alienation from the feminine (unknowable) bodies that otherwise govern and give discernible shape to their existence. Once the polestar to a lost and irresolute Martin—“she had made him understand exactly where he was in the world” (Brennan, n.d.-g)—Delia is now “hardly visible” to him (n.d.-g). In “What the Grocer’s Children Knew,” we learn that:

“When [Martin] first saw Delia, he felt his eyes had opened for the first time, and he realised immediately that the world was not round or flat or any given shape, but that it is made of *time*, which has no boundaries except the glorious boundaries set by our hopes, our stars” (Brennan, n.d.-g.; *Brennan’s emphasis*).

In acknowledging the spatio-temporality of his existence, Martin perhaps unwittingly admits of its fragility, and the very contingency of the happiness his realisation engenders. As a rhetorical device, the expression works on more than one level, as the unhappiness of the present moment is thrown into sharp contrast with the perceived happiness of the past, again collocating the concepts of time and space in percipient and relevant ways¹⁶⁶. Physical space itself is “deeply time-bound” (Wilson, 1992, p. 4); “That which we [think of as] most permanent,” writes Elizabeth Wilson, “dissolves as rapidly as the kaleidoscopic spectacle of the [crowd]” (p. 279). The present, then, is trapped in a process of continual disintegration, collapsing from one moment to the next into a past as irretrievable as the present is unknowable. Yet, like Hubert—and to a lesser extent, like Rose Derdon too—Martin persists, under the continual threat of personal *dis-integration*, in consecrating an idealised past at the expense of a present that has “dwindle[d] into monotonous daily routine” (Brennan, n.d.-g). Martin’s hopes, awakened, conditioned by Delia, are like Delia’s own hopes, rigidly bounded by what Bachelard calls, “the bosom of the house” (2014, p. 7), which is to say the walls of the feminine home, that—once again indistinguishable from Delia—now “shackled him and did not interest him at all” (Brennan, n.d.-g).

In “The Drowned Man,” we observe Hubert Derdon’s near-monomaniacal desire to gain access to his late wife’s bedroom. “He wanted to look at it,” we read *SA 193*—a succinct, five-word sentence, followed by a second, more than 150 words long, that clearly betrays the rising mania, which the former disavows:

“—the room now seemed mysterious to him the way an empty house will suddenly seem mysterious and even frightening to children who never noticed it when it was occupied, and the way a bird’s nest lying empty on the ground after a summer storm will crowd the mind with thoughts that have nothing to do with wings and food and warmth and song: thoughts of vacancy, and thoughts of winter, and of winds that are too violent and nights that are too dark, and thoughts of stony solitude, endured in silence, and of landscapes that are too cold and flat and where no one cares to walk” *SA 193*.

When Hubert finally enters Rose’s room, he finds nothing there but worthless artefacts—old chocolate boxes containing “Old bills marked paid thirty years before. Recipes for dinners she

¹⁶⁶ The conceit is a familiar one: In “Family Walls,” as the “line of light” in the hallway *SA 172*, which tethers Rose and Hubert Derdon at the moment of their (contested) recognition, apparently throws past and present into sharp contrast, so the moment of Martin’s recognition (of Delia’s smile) in “What the Grocer’s Children Knew,” inaugurates a similarly consequential juxtaposition of time and circumstance (time and *space*.)

had never cooked [...] Directions for making dresses that she would never in her life have had occasion to wear” *SA 204*. Christina Stevenson writes: “A masculine fantasy of woman as the ‘dark continent,’ the great mystery in the age of reason haunts the woman’s room” (2014, p. 127). In gaining access to Rose’s room, the prosopopoeic space of her femininity, Hubert makes a last-ditch attempt to exert “colonial control” over Rose (Blunt and Rose, 1994, p. 10), to inscribe the “dark continent” of the feminine body with significance, and a prismatic signification that might yet render his own life meaningful. But Hubert finds “nothing in there”—there was “nothing he could pit himself against” *SA 201-202*. Instead, he makes the bathetic discovery that Rose’s femininity, her pretensions to ipseity, have been all “mere performance”—“it occurred to him that he had fallen in love with her for the exact qualities that were not hers at all” (p. 209). Rose remains “unknowable,” then (Stevenson, 2014, p. 124), and in her unknowability, she renders Hubert “unknowable”, a feminine body illusive and empty as the empty room, which was, we are told, not even “particular” in its emptiness *SA 201*:

“[Rose] had given him nothing, nothing to be angry about and nothing to be sad about and nothing to laugh at and nothing to wonder at and nothing at all to remember. She had given him nothing and she had left him nothing, and by leaving him nothing she had taken away from him the one thing that might have been a rock of strength to him now—that rock of grief where he might have rested in blessed isolation” *SA 196*.

In Rose’s emptiness (the word itself appears seventeen times in the story); in the emptiness of her words, her deeds, her hopes; in the emptiness of her presence, and the empty space left by her absence, Hubert at last perceives his own emptiness, and the consequent effacement of meaning and identity. Literally un-manned, “[he] watched her, not as a husband, not even as a man, but as a supplicant” *SA 203*. It is as though, in entering the feminine space of Rose’s room, Hubert crosses the terminal threshold that separates illusion and reality. At last acknowledging the emptiness that underlay the fantasy of her life—“that it was all only a masquerade” (p. 211)—Hubert is sufficiently “unroomed” to be able to peer into the long-neglected cell of his own existence, and find there the same “emptiness,” the same “sham” (Stevenson, 2014, 129; *SA 201, 211*). Lefebvre writes that, “Disillusion leaves space empty [...] Spaces are devastated – and devastating” (1991, p. 97). Stripped of his illusions, Hubert lays bare a subjective emptiness concomitant with that of the feminised and feminising *homespace*. Rose’s room, devastated by the body’s extraction, becomes a space of devastating emptiness, emptying the domestic of its “ideal” (D’hoker, 2016, p. 62), and dispossessing

Hubert of the merest hope of redemption, even of that “rock of grief,” which Margaret Bagot, in another story, at another time, may yet contend with after her mother’s death.

The Visitor

The final section of this chapter explores the tensions between Irish men and women within the feminised, post-revolutionary narrative space of the text, specifically as depicted in two lately-uncovered drafts of *The Visitor*, held at the archives of Emory University. Posthumously published from a single typescript discovered a few short years after the author’s death, *The Visitor*, Brennan’s only-known novella, has been the subject of ongoing speculation concerning its origins, and the possible reasons for its obscurity, since its first publication in 2000. Notwithstanding my earlier analyses of the published text, presented in chapters one and two of this thesis, the following discussion concerns *The Visitor* as published, together with two alternate drafts (hereafter, Variant A and Variant B), in their depiction of feminine space as both traumatised and traumatising, within the context of Irish post-revolutionary nationhood¹⁶⁷.

As an Irishwoman, born a British subject, living and writing in New York City, Brennan understood something of the “double displacement of subaltern women writers” (Higgonet and Templeton, 1994, pp. 12-13). Much of her Irish writing exploits the tensions between the colonised and colonising agent, often expressed in the inscription of feminised bodies, whose (meta-)physical semiotics are frequently subject(ed) to tragic mis-readings. Indeed, Brennan’s own liminality arguably enhanced her understanding of “space [as] a writerly problem” (pp. 12-13). As the page invites inscription, so “the body [acts] as a surface to be mapped, a surface for inscription” (Lewis *et al.*, 1997, p. 3). In writing, and writing women’s bodies; in colonising the (virgin) space of the page, Brennan-as-author embodies a re-inscription of space—a feminisation equal to and greater than that of the (unsubtly inscriptive) space of home¹⁶⁸.

¹⁶⁷ Whilst I hesitantly identify the typescripts as variants, it should be noted that Brennan makes no such distinctions; both typescripts, first identified in 2017, are untitled and undated. The only variation Brennan is known to have submitted for publication at any point is that which we know today as *The Visitor* (2000). For a disquisition on Brennan’s editorial process in respect to *The Visitor* publication, see O’Rourke (*forthcoming*).

¹⁶⁸ Kathleen L. Komar opines that “the unviolated, virginal space of the empty page [...] waits to give birth to women’s suppressed or repressed thoughts—becom[ing] extremely important to women writers” (1994, p. 90).

In her imaginative treatise, “Feminist Curves in Contemporary Literary Space,” Kathleen L. Komar lays out a schema for the author’s exteriorisation of female (feminine) space. “First,” writes Komar,

“women writers identify female spaces in the external world—or indeed they project female spaces onto this outside world. [...] they exploit an interior space that is not merely biological (although it is often graphically so) but also psychological. This interior female space is eventually reexteriorized in the form of the literary text, not simply because the women write their stories, but because the space of the text eventually becomes the site of definition and affirmation of the female within and against a male-dominated social structure” (1994, pp. 90-91).

The feminine space of Brennan’s literary imagination arguably reconstructs that of the “densely inscribed” (Bourke, 2004, p. 44) socio-political space of her childhood. In its fragmented and dysphoric incarnation, Brennan’s Ireland appears *dis-eased*, jaundiced, the conceptual product of successive interregna, internecine wars, and the subsequent inscription of rigidly gendered identities within the newly constituted independent nation. Yet, as I suggest in chapter two of this thesis, the action of *The Visitor* (indeed, of almost all of Brennan’s Irish-based fiction) appears to float free of situated historical events; Anti Märchen-like, the stories subvert the authority of hegemonic historiography, by privileging the counter-hegemonic feminine voice. Indeed, Abigail Heineger has recently attempted to situate Brennan’s fiction within a “particularly Irish Cinderella tradition,” noting, “these dangerous Irish fairy tales transform and deconstruct fairy-tale wonder” (2020, pp. 66-67, 65)¹⁶⁹. Yet, the possibility that Brennan engaged in a process of self-censorship whilst drafting *The Visitor*, called into question by the emergence of Variants A and B, further complicates our conception of feminine space in Brennan’s Irish fiction.

Variant A of *The Visitor*, the longest of all three texts, follows much of the action of the published text—fleshes out certain details, elides others, yet deviates entirely from the novella’s familiar ending, in which Anastasia is evicted from her grandmother’s house on Noon Square only to return minutes later, to stand on the pavement singing childish songs up to the window, in a state of partial undress. In the final section of Variant A, however, Anastasia travels alone to Ticknock, a part of the Dublin Mountains, where she meets a stranger, Bernard

¹⁶⁹ Heineger avers that “Irish women writers remain in a doubly colonised position after colonial rule ends” (2020, p. 74). “Wonderless tales,” she continues, Brennan’s stories betoken “the limits of colonial oppression” (p. 74).

Lindsay, with whom she sits under a canopy of trees as night falls. The romantic encounter precedes a second, and several more. Finally, weeks later the couple return to Ticknock, where Bernard casually lays his head in Anastasia's lap, "wet[ting] his lips with his tongue hastily" (Brennan, n.d.-e). Yet, when Anastasia leans down to initiate a kiss, she finds it, "a matter of fumbling"—"his mouth [...] as quiet as it looked" (n.d.-e). Minutes later, descending the hill, Bernard confesses his generally ambivalent feelings towards women. He tells Anastasia, "I have a want in me"; intimacy with women, he explains, "makes [him] sick" (n.d.-e). The story concludes with the couple agreeing to part, until, at the last moment, Anastasia unaccountably races after him, grabs him by the arm and begs him to give her another chance. "Anything at all," she says, "but don't leave me alone" (n.d.-e).

The narrative focus of the published edition—Anastasia's mother's repatriation, Mrs. King's cruelty, and the tormented Nora Kilbride—now considerably attenuated, the focus of Variant A shifts perceptibly to that of Anastasia's feminine agency. Moreover, if the embittered, though categorically female, institutions of motherhood, sisterhood (nuns), and the home, are the targets of Brennan's relentlessly acrimonious enquiry in *The Visitor* as published, here the ineffectual Irish patriarch is taken, if not to an equal extent, then at least more extensively into the purview of her withering authorial lens.

Variant B, being the shortest, is also the most divergent of the three texts. Although still a probing novella, it is less a story of longing for home than of the vicissitudes of a family that has been ever more scattered to the winds. Indeed, there is more than a suggestion of the bildungsroman here. New sequences include a fraught exchange on a Dublin train with an older woman who embodies some of the bitterness, which Mrs. King, in her present guise, has almost entirely foresworn. If the episode lends little to the story's coherence, it is nevertheless a useful illustration of the kind of bitterness and parochial surveillance that pervades the Dublin of the narrative, in the first decades of independence.

Variant B, like Variant A, explores Anastasia's sexual agency, diverging further still from the published text. Yet here, the ineffectual (Irish) Bernard Lindsay has been replaced by John Lindsay, a sexually dynamic (if emotionally intemperate) Englishman, who kisses Anastasia passionately within only minutes of their first meeting. No longer the instigator of physical congress, Anastasia is nevertheless keenly receptive to the stranger's advances. The narrative ends with Anastasia's elopement, in spite of her grandmother's (implied) exhortations to stay. And in the final passages of the text, we see Anastasia admiring her wedding ring, and smiling "secretively" at her husband (Brennan, n.d.-f), aboard the ship that carries them away from Dublin.

The published text, then, is considerably less provocative than either of Variants A or B. *The Visitor* excises issues of promiscuity, adultery, pre-marital sex, and queer identities, all of which feature to one extent or another in the two alternate drafts. Notwithstanding the absence of a definitive redaction, it seems likely that Brennan engaged in a process of self-censorship, however consciously, through which the protagonist Anastasia King becomes progressively less refractory, and therefore increasingly submissive, to the agents of conservative values all around her. At the time of writing (circa 1946), Brennan would likely have been familiar with the Irish Free State's illiberal censorship laws, which saw Kate O'Brien's *Mary Lavelle*, a novel that treats of similar issues—adultery, promiscuity, and homosexuality amongst them—banned upon publication in 1936¹⁷⁰. Just one year before the new Irish Constitution (1937) formally enshrined women's consignment to home and motherhood, O'Brien's mistreatment prefigures the subjugation of Irish women, corporeal and intellectual, in subsequent decades. Indeed, family friend and author Dorothy Macardle's correspondence with the younger Maeve in the late 1930s, obliquely attests to the repressive conditions back home; She writes, "how I hope you won't encounter heartbreak and frustration when you come back here" (*quoted in Bourke, 2004, p. 131*). Yet if, as Sara Gerend attests, "Early twentieth-century Irish literature repeatedly foregrounds the figure of the mother as central to the construction of the Irish nation" (2011, p. 35), Brennan appears to tergiversate over her complicity, through a process of expurgation which, in direct proportion to the protagonist's marginalisation, renders the narrative space ever more schizophrenic. From a place of central importance in the published text, the mother figure gradually diminishes from the less oppressive (Variant A), to the significantly less visible, as is the case in Variant B, where Nora Kilbride, her solipsistic mother, the eidolon of Anastasia's mother, and the figure of the Virgin Mother are all excised, leaving an arguably well-meaning if misguided grandmother, and very few others besides. Yet, as the mother becomes increasingly extraneous to Anastasia's disaffection, the father(-figure) drifts by degrees into a position of increasing importance.

¹⁷⁰ A one-page rejection letter from *Good Housekeeping* attached to a 14-page typescript of a short story, "Miss Kilbride," dated 18th November 1946, gives us perhaps the only clear indication of a specific time that Brennan was writing what would eventually become *The Visitor*. Editor Christopher Carduff corroborates this timeline, noting that the text discovered at Notre Dame library was probably written "sometime in the middle 1940s" V 84.

Kate O'Brien's *Mary Lavelle* was banned under the Censorship of Publications Act, 1929, upon its release in 1936; while her later novel, *The Land of Spices* (1941), was banned over a single sentence – an anodyne reference to (male) homosexual desire that was nevertheless deemed too explicit for Irish readers (Justice, The Dept. of, 2022; What a Shocker, 2022).

Anastasia's disenchantment with a father she once adored—"I never saw a child fonder of her father," says Mrs. King (Brennan, n.d.-f)—conceivably drives her to seek out relationships with unsuitable, and equally callow, men. As lovers, or surrogate father-figures, both Bernard Lindsay, and Ronan Kelly—a married man with whom Anastasia has engaged in an abortive affair—are variously found wanting. Indeed, considered together, Variants A and B present an oblique challenge to Irish masculinity, relative to that represented by the Englishman John Lindsay. Effeminate, cossetted, impotent, feeble, regressive: Brennan's Irish men in all three texts are either dead or in terminal decline; over-mothered and emotionally underdeveloped; they are sexually passive, or conceivably queer; and each of them represents, to one extent or another, a version of failure, artistic or aspirational. Underscoring the 'otherness' of the Irish male, John Lindsay, the erstwhile colonist, strikes a uniquely confident, sexually assertive figure, in contrast to the hangdog Irish (post-)colonial subject. Why Brennan chose to espouse the already well-established stereotype of the colonised-thus-emasculated Irish male, and what caused her, more importantly, to later abandon the idea—substantially, if not entirely—is one of the key questions raised by the emergence of these previously unseen drafts¹⁷¹. Yet, in casting an enquiring eye, as she did; in questioning the patriarchal orthodoxy of the post-revolutionary decades of the 1930s and '40s, Brennan boldly engaged in a discourse of Irish identities (her own included) in disruptive and percipient ways.

Whilst her questionable self-censorship inevitably diminishes the narrative's subversive effects, there remains the possibility that in inscribing her resistance, Brennan enters into a radical process through which feminine space—narrative space as a mirror reflection of the (woman) author's "suppressed or repressed thoughts" (Komar, 1994, p. 90)—is, in a sense, birthed (p. 90). Whether such expurgatory choices were influenced by colleagues or publishers, or simply by the prevailing mores of the period, one can only speculate; and, in the absence of a clearer progression of drafting, hesitantly so. Yet, she clearly engaged in what Stephani Derisi calls "explorations" (2012, p. 3), moments of self-enquiry,

“[that] function as pathways to a ‘new’ feminine space in the midst of male domination, [...] meaning a place outside of the boundaries of what is expected of [women], an opportunity to explore new opportunities (a life beyond marriage, a life without children, a life with a career, or both)” (2012, pp. 3-4).

¹⁷¹ The question is especially significant given that her father was an IRA captain in the 1916 Easter Rising (Bourke, 2004, p. 39).

In spite of (and a corollary to) the narrative's apparently progressive conformity, Brennan's declarative use of feminine language, which is to say "becoming [...] the subject through the exercise of language" (Komar, 1994, p. 103), initiates a reclamation of feminine space. As Komar writes:

"a woman is always colliding with language and tradition that are distinctly not her own in which the male vocabulary, point of view, and method of conceptualization have long dominated. Women must, therefore, recast this space as their own; they must 'feminize' it in order to create a textual space defined by their own interiority and relational orientation" (1994, p. 102).

Considered in the light of post-revolutionary (re-)constructions of Irish masculinity—what Margaret O'Callaghan identifies as the "post-colonial search for a satisfactory 'national character'" (*quoted in* Delaney, 2003, p. 195)—Brennan's characterisation of the disoriented, and emasculated Irish male arguably subverts that space of masculine tradition—narrative, political, and historical—by overlaying it with the laminae of a feminine subjectivity that would ultimately define her own (interior) refractoriness.

Conclusion

It is perhaps difficult to reconcile the apparent antinomies of feminine space here, for much of Brennan's fiction appears to run counter to the feminist objective of transcending subordination (Cossman, 1986, p. 100), serving instead to merely degrade the masculine; indeed, to flatten, or obscure gender distinctions in relation to the feminising space of home, which, throughout the Dublin stories, possesses an all-consuming, even incendiary quality. The house becomes, in effect, a vacuum, into which the characters' lives—the Derdons, the Bagots, the Briscoes, and perhaps even the Brennans themselves—are inexorably poured, in what seems a pointless propitiation to a "force [...] that feeds on the expectation of chaos" *LWL 124*¹⁷². Against this interpretation, however, there is a second, decidedly more affirmative

¹⁷² In "Sixth Avenue Shows its True Self," the Long-Winded Lady makes the observation that the avenue is merely a "propped-up imitation of a thoroughfare," while "its purpose is not to provide safe or pleasant or beautiful passage for the people of the city but to propitiate, even if it is only for a little while, whatever the force is that feeds on the expectation of chaos" *LWL 123-124*.

In the story "The Bohemians," yet another family – the Briscoes – inhabit a house that appears to be the same Cherryfield Avenue house.

dimension that emerges in a countercurrent to the antagonistic (feminine) space of home. And I argue that it is in the very act of inscription itself—the founding act of inscribing the feminine narrative, subversive *and* expurgatory—that Brennan confronts patriarchal subjugation, appropriating a voice and a language that, in contrast to the homespace, introduces a feminine space of resistant possibility.

Yet, one cannot escape the impression that these texts were written from a perspective of considerable personal flux, reflective of the continual change within a post-independence Ireland as uneasy with its new, uncertain identity as with the act of looking back on its past. Indeed, whilst Anastasia cannot help but see, in *The Visitor*'s many mirrors, reflections of a past that seems so much happier, so much easier than the present, she is equally incapable of recognising the present as a corollary of that same idealised past. Brennan's feminine space—that mirrored space of her own feminine selfhood—is contradictory, intractable, at times violently so, but like Anastasia King standing on the pavement in the final pages of *The Visitor*, ultimately characterised by the will to speak and be heard, to look and be seen.



References Cited

- Ahmed, S. (2010). *The Promise of Happiness*. Duke University Press.
- Ahmed, S. (2017). *Living a feminist life*. Duke University Press.
- Arnold, M. (1867). *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (First). Smith, Elder & Co.
- Bachelard, G., Jolas, M., Danielewski, M. Z., & Kearney, R. (2014). *The Poetics of Space*. Penguin Publishing Group.
- <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ed/detail.action?docID=6042956>
- Bernstein, N. A. (1968, December 12). Letter from Nahum A. Bernstein to William Shawn. Letters to William Shawn, 1960-1976 (MSS 1172, Box 1, Folder 3), Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, United States.
- Blunt, A., & Rose, G. (Eds.). (1994). *Writing women and space: colonial and postcolonial geographies*. Guilford Press.
- Bourke, A. (2004). *Maeve Brennan: Homesick at the New Yorker*. Jonathan Cape [u.a.].
- Brennan, M. (1997). *The Springs of affection: stories of Dublin*. Houghton Mifflin.
- Brennan, M. (2000). *Rose Garden: Short Stories*. (Paperback). Counterpoint.
- Brennan, M. (2002). *The Visitor*. Atlantic.
- Brennan, M. (2016). *The Long-Winded Lady: Notes from The New Yorker* (Paperback). Counterpoint.
- Brennan, M. (n.d.-d). *Mrs Bagot's Legacy - draft material*. Maeve Brennan Papers, 1948-1981 (MSS 1412, Box 3, Folder 12), Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, United States.
- Brennan, M. (n.d.-f). *The Visitor (Variant A)*. Maeve Brennan Papers, 1948-1981 (MSS 1142, Box 5, Folder 2), Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, United States.

- Brennan, M. (n.d.-f). *The Visitor (Variant B)*. Maeve Brennan Papers, 1948-1981 (MSS 1142, Box 5, Folder 2), Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, United States.
- Brennan, M. (n.d.-g). *What the Grocer's Children Knew - draft material*. Maeve Brennan Papers, 1948-1981 (MSS 1142, Box 5, Folder 3), Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, United States.
- Buci-Glucksmann, C. (1994). *Baroque Reason: The Aesthetics of Modernity* (Hardback). Sage Publ.
- Chattopadhyay, S. (2017). Caliban and the Witch and wider bodily geographies. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 24(2), 160–173. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2017.1298570>
- Cieraad, I. (2002). “Out of my kitchen!” Architecture, gender and domestic efficiency. *The Journal of Architecture*, 7(3), 263–279. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602360210155456>
- Cosman, B. (1986). Precarious Unity of Feminist Theory and Practice: The Praxis of Abortion, The. *University of Toronto Faculty of Law Review*, 44(1), 85–108. <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.journals/utflr44&i=91>
- Dalla Costa, M., Cleaver, H., & Barbagallo, C. (2019). *Women and the subversion of the community: a Mariarosa Dalla Costa reader*. PM, Press.
- Delaney, P. (2003). D.P. Moran and The Leader: Writing an Irish Ireland through Partition. *Éire-Ireland*, 38(3–4), 189–211. <https://doi.org/10.1353/eir.2003.0008>
- Derisi, S. (2012). *Housing identity: Re-constructing feminine spaces through memory in Virginia Woolf's “The Years” and Daphne du Maurier's “Rebecca”* [ProQuest Dissertations Publishing]. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1027135561?pq-origsite=primo>
- D’hoker, E. (2016). Houses and Homes in the Short Stories of Elizabeth Bowen and Maeve Brennan. In *Irish Women Writers and the Modern Short Story* (pp. 51–81). Springer International Publishing.

- Doyle, M.-E. (2010). A Spindle for the Battle: Feminism, Myth, and the Woman-Nation in Irish Revival Drama. *Theatre Journal (Washington, D.C.)*, 51(1), 33–46.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/tj.1999.0010>
- Federici, S. (2004). *Caliban and the witch: women, the body and primitive accumulation*. Autonomedia.
- Fogarty, A. (2002). The Horror of the Unlived Life: Mother-Daughter Relationships in Contemporary Irish Women's Fiction. In A. Giorgio (Ed.), *Writing Mothers and Daughters: Renegotiating the Mother in Western European Narratives by Women* (pp. 85–118). Berghahn Books.
- Foucault, M., & Miskowiec, J. (1986). Of Other Spaces. *Diacritics*, 16(1), 22–27.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/464648>
- Gerend, S. (2005). “Magdalene versus the Nation”: Ireland as a Space of Compulsory Motherhood in Edna O’Brien’s *Down by the River*. In S. B. Hardy & C. A. Wiedmer (Eds.), *Motherhood and space: configurations of the maternal through politics, home, and the body* (e-book, pp. 35–54). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Grosz, E. (1997). Inscriptions and Body Maps: Representations and the Corporeal. In L. McDowell & J. P. Sharp (Eds.), *Space, Gender, Knowledge: Feminist Readings*. Arnold.
- Halberstam, J. J. (2005). *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York University Press.
<https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.18574/nyu/9780814790892/html>
- Hardy, S. B., & Wiedmer, C. A. (Eds.). (2005). *Motherhood and space: configurations of the maternal through politics, home, and the body*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Constitution of Ireland, 25.5.2° (1937).

- Heineger, A. (2019). The British Empire's Lost Slipper: Dangerous Irish Cinderellas. In L. Brugué & A. Llompart (Eds.), *Contemporary Fairy-Tale Magic* (Paperback, Vol. 129, pp. 63–76). Brill.
- Higonnet, M. R., & Templeton, J. (Eds.). (1994). *Reconfigured spheres: feminist explorations of literary space*. University of Massachusetts Press.
- Janson, A., & Tigges, F. (2014). *Fundamental Concepts of Architecture: The Vocabulary of Spatial Situations / Alban Janson, Florian Tigges*. Birkhäuser,.
- Justice, T. D. of. (n.d.). *Banned Books*. The Department of Justice. Retrieved January 27, 2022, from <https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/banned-books>
- Komar, K. L. (1994). Feminist Curves in Contemporary Literary Space. In M. R. Higonnet & J. Templeton (Eds.), *Reconfigured spheres: feminist explorations of literary space* (pp. 89–103). University of Massachusetts Press.
- Lefebvre, H., Nicholson-Smith, D., & Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The Production of Space* (33. print). Blackwell Publishing.
- Lewis, R., Sharp, E., Remnant, J., & Redpath, R. (2015). 'Safe Spaces': Experiences of Feminist Women-Only Space. *Sociological Research Online*, 20(4), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.3781>
- Marotta, M. (2005). MotherSpace: Disciplining through the Material and Discursive. In S. B. Hardy & C. A. Wiedmer (Eds.), *Motherhood and space: configurations of the maternal through politics, home, and the body* (e-book, pp. 15–34). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Massey, D. B. (1994). *Space, place, and gender*. University of Minnesota Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttw2z>
- McDaid, A. (2019). "As Important ... in My Childhood as the Catholic Church and the Fight for Irish Freedom": Legacies of Conflict in Maeve Brennan's Cherryfield Avenue Stories. *New Hibernia Review*, 23(4), 79–99. <https://doi.org/10.1353/nhr.2019.0042>

- McDowell, L., & Sharp, J. P. (Eds.). (1997). *Space, Gender, Knowledge: Feminist Readings*. Arnold.
- Miller, I. (2016). Irish insanity 1800–2000. *Irish Studies Review*, 23(4), 503–504.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09670882.2015.1087083>
- Moran, D. P. (1905). *The Philosophy of Irish Ireland*. An Chartlann.
- Nash, C. (1994). Remapping the Body/Land: New Cartographies of Identity, Gender, and Landscape in Ireland. In A. Blunt & G. Rose (Eds.), *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies* (Paperback, p. 256). Guilford Press.
- Palko, A. L. (2007). Out of Home in the Kitchen: Maeve Brennan’s Herbert’s Retreat Stories. *New Hibernia Review*, 11(4), 73–91. <https://doi.org/10.1353/nhr.2008.0008>
- Pollock, A. (2011). Aesthetic Economies of Immasculation: Capitalism and Gender in Wollstonecraft’s “Letters from Sweden.” *The Eighteenth Century*, 52(2), 193–210.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/41468136>
- Stevenson, C. (2014). “Here Was One Room, There Another”: The Room, Authorship, and Feminine Desire in A Room of One’s Own and Mrs. Dalloway. *Pacific Coast Philology*, 49(1), 112–132.
- Traister, R. (2016). *All the single ladies: unmarried women and the rise of an independent nation* (First Simon&Schuster hardcover edition). Simon & Schuster.
- Tsantsoulas, T. (2020). Anger, Fragility, and the Formation of Resistant Feminist Space. *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 34(3), 367–377.
<https://doi.org/10.5325/jspecphil.34.3.0367>
- Walter, B. (2000). *Outsiders Inside: Whiteness, Place, and Irish Women*. Routledge.
- Wan-lih Chang, A. (2015). A Woman Alone: The Depictions of Spinster in Irish Women’s Short Stories. *Estudios Irlandeses*, 10, 44–57. <https://doi.org/10.24162/EI2015-4924>

What a shocker: no more books to ban. (n.d.). The Irish Times. Retrieved January 27, 2022, from <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/tv-radio-web/what-a-shocker-no-more-books-to-ban-1.688191>

Wiley, C., & Barnes, F. R. (2021). "Introduction." In *Homemaking: Women Writers and the Politics and Poetics of Home* (e-book, Vol. 8, pp. xv–xxvi). Routledge.

Williams, J. B. (2018). Willing Servants: The Growth of Appliances in the 1930s. In J. B. Williams (Ed.), *The Electric Century: How the Taming of Lightning Shaped the Modern World* (pp. 103–114). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-51155-9_12

Wilson, E. (1992). *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women* (1st University of California Press ed). University of California Press.

Conclusion

Introduction

In this thesis, I have attempted to provide a sustained analysis of the works of Maeve Brennan, by assessing the four cardinal dimensions of space that occur and overlap within her body of writing. I set out to establish a model for rethinking, or indeed for at least beginning to think about, the marginal(ised) literature of an important Irish woman writer, who was, and arguably remains, greatly overlooked in the pantheon of twentieth-century Irish authors. In the four preceding chapters, I have proposed a schema for repositioning the feminine—which is to say the particular and the interstitial—relative to discourses of totalising, patriarchal narrativity—which is to say the universal and the hegemonic. Whilst Brennan's fiction confronted the imbalance between the (feminine) domestic, quotidian, and private narrative, and that of the (masculine) industrial, epic, and public narrative—her writing, I contend, was curiously, concomitantly, resistant to such essentialising distinctions. In the concluding passages of this dissertation, I review the findings of my research, and draw attention to a number of opportunities for possible future scholarship, including (1) the relative queer spatio-temporality of Brennan's literature; (2) the prevalence of manic space in the larger body of Irish diaspora writing, and its alignment with the manic writing of other diasporas, notably those of the (Afro-)Caribbean diasporas; and (3) the potential for a reappraisal of feminine agency in Brennan's fiction, in light of the recent emergence of previously unseen drafts of *The Visitor*, and to a lesser extent, new draft material pertaining to the Bagot narrative sequence. Finally, I position my research in relation to the growing international scholarship on Brennan's condensed, but important oeuvre.

Research Findings

The afterword to *The Visitor* contains editor Christopher Carduff's remark that, "[i]n the music of Maeve Brennan, three notes repeatedly sound together—a ravenous grudge, a ravenous nostalgia, and a ravenous need for love" *V* 84. Indeed, it is difficult to read *The Visitor* without feeling the force of Carduff's assertion. Yet, in spite of its tempting lyricism, the observation seems to fall short of the whole truth, for while it is undoubtedly partly true, and more specifically, true of a part of Brennan's writing, the full "chord" of Brennan's music (p. 84)—or, to employ a more sympathetic metaphor—the full ambit of Brennan's literary space, comprises a great many more variations, more nuance, and a degree of heterogeneity that is rarely apparent in that of other Irish (women) writers. Though formally circumscribed, Brennan's work covered several genres, fiction and non-fiction, farce (*Herbert's Retreat*), literary fiction (the *Derdon-Bagot* sequences), humour/reportage (the 'Long-Winded Lady'), and realist fiction (*The Visitor*). Indeed, Brennan's 'notes' as the *Long-Winded Lady* alone clearly transcend the strata of begrudgery, nostalgia, and the privation of love, initiating instead a celebration of the city, its "cheerful hurly-burly" (Jacobs, 1958, p. 126), and the right to be part of—and to stake a claim to part of—that same urban sphere, as "a woman alone" (Wanli Chang, 2015, p. 44). Notwithstanding the grim actuality of much of Brennan's fiction, this thesis takes the view that there is an immanent subversive potential in her depictions of suburbia and the feminine subjection it engendered; whilst her urban narratives—those "literary articulation[s] of spatial knowledge" (Neculai, 2014, pp. 10-11)—often took the form of "consciousness-raising" (p. 11), documenting a way of life that was itself resistant to the homogenising influence of finance and mass-consumerism that beleaguered it. Outwith any personal desire to be loved, Brennan *qua* the *Long-Winded Lady* actively exalted love—romantic and platonic, yes; but also, civic love, which John Fantuzzo, in his essay on author and activist James Baldwin, describes as "interpersonal solidarity between citizens" (2018, p. 385). Brennan's celebrations of civic love, like Baldwin's, "contribute[d] to civic education" (p. 385), by recognising and recording the love of place and placedness (Hünefeldt & Schlitte, 2018, p. 1), and the love of the citizen, which is to say the compassion, the kindness, and understanding extended from one citizen—one stranger—to another. Her public (and personal) espousal of a civic love that was free of borders or bigotry arguably coincides with Raymond Williams's view of the "paradox[ical]" metropolis as a place that essentially embodies the archetypal "collective consciousness," yet is equally characterised by "an absence of

common feeling [and] excessive subjectivity” (1973, p. 215)¹⁷³. Certainly, there are shades of doubt here—shadows of the citizen’s capacity for grotesque indifference—and a presentiment of the consequences of such persistent civic erosion, psychosocial *and* environmental, astutely expressed in the Long-Winded Lady’s observation: “Architecturally, very little that was notable has been lost in the destruction of the Broadway area. What has been lost is another strip of the common ground we share with each other and with our city — the common ground that is all that separates us from the Machine” *LWL 145-146*. Yet, in contrast to Williams’s “aggregate of little systems” (1973, p. 215), Brennan viewed the city through more generous, possibly more quixotic eyes, as an aggregate of “moments” *LWL 3*, or gestures; “moments of kindness,” implicit in, and indistinguishable from, those “moments of recognition” (p. 3) that were themselves expressions of love at its most quotidian, and its most public.

In the stories of Dublin, too, there are redemptory possibilities, inchoate though they may be. Within an overarching narrative of emotional desolation, light flashes now and then, however briefly, however faintly. The stories carry a “secret light” *SA 252*, that coruscates through the tapestry of shadows that comprises the Derdon and Bagot narrative cycles. Indeed, the house itself, in “The Shadow of Kindness,” is said to contain a light that “shone more steadily in th[e] evening’s dimness than [it] ever shone on a sunny day,” such that, “the wooden banister glowed with the same warm and reverberating depth, as though the dying light called up sources of strength that went unnoticed in the self-sufficient daytime” (p. 252). The (psycho-)socioemotional stagnation that occurs within the Cherryfield Avenue house is arguably metonymic with that of the *anomie* that would beset Irish towns and villages in the latter-half of the twentieth century (Adolfo J. Cangas et al., 2009; Scheper-Hughes, 2001). Yet over and above their inherent social critique, the stories of Dublin call attention to the Irish woman’s double-subjugation in the wake of Irish independence. The apparently anodyne suburban home becomes a (feminising) force that flattens gendered structures of power, so that Hubert Derdon

¹⁷³ Brennan’s personal correspondence, and – tellingly – a number of her unpublished, conceivably rejected, Long-Winded Lady pieces, evince a principled morality, and a deep-seated consciousness of social injustice. Amongst a handful of unpublished ‘notes’ from the Long-Winded Lady, held at the archives of Emory University, are reflections on the assassination of Robert Kennedy, the construction of a restaurant on (public) Central Park land, and the real-world consequences of New York City’s 1966 public transport strike on the poor and working-class families it disproportionately affected – the pattern of expurgation, here, allowing for the distinct possibility of a form of censorship (Brennan, 1968; Brennan, 1960; Brennan, 1966). For more on Brennan’s attitudes to bigotry, see chapter one of this thesis, “Urban Space,” pp. 42-45; For more on the Long-Winded Lady’s tacit bowdlerisation, see same chapter, pp. 37-40.

and Martin Bagot are themselves subjected to the rigid spatial ordering of home. This subtle disruption of the patriarchal, even the theocratic, Irish state—reified here in the domestic household—that delegitimised the cause of women’s autonomy, yields a “paradox” equal to that of the ambivalent metropolis (Williams, 1973, p. 215). For although the very act of writing, of inscribing the “spatial arena [...] of the literary text itself”—which, writes Komar, in “giv[ing] birth to women’s suppressed or repressed thoughts—becomes extremely important to women writers” (1994, p. 90); although Brennan’s writing undoubtedly empowered her, she paid, I argue, a substantial personal cost for her unflinching honesty, since the Dublin stories ostensibly failed to conform to the version(s) of Ireland espoused either by Irish *or* American audiences of the time. Whilst Irish(-American) authors Frank O’Connor and Mary Lavin enjoyed a distinction on both sides of the Atlantic, thanks in no small measure to their *New Yorker* contributions, Brennan failed to gain any significant traction in Ireland, despite being a staff writer for the magazine for over twenty years. Given that her ongoing reclamation in Ireland has coincided with something of a new erasure—a recent, regressive neglect—in the adopted home that established her—indeed, that conceivably (re)invented her—the afterlife of Maeve Brennan, like that of her actual life, remains enduringly ambivalent.

Further Research Opportunities

Queer Time: In the introduction to this thesis, I touched upon the possible collision of Brennan’s life and writing with theoretical notions of queer temporo-spatialities, using Halberstam’s (2005) conceptualisation of queer time and space, which allows for the assimilation of non-normative behaviours that transcend sexual alterity. Notwithstanding Brennan’s normative sexual identity, the very facts of her childlessness and (habitual) singleness rendered her body improperly “temporalized” (Freeman, 2010, p. 4). As such—and, again, adopting Halberstam’s plastic definition of queerness—Brennan divagated from those “teleological schemes of events or strategies for living,” which, according to Elizabeth Freeman, form part of the ‘chronobiopolitics’ that compose, “[the] accumulation of health and wealth for the future, reproduction [and] childrearing” (p. 4). Indeed, Brennan’s fiction contains many such rebellious bodies, not least of which are those of her numerous, potentially queer, spinsters and bachelors—amongst them, Min Bagot, Mary Ramsay, John Derron, and Charles Runyon. Future scholarship may wish to address the occurrence of queer time—and,

indeed, its spatial embodiment—in Brennan’s writing, notably in the context of women’s (bodily) subjugation, as was perpetuated in Ireland throughout the twentieth century¹⁷⁴.

Manic Space: In the course of my research, I identified a lacuna in the scholarship pertaining to madness in contemporary Irish fiction . Despite the evidence in favour of a routinely embodied mania in post-colonial Irish writing, little has been written about madness in Irish literature; less still about madness in Irishwomen’s writing. What has emerged, however, is a recent body of work on madness in Afro-Caribbean diaspora writing, notably women’s writing. However, in making use of these resources, I became conscious of an intersection in the occurrence of madness in twentieth-century Caribbean and Irish fiction—notably, within the short fiction genre . Although the concept of Irish subalternity remains a controversial one, there is, I believe, the possibility of a valuable dialogue in the shared colonial legacy of these multiple, and ostensibly disparate, cultures. Certainly, there are theoretical convergences here: Bronwen Walter argues that the Irish immigrants to the United States in the nineteenth century were initially “interchangeable [with] ‘black’ populations,” and “by no means automatically included as ‘white’” (2000, pp. 66, 67); whilst David Lloyd asserts that, owing to “colonial wars and subsequent settlements [...] untold numbers of [dispossessed and displaced] Irish [...] became the slaves and indentured servants of Virginia and the Caribbean” (2005, pp. 432-433) .

Therefore, this thesis invites further research on the legacy of madness in the writing of the (post-)colonised British subject, specifically in its spatial incarnations, as evoked by women writers across broad geographical and cultural divides. By exploring possible linkages in the performance of colonial subjectivities in Irish and Caribbean diaspora (short) fictions, it may be possible to establish a shared heritage of manic space, which, as an adjunct to diaspora space, embodies the resistant and the transgressive potentialities of women’s lives.

Feminine Agency: Lastly—and notwithstanding the preliminary work carried out in this thesis—the recent emergence of significant new material pertaining to the novella *The Visitor* behoves a fresh appraisal of the expression of feminine agency within—and otherwise largely absent from—Brennan’s writing. In chapter four of this thesis, “Feminine Space,” I discuss

¹⁷⁴ For a discussion on the occurrence of femme failure – theoretically linked to that of “chronobiopolitics” (Freeman, 2010) – see O’Rourke (*forthcoming*).

the process of self-censorship that Brennan conceivably undertook, through which the protagonist Anastasia King undergoes a transition from moderately promiscuous in the unpublished drafts, to functionally asexual in the (posthumously) published text. Outwith any speculative causes for such expurgatory (self-)editing, there is, I argue, considerable scope for situating these moments of self-enquiry—what Stephani Derisi calls “pathways to a ‘new’ feminine space” (2012, p. 3)—within the context of a curiously paradoxical empowerment, which enabled Brennan to take possession of, and ultimately refine, a voice that, at the crowning point of its expression, would implode with the force of its own indignation.

Conclusion

The innovative character of this thesis is perhaps self-evident, given that no other doctoral theses have yet been produced on the works of Maeve Brennan¹⁷⁵. Yet, its originality is, I contend, still more significant, for it addresses a fundamental lacuna in the scholarship of one of Ireland’s most important and still neglected literary voices. Moreover, in the breadth of its scope, it contributes to discussions of urban renewal, diasporic longing, psychosocial decay in post-independent Ireland, and the text as a resistant feminine space, over and above the extensive analyses of Brennan’s body of work—published and unpublished—that it comprises. Finally, this thesis situates itself amidst a growing body of scholarship on Brennan’s literature, including recent works by Ellen McWilliams (2021), Ailbhe McDaid (2019), Klára Hutková (2021), and Abigail Heineger (2019); It acknowledges the seminal work of Angela Bourke (2004); And it strives to do justice to the extraordinary artistry of the author who inspired it.



¹⁷⁵ To the best of my knowledge, this remains true as of June 2022.

References Cited:

- Adolfo J. Cangas, Louis A. Sass, & Marino Pérez-Álvarez. (2009). From the Visions of Saint Teresa of Jesus to the Voices of Schizophrenia. *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology*, 15(3), 239–250. <https://doi.org/10.1353/ppp.0.0187>
- Bourke, A. (2004). *Maeve Brennan: Homesick at the New Yorker*. Jonathan Cape [u.a.].
- Brennan, M. (1997). *The Springs of affection: stories of Dublin*. Houghton Mifflin.
- Brennan, M. (2002). *The Visitor*. Atlantic.
- Brennan, M. (2016). *The Long-Winded Lady: Notes from The New Yorker* (Paperback). Counterpoint.
- Brennan, M. (1960, August 24). *The Long-Winded Lady - draft (Central Park Café)*. Letters to William Shawn, 1960-1976 (MSS 1172, Box 1, Folder 4), Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, United States.
- Brennan, M. (1966, January 4). *The Long-Winded Lady - draft (Transport Strike)*. Letters to William Shawn, 1960-1976 (MSS 1172, Box 1, Folder 4), Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, United States.
- Brennan, M. (1968, June 18). *The Long-Winded Lady - draft (Assassination of Robert Kennedy)*. Maeve Brennan Papers, 1948-1981 (MSS 1412 , Box 3, Folder 3), Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, United States.
- Derisi, S. (2012). *Housing identity: Re-constructing feminine spaces through memory in Virginia Woolf's "The Years" and Daphne du Maurier's "Rebecca"* [ProQuest Dissertations Publishing]. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1027135561?pq-origsite=primo>
- Fantuzzo, J. P. (2018). Facing the Civic Love Gap: James Baldwin's Civic Education for Interpersonal Solidarity. *Educational Theory*, 68(4–5), 385–402. <https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12323>
- Freeman, E. (2010). *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822393184>
- Halberstam, J. J. (2005). *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York University Press. <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.18574/nyu/9780814790892/html>
- Heineger, A. (2019). The British Empire's Lost Slipper: Dangerous Irish Cinderellas. In L. Brugué & A. Llompart (Eds.), *Contemporary Fairy-Tale Magic* (Paperback, Vol. 129, pp. 63–76). Brill.

- Hünefeldt, T., & Schlitte, A. (2018). Introduction: Situatedness and Place. In *Situatedness and Place: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on the Spatio-temporal Contingency of Human Life* (e-book, pp. 1–17). Springer.
- Hutková, K. (2021). *Shame and Belonging in the Fiction of Maeve Brennan*.
<https://dspace.cuni.cz/handle/20.500.11956/136450>
- Jacobs, J. (1958). Downtown is For People. *The Exploding Metropolis*, 168, 124–131.
- Komar, K. L. (1994). Feminist Curves in Contemporary Literary Space. In M. R. Higonnet & J. Templeton (Eds.), *Reconfigured spheres: feminist explorations of literary space* (pp. 89–103). University of Massachusetts Press.
- Lloyd, D. (2005). The subaltern in motion: subalternity, the popular and Irish working class history. *Postcolonial Studies*, 8(4), 421–437. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790500375108>
- McDaid, A. (2019). “As Important ... in My Childhood as the Catholic Church and the Fight for Irish Freedom”: Legacies of Conflict in Maeve Brennan’s Cherryfield Avenue Stories. *New Hibernia Review*, 23(4), 79–99. <https://doi.org/10.1353/nhr.2019.0042>
- McWilliams, E. (2021). Irish-American Immigrant Histories and Readings of Exile in the Writing of Maeve Brennan. In E. McWilliams (Ed.), *Irishness in North American Women’s Writing: Transatlantic Affinities* (pp. 55–82). Palgrave Macmillan UK.
https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-53788-1_3
- Neculai, C. (2014). *Urban Space and Late Twentieth-Century New York Literature: Reformed Geographies* (First edition). Palgrave Macmillan.
- O’Rourke, E. (Forthcoming). *Vexed in the City: Femme failure in the world of Carrie Bradshaw and the ‘Long- Winded Lady.’*
- Scheper-Hughes, N. (2001). *Saints, Scholars, and Schizophrenics: Mental Illness in Rural Ireland* (20th anniversary ed., rev.expanded). University of California Press.
- Walter, B. (2000). *Outsiders Inside: Whiteness, Place, and Irish Women*. Routledge.
- Wan-lih Chang, A. (2015). A Woman Alone: The Depictions of Spinster in Irish Women’s Short Stories. *Estudios Irlandeses*, 10, 44–57. <https://doi.org/10.24162/EI2015-4924>
- Williams, R. (1973). *The country and the city*. Chatto and Windus.

List of Abbreviations

LWL – *The Long Winded Lady: Notes from The New Yorker* (2016)

RG – *The Rose Garden* (2000)

SA – *The Springs of Affection* (1997)

V – *The Visitor* (2002)

List of Works Cited

- Abensour, L. (2013). Liminal space, manic writing. In *Psychotic Temptation* (pp. 136–152). Taylor & Francis Group.
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ed/detail.action?docID=1125210>
- Adolfo J. Cangas, Louis A. Sass, & Marino Pérez-Álvarez. (2009). From the Visions of Saint Teresa of Jesus to the Voices of Schizophrenia. *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology*, 15(3), 239–250. <https://doi.org/10.1353/ppp.0.0187>
- Adorno, T., Benjamin, W., Brecht, B., Lukács, G., & Adorno, T. W. (2007). *Aesthetics and Politics*. Verso.
<https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=5649902>
- Adorno, T. W. (2005). *Minima moralia: reflections on a damaged life* (E. F. N. Jephcott, Trans.). Verso.
- Ahmed, S. (2010). *The Promise of Happiness*. Duke University Press.
- Ahmed, S. (2017). *Living a feminist life*. Duke University Press.
- Akenson, D. H. (1993). *The Irish diaspora: a primer*. P.D. Meany Co. ; Institute of Irish Studies, Queen’s University of Belfast.
- Allen-Hermanson, S., & Matey, J. (n.d.). *Synesthesia* | *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved April 14, 2022, from <https://iep.utm.edu/synesthe/>
- Anzaldúa, G. (1999). *Borderlands =: La frontera* (2nd ed). Aunt Lute Books.
- Arnold, M. (1867). *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (First). Smith, Elder & Co.
- Auden, W. H. (1940). *In Memory of W. B. Yeats* [Poetry (online)]. Poet’s.Org.
<https://poets.org/poem/memory-w-b-yeats>
- Austin, M. (2012). Sex, Purity, and Madness in Iris Murdoch’s Fiction. *Feminist Studies in English Literature*, 20(3), 5–26.
https://oak.go.kr/central/journalist/journaldetail.do?article_seq=19162
- Bachelard, G., Jolas, M., Danielewski, M. Z., & Kearney, R. (2014). *The Poetics of Space*. Penguin Publishing Group.
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ed/detail.action?docID=6042956>
- Bailey, D. (1976). *Mother Ireland* [Documentary; Digital]. BFI.
<https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-mother-ireland-1976-online>

- Baldwin, J. (1962, November 9). James Baldwin: Letter from a Region in My Mind. *The New Yorker*. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1962/11/17/letter-from-a-region-in-my-mind>
- Balinisteanu, T. (2009). *Narrative, social myth and reality in contemporary Scottish and Irish women's writing: Kennedy, Lochhead, Bourke, Ni Dhuibhne, and Carr*. Cambridge Scholars Pub.
- Bartky, S. L. (1990). *Femininity and domination: studies in the phenomenology of oppression*. Routledge.
- Bartram Scott, J. (2021). Negotiating relationships with powerfulness: using femme theory to resist masculinist pressures on feminist femininities. *Psychology & Sexuality*, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2021.1878470>
- Baudrillard, J. (1983). *Simulations*. Semiotext(e), Inc.
- Bellou, A., & Cardia, E. (2016). Occupations after WWII: The legacy of Rosie the Riveter. *Explorations in Economic History*, 62, 124–142. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eeh.2016.03.004>
- Benjamin, W. (1985). Central Park (L. Spencer & M. Harrington, Trans.). *New German Critique*, 34, 32–58. <https://doi.org/10.2307/488338>
- Benjamin, W. (1999). *The Arcades Project* (R. Tiedemann, Ed.). Belknap Press.
- Benjamin, W. (2002). *The arcades project* (1st paperback ed). Harvard University Press.
- Bernstein, N. A. (1968, December 12). *Letter from Nahum A. Bernstein to William Shawn*. Letters to William Shawn, 1960-1976 (MSS 1172, Box 1, Folder 3), Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, United States.
- Biondi, M. (2001). How New York Changes the Story of the Civil Rights Movement. *Afro-American Historical Association of the Niagara Frontier*, 31(2), 15–31.
- Blunt, A., & Rose, G. (Eds.). (1994). *Writing women and space: colonial and postcolonial geographies*. Guilford Press.
- Bolick, K. (2016). *Spinster: Making A Life of One's Own* (Paperback). Corsair.
- Book (eISB), electronic I. S. (n.d.). *electronic Irish Statute Book (eISB)*. Retrieved May 3, 2021, from <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1922/act/1/enacted/en/print.html>
- Bourke, A. (2004). *Maeve Brennan: Homesick at the New Yorker*. Jonathan Cape [u.a.].
- Brah, A. (2005). *Cartographies of diaspora contesting identities*. Routledge.
- Bren, P. (2021). *The Barbizon: The Hotel That Set Women Free* (e-book). Two Roads.
- Brennan, D. (2018). The myth of the Irish insanity epidemic. In B. M. Z. Cohen (Ed.), *Routledge International Handbook of Critical Mental Health* (ebook, pp. 133–140). Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group.
- Brennan, M. (1997). *The Springs of affection: stories of Dublin*. Houghton Mifflin.

- Brennan, M. (2000). *Rose Garden: Short Stories*. (Paperback). Counterpoint.
- Brennan, M. (2002). *The Visitor*. Atlantic.
- Brennan, M. (2013). *Bluebell: Erzählungen* (H.-C. Oeser, Trans.; 1. Aufl). Steidl.
- Brennan, M. (2016). *The Long-Winded Lady: Notes from The New Yorker* (Paperback). Counterpoint.
- Brennan, M. (n.d.-a). *Letter from Maeve Brennan to William Shawn (Fire at the Van Cortland Hotel)*. Letters to William Shawn, 1960-1976 (MSS 1172, Box 1, Folder 1), Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, United States.
- Brennan, M. (n.d.-b). *Letter from Maeve Brennan to William Shawn (from the Van Cortland Hotel)*. Letters to William Shawn, 1960-1976 (MSS 1172 , Box 1, Folder 1), Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, United States.
- Brennan, M. (n.d.-c). *Letter from Maeve Brennan to William Shawn (from the Van Cortland Hotel)*. Letters to William Shawn, 1960-1976 (MSS 1172, Box 1, Folder 1), Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, United States.
- Brennan, M. (n.d.-d). *Mrs Bagot's Legacy - draft material*. Maeve Brennan Papers, 1948-1981 (MSS 1412, Box 3, Folder 12), Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, United Kingdom.
- Brennan, M. (n.d.-e). *The Visitor (Variant A)*. Maeve Brennan Papers, 1948-1981 (MSS 1142, Box 5, Folder 2), Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, United States.
- Brennan, M. (n.d.-f). *The Visitor (Variant B)*. Maeve Brennan Papers, 1948-1981 (MSS 1142, Box 5, Folder 2), Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, United States.
- Brennan, M. (n.d.-g). *What the Grocer's Children Knew - draft material*. Maeve Brennan Papers, 1948-1981 (MSS 1142, Box 5, Folder 3), Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, United States.
- Brennan, M. (n.d.-h). *Letter from Maeve Brennan to William Shawn (Problem with Long-Winded)*. (Letters to William Shawn, 1960-1976) [Letter]. Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library.
- Brennan, M. (n.d.-i). *Letter from Maeve Brennan to William Shawn (Racism at New Yorker)*. (Letters to William Shawn, 1960-1976) [Note]. Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library.

- Brennan, M. (1960a). *Letter from Maeve Brennan to William Shawn (Attitude to Irish Conflict)*. Letters to William Shawn, 1960-1976 (MSS 1172, Box 1, Folder 1), Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, United States.
- Brennan, M. (1960b, August 24). *The Long-Winded Lady - draft (Central Park Café)*. Letters to William Shawn, 1960-1976 (MSS 1172, Box 1, Folder 4), Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, United States.
- Brennan, M. (1963). *Notebook entry*. Maeve Brennan Papers, 1948-1981 (MSS 1142, Box 6, Folder 3), Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, United States.
- Brennan, M. (1966, January 4). *The Long-Winded Lady - draft (Transport Strike)*. Letters to William Shawn, 1960-1976 (MSS 1172, Box 1, Folder 4), Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, United States.
- Brennan, M. (1968, June 18). *The Long-Winded Lady - draft (Assassination of Robert Kennedy)*. Maeve Brennan Papers, 1948-1981 (MSS 1412, Box 3, Folder 3), Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Atlanta, United States.
- Brennan, M. (1972, September 10). *Letter from Maeve Brennan to Howard Moss (from Dublin)*. The Howard Moss Papers, The Berg Collection (Box 55, The Maeve Brennan Folder), The New York Public Library, New York, United States.
- Brennan, M. (1973, October 8). *Letter from Maeve Brennan to Howard Moss*. The Howard Moss Papers, The Berg Collection (Box 55, Maeve Brennan Folder), The New York Public Library, New York, United States.
- Bromley, R. (2000). Introduction: The Third Scenario. In *Narratives for a New Belonging* (pp. 1–16). Edinburgh University Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctvxcrp8n.5>
- Brown, C. A. (2017). Introduction: Women, Writing, Madness: Reframing Diaspora Aesthetics. In C. A. Brown & J. X. K. Garvey (Eds.), *Madness in Black Women's Diasporic Fictions: Aesthetics of Resistance* (1st ed. 2017). Springer International Publishing : Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Brown, C. A., & Garvey (Eds.). (2017). *Madness in Black Women's Diasporic Fictions*. Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- Brown, S. C., Mason, C. A., Lombard, J. L., Martinez, F., Plater-Zyberk, E., Spokane, A. R., Newman, F. L., Pantin, H., & Szapocznik, J. (2009). The Relationship of Built Environment to Perceived Social Support and Psychological Distress in Hispanic Elders: The Role of “Eyes on the Street.” *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, 64B(2), 234–246. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/gbn011>

- Buci-Glucksmann, C. (1994). *Baroque Reason: The Aesthetics of Modernity* (Hardback). Sage Publ.
- Buck-Morss, S. (1986). The Flaneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering. *New German Critique*, 39, 99. <https://doi.org/10.2307/488122>
- Buck-Morss, S. (1991). *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (New). The MIT Press.
- Byron, E. (2004, August 31). Rooms for Rent: Maid Service, Hot Meals, No Men; at the Webster in New York, Values Date to 1923; Visits in the “Beau Parlor.” *The Wall Street Journal*, A1.
- Cahillane, L. (2016). *Drafting the Irish Free State Constitution*. Manchester University Press. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ed/detail.action?docID=5719406>
- Cameron, J. (2016). *The Artist’s Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity* (25th Anniversary Edition). Tarcher Peregree.
- Caro, R. A. (1974). *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (1st ed.). Knopf.
- Casey, E. S. (1997). *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*. Univ. of California Press.
- Cervi, L., & Brewis, J. (2022). Fertility treatment and organizational discourses of the non-reproductive female body. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 29(1), 8–27. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12733>
- Chattopadhyay, S. (2017). Caliban and the Witch and wider bodily geographies. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 24(2), 160–173. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2017.1298570>
- Chronopoulos, T. (2014). Robert Moses and the Visual Dimension of Physical Disorder: Efforts to Demonstrate Urban Blight in the Age of Slum Clearance. *Journal of Planning History*, 13(3), 207–233. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1538513213487149>
- Cieraad, I. (2002). “Out of my kitchen!” Architecture, gender and domestic efficiency. *The Journal of Architecture*, 7(3), 263–279. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602360210155456>
- Clapp-Itnyre, A. (2015). *British hymn books for children, 1800-1900: re-tuning the history of childhood*. Ashgate.
- Commerical Advertisements (The New Yorker, 7th May 1955)*. (1955). [A4; Magazine].
- CONSTITUTION OF THE IRISH FREE STATE (SAORSTÁT EIREANN) ACT, 1922.*, (1921). <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1922/act/1/enacted/en/print>
- Conway, B. (2011). the vanishing catholic priest. *Contexts*, 10(2), 64–65. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41960210>

- Cossmann, B. (1986). Precarious Unity of Feminist Theory and Practice: The Praxis of Abortion, *The University of Toronto Faculty of Law Review*, 44(1), 85–108.
<https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.journals/utflr44&i=91>
- Cowley, U. (2018). Placeless Patriots: The Misplaced Loyalty of “The Middle Nation.” In J. Devlin Trew & M. Pierson (Eds.), *Rethinking the Irish Diaspora: After The Gathering* (1st ed. 2018, pp. 215–227). Springer International Publishing : Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Crampton, J. W., & Elden, S. (Eds.). (2007). *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography*. Ashgate.
- Crampton, J. W., Suite, G. H., & Foucault, P. (n.d.). *British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*.
- Cruise O’Brien, M. (1983). The Female Principle in Gaelic Poetry. In S. F. Gallagher (Ed.), *Woman in Irish Legend, Literature and Life*. Barnes and Noble.
- Crystal, S., & Beck, P. (1992). A Room of One’s Own: The SRO and the Single Elderly. *The Gerontologist*, 32(5), 684–692. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/32.5.684>
- Dalla Costa, M., Cleaver, H., & Barbagallo, C. (2019). *Women and the subversion of the community: a Mariarosa Dalla Costa reader*. PM, Press.
- de Certeau, M. (1998). *The Practice of Everyday Life*. University of California Press.
<http://qut.eblib.com.au/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=922939>
- de Certeau, M., & Rendall, S. F. (2011). *The Practice of Everyday Life*. University of California Press. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ed/detail.action?docID=922939>
- de Valera, E. (1921, June 2). Documents on Irish Foreign Policy - Volume 1 - No. 59 NAI DFA ES Box 14 File 96 [Irish government]. *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy*.
<https://www.difp.ie/volume-1/1921/eamon-de-valera-to-robert-brennan/59/#section-documentpage>
- Delaney, P. (2003). D.P. Moran and The Leader: Writing an Irish Ireland through Partition. *Éire-Ireland*, 38(3–4), 189–211. <https://doi.org/10.1353/eir.2003.0008>
- Derisi, S. (2012). *Housing identity: Re-constructing feminine spaces through memory in Virginia Woolf’s “The Years” and Daphne du Maurier’s “Rebecca”* [ProQuest Dissertations Publishing]. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1027135561?pq-origsite=primo>
- Devlin Trew, J. (2018). Diaspora Engagement in Ireland, North and South, in the Shadow of Brexit. In J. Devlin Trew & M. Pierson (Eds.), *Rethinking the Irish Diaspora: After The Gathering* (1st ed. 2018, pp. 15–57). Springer International Publishing : Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan.

- D'hoker, E. (2016). Houses and Homes in the Short Stories of Elizabeth Bowen and Maeve Brennan. In *Irish Women Writers and the Modern Short Story* (pp. 51–81). Springer International Publishing.
- DiPlacidi, J. (2018). *Gothic incest: gender, sexuality and transgression*. Manchester University Press.
- Doudaki, V. (2012). Sex and the City: In the ambivalent playground of postmodern identity. *Journal of International Communication*, 18(1), 5–17.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13216597.2012.670126>
- Doyle, M.-E. (2010). A Spindle for the Battle: Feminism, Myth, and the Woman-Nation in Irish Revival Drama. *Theatre Journal (Washington, D.C.)*, 51(1), 33–46.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/tj.1999.0010>
- Dybska, A. (2015). Where the War on Poverty and Black Power Meet: A Right to the City Perspective on American Urban Politics in the 1960s. *European Journal of American Studies*, 10(3). <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejas.11251>
- Elkin, L. (2017). *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice and London*. Vintage.
- Fantuzzo, J. P. (2018). Facing the Civic Love Gap: James Baldwin's Civic Education for Interpersonal Solidarity. *Educational Theory*, 68(4–5), 385–402.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12323>
- Federici, S. (2004). *Caliban and the witch: women, the body and primitive accumulation*. Autonomedia.
- Felton, E. (2012). Living with Strangers: Urban Space, Affect and Civility. In S. Vaughan & O. Zelenko (Eds.), *Design and Ethics: Reflections on Practice* (pp. 129–142). Routledge.
- Figlerowicz, M. (2017). *Spaces of Feeling: Affect and Awareness in Modernist Literature*. Cornell University Press.
- Fogarty, A. (2002). The Horror of the Unlived Life: Mother-Daughter Relationships in Contemporary Irish Women's Fiction. In A. Giorgio (Ed.), *Writing Mothers and Daughters: Renegotiating the Mother in Western European Narratives by Women* (pp. 85–118). Berghahn Books.
- Fogarty, G. (2009). *Madness and Transformation in Early Irish Literature: A Psychoanalytic Perspective* [Ph.D., University of Toronto (Canada)].
<https://search.proquest.com/docview/910322179/abstract/D0FD0411593E4998PQ/1>

- Foley, D. (2022). 'Their proper place': women, work and the marriage bar in independent Ireland, c. 1924–1973. *Social History*, 47(1), 60–84.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03071022.2022.2009692>
- Foucault, M. (1971). Polemic: Monstrosities in Criticism. *Diacritics*, 1(1), 57–60.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/464562>
- Foucault, M. (2006). *History of Madness* (J. Khalfa, Ed.; J. Murphy & J. Khalfa, Trans.; e-book). Routledge.
- Foucault, M. (2012). *The Order of Things*. Taylor & Francis.
<http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=240649>
- Foucault, M., & Miskowiec, J. (1986). Of Other Spaces. *Diacritics*, 16(1), 22–27.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/464648>
- Fox Gotham, K., & Greenberg, M. (2014). "Tighten Your Belts and Bite the Bullet" The Legacy of Urban Crisis in New York City and New Orleans. In *Crisis Cities: Disaster and Redevelopment in New York and New Orleans* (pp. 1–42). Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199752225.001.0001>
- Freeman, E. (2010). *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. Duke University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822393184>
- Frisby, D. (2001). *Cityscapes of modernity: critical explorations*. Polity Press in association with Blackwell.
- Garvey, J. X. K. (2017). Conclusion: Moving Beyond Psychic Ruptures. In C. A. Brown & J. X. K. Garvey (Eds.), *Madness in Black Women's Diasporic Fictions: Aesthetics of Resistance* (1st ed. 2017). Springer International Publishing : Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Genz, S. (2006). Third Way/ve: The politics of postfeminism. *Feminist Theory*, 7(3), 333–353.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700106069040>
- Gerend, S. (2005). "Magdalene versus the Nation": Ireland as a Space of Compulsory Motherhood in Edna O'Brien's *Down by the River*. In S. B. Hardy & C. A. Wiedmer (Eds.), *Motherhood and space: configurations of the maternal through politics, home, and the body* (e-book, pp. 35–54). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gillespie, R. (2003). Childfree and Feminine: Understanding the Gender Identity of Voluntarily Childless Women. *Gender and Society*, 17(1), 122–136.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3081818>
- Gratz, R. B. (2016). The Genius of Jane Jacobs. *The Nation*.
- Gray, B. (2004). *Women and the Irish Diaspora*. Routledge.

- Grinberg, E. (2017, March 30). *The Story Behind “An American Girl in Italy”* [News]. CNN.
<https://www.cnn.com/2017/03/30/europe/tbt-ruth-orkin-american-girl-in-italy/index.html>
- Grishakova, M. (2012). *The Models of Space, Time and Vision in V. Nabokov’s Fiction: Narrative Strategies and Cultural Frames (Volume 5.0)* (Vol. 51). University of Tartu Press.
- Grosz, E. (1997). Inscriptions and Body Maps: Representations and the Corporeal. In L. McDowell & J. P. Sharp (Eds.), *Space, Gender, Knowledge: Feminist Readings*. Arnold.
- Halberstam, J. (2011). *The queer art of failure / Judith Halberstam*. Duke University Press.
- Halberstam, J. J. (2005). *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York University Press.
<https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.18574/nyu/9780814790892/html>
- Hardy, S. B., & Wiedmer, C. A. (Eds.). (2005). *Motherhood and space: configurations of the maternal through politics, home, and the body*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hartford, J. J. (2018). A Cultural History of Queer Martyrs. In J. J. Hartford (Ed.), *Sexuality, Iconography, and Fiction in French: Queering the Martyr* (pp. 33–64). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-71903-0_2
- Constitution of Ireland, 25.5.2° (1937).
- Heineger, A. (2019). The British Empire’s Lost Slipper: Dangerous Irish Cinderellas. In L. Brugué & A. Llompart (Eds.), *Contemporary Fairy-Tale Magic* (Paperback, Vol. 129, pp. 63–76). Brill.
- Herr, C. (1990). The Erotics of Irishness. *Critical Inquiry*, 17(1), 1–34.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1343723>
- Higonnet, M. R., & Templeton, J. (Eds.). (1994). *Reconfigured spheres: feminist explorations of literary space*. University of Massachusetts Press.
- Hoskin, R. A. (2021). Can femme be theory? Exploring the epistemological and methodological possibilities of femme. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 25(1), 1–17.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10894160.2019.1702288>
- Hull, E. (1927). Legends and Traditions of the Cailleach Bheara or Old Woman (Hag) of Beare. *Folklore*, 38(3), 225–254. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1256390>
- Hünefeldt, T., & Schlitte, A. (2018). Introduction: Situatedness and Place. In *Situatedness and Place: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on the Spatio-temporal Contingency of Human Life* (e-book, pp. 1–17). Springer.
- Hutková, K. (2021). *Shame and Belonging in the Fiction of Maeve Brennan*.
<https://dspace.cuni.cz/handle/20.500.11956/136450>
- Ingman, H. (2007). *Twentieth-century fiction by Irish women: nation and gender*. Ashgate.

- Jackson, A. (2004). *Home rule: an Irish history, 1800 - 2000* (paperback ed). Phoenix.
- Jacobs, J. (1958). Downtown is For People. *The Exploding Metropolis, 168*, 124–131.
- Jacobs, J. (1992). *The death and life of great American cities* (Vintage Books ed). Vintage Books.
- Jacobs, J. (2011). *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (50th anniversary ed., 2011 Modern Library ed). Modern Library.
- Janson, A., & Tigges, F. (2014). *Fundamental Concepts of Architecture: The Vocabulary of Spatial Situations / Alban Janson, Florian Tigges*. Birkhäuser,.
- Joyce, J. (1979). *Ulysses*. Lerner Publishing Group.
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ed/detail.action?docID=5444999>
- Joyce, J., & Brown, T. (2000). *Dubliners* (Repr). Penguin Books.
- Justice, T. D. of. (n.d.). *Banned Books*. The Department of Justice. Retrieved January 27, 2022, from <https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/banned-books>
- Karim, K. H. (2003). *The media of diaspora*. Routledge.
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=93063>
- Keane, P. J. (1988). *Terrible Beauty: Yeats, Joyce, Ireland, and the Myth of the Devouring Female* (Hardback). University of Missouri Press.
- Kennedy, T. ann. (2007). *Keeping up Her Geography*. Taylor & Francis.
- Keyser, C. (2011). *Playing Smart: New York Women Writers and Modern Magazine Culture*. Rutgers University Press.
- Kiberd, D. (1996). *Inventing Ireland: the Literature of the Modern Nation* (Paperback). Vintage.
- Kiberd, D. (2017). *After Ireland: writing from Beckett to the present* (Hardback). Head of Zeus.
- Knight, K. T. (2017). Placeless places: resolving the paradox of Foucault's heterotopia. *Textual Practice*, 31(1), 141–158. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2016.1156151>
- Knirck, J. K. (2006). *Imagining Ireland's Independence: The Debates Over the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Komar, K. L. (1994). Feminist Curves in Contemporary Literary Space. In M. R. Higonnet & J. Templeton (Eds.), *Reconfigured spheres: feminist explorations of literary space* (pp. 89–103). University of Massachusetts Press.
- Kreuter, A. (2015). The flâneuse and the City as uncanny home in Lawrence Durrell's The Alexandria quartet. *Literator*, 36(1), 8.
<https://literator.org.za/index.php/literator/article/view/1165>

- Lebovic, A. (2019). Refashioning Feminism: American Vogue, the Second Wave, and the Transition to Postfeminism. *Journal of Women's History*, 31(1), 109–132.
<https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2019.0005>
- Ledent, B., O'Callaghan, E., & Tunca, D. (Eds.). (2018). *Madness in Anglophone Caribbean Literature*. Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- Lefebvre, H., Kofman, E., & Lebas, E. (1996). *Writings on Cities*. Blackwell Publishers.
- Lefebvre, H., Nicholson-Smith, D., & Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The Production of Space* (33. print). Blackwell Publishing.
- Lejeune, A. (Ed.). (2001). *The Concise Dictionary of Foreign Quotations*. Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers.
- Lennon, P. (1967). *Rocky Road to Dublin* [Documentary; Digital]. IFI Irish Film Institute.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66JpC_T3wFM
- Lewis, R., Sharp, E., Remnant, J., & Redpath, R. (2015). 'Safe Spaces': Experiences of Feminist Women-Only Space. *Sociological Research Online*, 20(4), 1–14.
<https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.3781>
- Lloyd, D. (2005). The subaltern in motion: subalternity, the popular and Irish working class history. *Postcolonial Studies*, 8(4), 421–437. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790500375108>
- Luibheid, E. (1997). The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act: An "End" to Exclusion? *Positions : East Asia Cultures Critique*, 5(2), 501–522. <https://doi.org/10.1215/10679847-5-2-501>
- Lynch, K. (2005). *The Image of the City* (Nachdr.). MIT PRESS.
- MacKillop, J. (1990). *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*. Oxford University Press.
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ed/detail.action?docID=431087>
- Malpas, J. (2018). Place and Placedness. In T. Hünefeldt & A. Schlitte (Eds.), *Situatedness and Place: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on the Spatio-temporal Contingency of Human Life* (pp. 27–39). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-92937-8_3
- Manolescu, M. (2018). *Cartographies of New York and Other Postwar American Cities: Art, Literature and Urban Spaces*. Springer International Publishing.
- Marotta, M. (2005). MotherSpace: Disciplining through the Material and Discursive. In S. B. Hardy & C. A. Wiedmer (Eds.), *Motherhood and space: configurations of the maternal through politics, home, and the body* (e-book, pp. 15–34). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Massey, D. B. (1994). *Space, place, and gender*. University of Minnesota Press.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttw2z>

- Massey, D. B., Allen, J., & Sarre, P. (Eds.). (1999). *Human geography today*. Polity Press ; Blackwell Publishers.
- McDaid, A. (2019). “As Important ... in My Childhood as the Catholic Church and the Fight for Irish Freedom”: Legacies of Conflict in Maeve Brennan’s Cherryfield Avenue Stories. *New Hibernia Review*, 23(4), 79–99. <https://doi.org/10.1353/nhr.2019.0042>
- McDowell, L., & Sharp, J. P. (Eds.). (1997). *Space, Gender, Knowledge: Feminist Readings*. Arnold.
- McGrath, B., & Shane, G. (2012). Introduction: Metropolis, Megalopolis and Metacity. In *The SAGE Handbook of Architectural Theory* (pp. 641–656). SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446201756>
- McKelway, S. C. (1972, July 19). *Letter from St. Clair McKelway to Maeve Brennan*. Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books, The New Yorker Records (The Joseph Mitchell Papers, MSS COL 23209, Box 82, File 82.1), The New York Public Library, New York, United States.
- McKinnon, S. (1995). American Kinship/American Incest: Asymmetries in a Scientific Discourse. In S. Yanagisako & D. Carol (Eds.), *Naturalizing Power: Essays in Feminist Cultural Analysis* (p. 321). Routledge.
- McWilliams, E. (2013). *Women and exile in contemporary Irish fiction* (e-book). Palgrave Macmillan.
- McWilliams, E. (2014). “No Place Is Home—It Is as It Should Be”: Exile in the Writing of Maeve Brennan. *Éire-Ireland*, 49(3–4), 95–111. <https://doi.org/10.1353/eir.2014.0015>
- McWilliams, E. (2016). ‘A sort of Rathmines version of a Dior design’: Maeve Brennan, Self-Fashioning and the Uses of Style. *Women: A Cultural Review*, 27(1), 42–61. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09574042.2015.1122488>
- McWilliams, E. (2021). Irish-American Immigrant Histories and Readings of Exile in the Writing of Maeve Brennan. In E. McWilliams (Ed.), *Irishness in North American Women’s Writing: Transatlantic Affinities* (pp. 55–82). Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-53788-1_3
- Merritt, H. (2001). “Dead Many Times”: “Cathleen ni Houlihan,” Yeats, Two Old Women, and a Vampire. *The Modern Language Review*, Vol.96((3)), p.644-653.
- Metcalfe, J. S., & Ramlogan, R. (Eds.). (2017). *Creative Destruction*. Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781784716356>
- Miller, I. (2016). Irish insanity 1800–2000. *Irish Studies Review*, 23(4), 503–504. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09670882.2015.1087083>

- Moloney, C. (1996). The Hags of “Ulysses”: The “Poor Old Woman,” Cathleen Ni Houlihan, and the Phallic Mother. *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.34((1/2)), p.103-120.
- Moran, D. P. (1905). *The Philosophy of Irish Ireland*. An Chartlann.
- Moses, R. (1956). *Working for the People: Promise and Performance in Public Service* (1st ed.). Harper and Brothers.
- Mostoller, M. (2012). A Single Room: Housing for the Low-Income Single Person. In E. Lardner Birch (Ed.), *The Unsheltered Woman: Women and Housing* (pp. 191–217). Transaction Publishers.
- Mouton, J. (2001). From Feminine Masquerade to Flâneuse: Agnès Varda’s Cléo in the City. *Cinema Journal*, 40(2), 3–16. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cj.2001.0004>
- Murray, T. (2017). Joyce, Dubliners and diaspora. *Irish Studies Review*, 26(1), 98–110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09670882.2017.1412279>
- Murray, T. (2018). Rafferty’s Return: Diaspora and Dislocation in Edna O’Brien’s “Shovel Kings.” In J. Devlin Trew & M. Pierse (Eds.), *Rethinking the Irish Diaspora: After The Gathering* (1st ed. 2018, pp. 229–246). Springer International Publishing : Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nash, C. (1994). Remapping the Body/Land: New Cartographies of Identity, Gender, and Landscape in Ireland. In A. Blunt & G. Rose (Eds.), *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies* (Paperback, p. 256). Guilford Press.
- Nash, M., & Grant, R. (2015). Twenty-Something Girls v. Thirty-Something Sex And The City Women. *Feminist Media Studies*, 15(6), 976–991. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2015.1050596>
- Neculai, C. (2014). *Urban Space and Late Twentieth-Century New York Literature: Reformed Geographies* (First edition). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nelson, B. (2012). *Irish Nationalists and the Making of the Irish Race*. Princeton University Press. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ed/detail.action?docID=878312>
- Nesci, C. (2007). *Le flâneur et les flâneuses: les femmes et la ville à l’époque romantique / Catherine Nesci ; préface de Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson*. ELLUG, Université Stendhal.
- Nonko, E. (2017, July 27). *New York City’s subway crisis started with Robert Moses*. Curbed NY. <https://ny.curbed.com/2017/7/27/15985648/nyc-subway-robert-moses-power-broker>
- Ó Broin, L. (1976). *Revolutionary underground: the story of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, 1858-1924 / Leon Ó Broin*. Gill and Macmillan.
- O’Brien, E. (1976). *Mother Ireland*. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- O’Connor, F. (2004). *The lonely voice: a study of the short story*. Melville House Pub.

- O'Connor, F., & Maxwell, W. (1996). *The happiness of getting it down right: letters of Frank O'Connor and William Maxwell, 1945-1966* (M. Steinman, Ed.; 1st ed). A.A. Knopf : Distributed by Random House.
- Orkin, R. (n.d.). American Girl in Italy 1951 | Ruth Orkin Photo Archive | The Work of Photojournalist Ruth Orkin. *Ruth Orkin Photo Archive*. Retrieved May 18, 2022, from <https://www.orkinphoto.com/photographs/american-girl/>
- O'Rourke, E. (Forthcoming). *Vexed in the City: Femme failure in the world of Carrie Bradshaw and the 'Long- Winded Lady.'*
- O'Toole, F. (2015, May 29). Sexual politics in Ireland. *OpenDemocracy*.
<https://search.proquest.com/docview/1683984305/abstract/FF74E3658D5B4C0CPQ/1>
- Palko, A. L. (2007). Out of Home in the Kitchen: Maeve Brennan's Herbert's Retreat Stories. *New Hibernia Review*, 11(4), 73–91. <https://doi.org/10.1353/nhr.2008.0008>
- Palko, A. L. (2010). From The Uninvited to The Visitor: The Post-Independence Dilemma Faced by Irish Women Writers. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 31(2), 1–34. <https://doi.org/10.1353/fro.2010.0008>
- Paumgarten, N. (2015, February 2). *So Long, Times Square*. The New Yorker.
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/02/02/here-3>
- Pelling, N. (2002). *Anglo-Irish Relations 1798-1922*. Taylor and Francis.
- Peters, A. (2005). A TRAVELER IN RESIDENCE: MAEVE BRENNAN AND THE LAST DAYS OF NEW YORK. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 33((3/4)), 66–89.
- Pickett, S. T., McGrath, B., Marshall, V., Morgan Grove, J., & Cadenasso, M. L. (2020). Ecological Urban Design: Theory, Research, and Praxis. In *Science for the sustainable city empirical insights from the Baltimore School of Urban Ecology* (e-book). Yale University Press. <http://www.vlebooks.com/vleweb/product/openreader?id=none&isbn=9780300249385>
- Pierse, M. (2018). “Coeval but Out of Kilter”: Diaspora, Modernity and “Authenticity” in Irish Emigrant Worker Writing. In J. Devlin Trew & M. Pierse (Eds.), *Rethinking the Irish Diaspora: After The Gathering* (1st ed. 2018, pp. 247–272). Springer International Publishing : Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pollock, A. (2011). Aesthetic Economies of Immaculation: Capitalism and Gender in Wollstonecraft's “Letters from Sweden.” *The Eighteenth Century*, 52(2), 193–210. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41468136>
- Pratt, M. L. (1981). The Short Story: The Long and the Short of It. *Poetics*, 10(2), 175–194. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-422X\(81\)90033-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-422X(81)90033-4)

- Rabbitte, P. (2018, January 20). When theocracy, not democracy, ruled Ireland. *Sunday Business Post*.
- Richards, H. (2003). Sex and the City : A visible flaneuse for the postmodern era? *Continuum*, 17(2), 147–157. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304310302745>
- Robins, J. (1986). *Fools and Mad : A History of the Insane in Ireland*. Institute of Public Administration.
- Rogers, D. (2013). The Poetics of Cartography and Habitation: Home as a Repository of Memories. *Housing, Theory and Society*, 30(3), 262–280. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14036096.2013.797019>
- History of the Whitney*. (n.d.). Retrieved February 6, 2020, from <https://whitney.org/about/history>
- Ronen, R. (2010). *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory* (e-book). Cambridge University Press. <http://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=4638487>
- Rowan, J. C. (2010). The New York School of Urban Ecology: The New Yorker, Rachel Carson, and Jane Jacobs. *American Literature*, 82(3), 583–610. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00029831-2010-025>
- Rushdie, S. (2006). Imaginary Homelands. In G. Griffiths, H. Tiffin, & B. Ashcroft (Eds.), *The Post-colonial Studies Reader* (e-book, pp. 428–434). Taylor & Francis.
- Sagalyn, L. (2016). *The Cross Manhattan Expressway*. Museum of the City of New York. <https://www.mcny.org/story/cross-manhattan-expressway>
- Scheper-Hughes, N. (2001). *Saints, Scholars, and Schizophrenics: Mental Illness in Rural Ireland* (20th anniversary ed., rev.expanded). University of California Press.
- Schjeldahl, P. (n.d.). *Edward Hopper and American Solitude*. The New Yorker. Retrieved August 25, 2020, from <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/06/08/edward-hopper-and-american-solitude>
- Scull, A. (1979). *Museums of madness: the social organization of insanity in nineteenth-century England*. Allen Lane.
- Sedensky, M. (2001, July 10). Decades Later, Doing the Cross Bronx Expressway Right. *The New York Times*, 8–8.
- Shanahan, R. L. (2015). *Grotesque Sheela-na-gigs? A Feminist Reclaiming of Borders in “The Spirit of Woman” Posters* [Master’s Thesis]. University of Colorado.
- Siegal, H. (1974). *Outposts of the Forgotten: An Ethnography of New York City’s Welfare Hotels and Single Room Occupancy (S.R.O.) Tenements* [PhD Thesis]. Yale.

- Simpson, R. (2016). Singleness and self-identity: The significance of partnership status in the narratives of never-married women. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 33(3), 385–400. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407515611884>
- Spain, D. (2014). Gender and Urban Space. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 40(1), 581–598. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-071913-043446>
- Spiegel, L. (1992). The Suburban Home Companion: Television and the Neighbourhood Ideal in Postwar America. In J. Bloomer & B. Colomina (Eds.), *Sexuality and Space* (p. 389). Princeton Architectural Press.
- Stevenson, C. (2014). “Here Was One Room, There Another”: The Room, Authorship, and Feminine Desire in *A Room of One’s Own* and *Mrs. Dalloway*. *Pacific Coast Philology*, 49(1), 112–132.
- Terry, M. M. (2018). *Channeling Cathleen: Crossing the Threshold from Mother Ireland to Spinster Sean Bhean Bhocht* [Doctoral Thesis]. Drew University.
- Tester, K. (1994). *The Flâneur* / edited by Keith Tester. Routledge.
- Tracey, P. A. (2008). *Stalking Irish Madness: Searching for the Roots of my Family’s Schizophrenia*. Bantam Dell.
- Traister, R. (2016). *All the single ladies: unmarried women and the rise of an independent nation* (First Simon&Schuster hardcover edition). Simon & Schuster.
- Tsantsoulas, T. (2020). Anger, Fragility, and the Formation of Resistant Feminist Space. *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 34(3), 367–377. <https://doi.org/10.5325/jspecphil.34.3.0367>
- Tymoczko, M. (1994). *The Irish Ulysses*. University of California Press. <https://www.degruyter.com/isbn/9780520330245>
- Walker, P. (2012). Charles Abrams vs. Robert Moses: Contested Rhetorics of Urban Housing. *Rhetoric Review*, 31(3), 289–308. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07350198.2012.684000>
- Walter, B. (2000). *Outsiders Inside: Whiteness, Place, and Irish Women*. Routledge.
- Walter, B. (2013). Personal lives: narrative accounts of Irish women in the diaspora. *Irish Studies Review*, 21(1), 37–54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09670882.2012.759711>
- Wan-lih Chang, A. (2015). A Woman Alone: The Depictions of Spinster in Irish Women’s Short Stories. *Estudios Irlandeses*, 10, 44–57. <https://doi.org/10.24162/EI2015-4924>
- Washington Square Park Highlights - Shirley Hayes and the Preservation of Washington Square Park : NYC Parks*. (2020). Nycgovparks.Org. <https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/washington-square-park/highlights/9763>

- What a shocker: no more books to ban.* (n.d.). The Irish Times. Retrieved January 27, 2022, from <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/tv-radio-web/what-a-shocker-no-more-books-to-ban-1.688191>
- Wiley, C., & Barnes, F. R. (2021). "Introduction." In *Homemaking: Women Writers and the Politics and Poetics of Home* (e-book, Vol. 8, pp. xv–xxvi). Routledge.
- Williams, J. B. (2018). Willing Servants: The Growth of Appliances in the 1930s. In J. B. Williams (Ed.), *The Electric Century: How the Taming of Lightning Shaped the Modern World* (pp. 103–114). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-51155-9_12
- Williams, R. (1973). *The country and the city*. Chatto and Windus.
- Williams, R. Y. (2004). *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women's Struggles Against Urban Inequality*. Oxford University Press, Incorporated.
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ed/detail.action?docID=279617>
- Wilson, E. (1992). *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women* (1st University of California Press ed). University of California Press.
- Wolf, A. (2019, October 12). Benjamin's Dialectical Image: Hegelian Interruption. *The Empyrean Trail*. <https://empyreantrail.wordpress.com/2019/10/11/benamins-dialectical-image-hegelian-interruption/>
- Wolff, J. (1985). The Invisible Flâneuse. Women and the Literature of Modernity. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 2((3)), 37–46.
- Yagoda, B. (2000). *About town: the New Yorker and the world it made* (1. publ). Duckworth.
- Yeats, W. (2015). EASTER 1916. *The Poetry Ireland Review*, 116, 54–55.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26509660>
- Yeats, W. B. (2011). *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* (Digireads.com).
<http://www.vlebooks.com/vleweb/product/openreader?id=none&isbn=9781420942224>
- Zipes, J. (2012). *The Irresistible Fairy Tale: The Cultural and Social History of a Genre*. Princeton University Press.
- Zipp, S. (2010). *Manhattan projects: the rise and fall of urban renewal in Cold War New York*. Oxford University Press. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.31479>
- Zipp, S. T. (n.d.). *Manhattan projects: Cold War urbanism in the age of urban renewal* [Ph.D., Yale University]. Retrieved May 14, 2022, from <https://www.proquest.com/docview/304986602/abstract/C3FB4FA4505F424FPQ/1>

