



Recensioni / Reviews

Citation: (2021) Recensioni /
Reviews. *Sijis* 11: pp. 475-507.
doi: 10.13128/SIJIS-2239-
3978-12906

Melania Terrazas Gallego, *Trauma and Identity in Contemporary Irish Culture*, Oxford-Bern-Berlin *et al.*, Peter Lang, 2020, pp. 302. GBP 40. ISBN: 978-1-78997-559-8.

Nowadays, the publication of a new book on Irish Studies seems almost as common as a pint of Guinness served in an Irish pub. Nonetheless, Melania Terrazas's volume *Trauma and Identity in Contemporary Irish Culture* is a fresh draught, a new and indispensable work within the field of Irish Studies where memory, silence and trauma are recreated through the examination of their echoes in historical records, and in cinematographic, literary, and musical production. Of course, the book does share its aims with some others from the Reimagining Ireland series, a collection of critical studies on Ireland's past and present realities, reinterpretations of the territory, Irishness and the Irish people through contemporary lenses. All these volumes are interdisciplinary exercises in the recovery of facts and realities, and their distillation from myths and imagination, through new readings of old events and people that become so necessary in times of the sometimes controversial commemorations of such events. They are deconstructions of the past, reconstructions of the present, and reimagining(s) of the future.

Limits and contrasts are made clear even before opening the current book. The front cover captures the reader's attention with the haunting painting "Crossing Borders" by Emer Martin, a work described by Martin herself as being part of a story of "a metamorphosis and a drama of a metamorphosis into our lives" (n.d.). The staring eyes of a genderless character are emerald-green with shades of reddish orange on a white background, and thus might recall Ireland's flag. The lips are scarlet red and cracked, as if they have been subjected to great ordeals. The sad, petrified face is crossed by three wires; two of these intersect and one runs parallel. This latter wire can be read both figuratively and literary as representing either a turbulent past that witnessed the dismemberment of Ireland into two, or as standing for a troubled present. There is no sign of a time frame, but the blue light colour that completes the portrait might signify a variety of things: to conjure up images of sky and sea, and with this, physical or metaphorical journeys into the depths of the human psyche; the blue colour also conveys serenity, stability, wisdom,

constancy, but also sadness, stasis, and depression. All these interpretations of the colour symbolism of the painting suit Ireland, and indeed are recollected in one way or another throughout the pages of *Trauma and Identity in Contemporary Irish Culture*.

The volume opens with a preface by Linda Connolly and an introduction by the editor of the compilation, Melania Terrazas Gallego, which together present the thematic structure of the 12 chapters, these divided into five parts. Essays on different cultural manifestations and unpublished, creative pieces of writing, plus an interview about trauma, memory and identity, are symbiotically intermingled. Among other aspects, the chapters present a great array of themes, such as minorities' stories and voices, Irish female emigration, the Great Hunger, the Troubles, the Irish War of Independence and the Civil War, problematic Anglo-Irish relationships, racism, gender inequality, institutional and religious abuse, and domestic violence.

The first part of the volume explores literature and film. In the opening chapter, "From Undoing: Silence and the Challenge of Individual Trauma in John Boyne's *The Heart's Invisible Furies*", Asier Altuna-García de Salazar analyses the complicated dyad of individual-society. The novel provides an account of the life of its main character Cyril Avery, from the moment of his birth out of wedlock in the year 1945, to the 22 May 2015, when same-sex marriage was legalised after a popular vote in post-Celtic Tiger Ireland. Tangentially, the literary piece tackles undesired pregnancies, the stigmatisation and difficulties of single motherhood, illegal adoptions, and the overburdening power of the Catholic Church. In contrast to accounts of major traumatic events such as the Nazi regime and the Second World War – reminiscences of which appear frequently in the historical tapestry of the novel – Altuna-García de Salazar observes how Boyne here focuses on the individual traumas of both major and minor characters by dissecting identity, masculinity, heterosexuality, and homosexuality. Boyne plays with time and space, and offers a diachronous evolution of traumas alongside economic, social, and political metamorphoses occurring at the turn of the twentieth century, not only in Ireland, but also in Holland and the United States. The novel, then, captures the precarious reality of the homosexual community by illustrating how oppressive power structures impact on the rights of this minority, whose behaviour was considered for centuries to be deviant. Within the framework of a strong patriarchal society, the persecution carried out by the religious authorities, the punishment and criminalisation by the Irish law of homosexuals, as well as the ostracism and vilification they faced in associated issues of child abuse, pornography, and the spread of AIDS, are ubiquitous menaces for men, as the character of Avery recalls. He is constantly in danger throughout his youth and adulthood, and only seems to find some relief and peace at the end of his life. This bildungsroman process is well reflected in the structure and the titles of the book's three parts: "Shame", "Exile" and "Peace", plus the epilogue, "Beyond the harbour on the high seas". In the words of the author of this chapter, the scars of tumultuous episodes and the traumatic individual silence that they occasion seem to heal at a certain moment in Avery's odyssey, "but this does not mean that the violence they bespeak can be easily resolved or erased" (16), since the harm caused by his former experiences is woven into the fabric of his very being and memory. Nonetheless, although painful, remembrance becomes significant in Avery's narration at both the individual and collective levels, because his voice comes to represent other oppressed minorities. This is how memory is transformed into a source for healing and renegotiation of alternative discourses, spaces, identities, and sexualities in contemporary and globalised Ireland.

In the second contribution of the volume, "Trauma and Irish Female Migration through Literature and Ethnography", María Amor Barros-del Río complements current studies on Irish female migration (Nolan 1989; O'Sullivan 1997; Walter 2002; Gray 2004; MacPherson

and Hickman 2014) by addressing the works of Edna O'Brien, Mary Costello, Sebastian Barry, and Colm Tóibín in light of official ethnographic records, this as a means of exploring memories of trauma before, during and after the departure of those involved in such processes. Barros-del Río mentions here one of the most tragic, calamitous, and grievous experiences of Ireland's history, the Famine (1845-1852). The haemorrhaging of the population, with widespread emigration to the United States, Great Britain, Australia, and Canada is just one of the direct consequences of the Great Famine. The demographic changes experienced by Ireland during the nineteenth century, as the author explains, were not limited to this outflow of its population; the impact also led to a domino effect at home, one that had strong repercussions in the economic, political, social, and cultural spheres. Covering a variety of issues, this chapter illustrates how the post-Famine period constituted a backlash in the position of Irish women (Horgan 2001), in the sense that the decades that followed the Famine saw the consolidation of the power of the Catholic Church, a further erosion of Irish women's rights, with women increasingly equated to both Mother Ireland and their biological functions, a rigid stereotyping that further limited women's life experiences to the private sphere. According to Barros-del Río, between the Act of Union of 1800 and the independence of the Republic, 4 million women, most of them young and unmarried, left the island (38). Despite these large numbers, emigration is one of those issues where the historical erasure of Irish women persists, and where "[their] experiences are peripheral or completely ignored in many general accounts of migration and the Irish diaspora" (Redmond 2018, 2-3). Although the title, the abstract, and the first part of this contribution refer to a general framework of Irish female emigration, and to different destinations where Irish women worked and settled, the study is then limited to one of the receiving countries: The United States. Nonetheless, the analysis of many points here sheds light on the complex reasons that for centuries had motivated women's incessant exodus from Irish shores to America, and does so by interweaving fortunate and unfortunate stories. Through the reading of these fictional works and historical records, the author offers a more nuanced picture of Irish female emigration that goes beyond the conceptualisations of those women who left the Irish shores as vulnerable, ignorant, poor, pregnant, or sexually deviant, while the phenomenon of immigration itself is understood in relation to variables such as class, age, education, nationality, and religion. By setting these stories back on the page, and thus returning them to the collective memory, women are rendered visible, they are offered a voice to explore their traumas, and they are located in the frames of modern Irish history by valuing their socioeconomic, cultural, and emotional contributions to the construction of Ireland or that of their host societies (Armie 2020, 190).

"Avenging the Famine: Lance Daly's *Black' 47*, Genre and History", by Ruth Barton, explores the ties between Lance Daly's film *Black' 47* – taking the form of a classic Western but set in Gaelic-speaking Western Ireland – the Great Famine, historical veracity, the much-questioned colonial relationship between England-Ireland, and trauma. *Black' 47* premiered in 2018 and its historical context transports the viewer to 1847, to be introduced to Martin Feeney, a singular white male and fictional hero. He is a deserter from the British Army who returns to Connemara after receiving bad news from home: his mother has died of fever and his brother has been hung for resisting eviction. Back at home, Feeney has brutal encounters with the authorities, and the remaining members of his family are either killed or suffer other tragic deaths. An insatiable desire for revenge and a violent interpretation of justice brings Feeney together with Hannah, an old comrade from his regiment in Afghanistan and a member of the British forces in Ireland. From the very moment of its release, this visual representation of the Famine has enjoyed a very positive reception, whereas responses in different countries have had

different outcomes. According to Barton, while in the United Kingdom and Ireland the movie has enjoyed success, international audience figures were very modest, and this study examines some of the reasons underlying such a varied reception by looking at the symbolism of the plot in the wider context of Ireland's past and present history, memory, and the complicated Anglo-Irish relations. Here notions such as victimhood, cultural and nationalist manifestos like the Irish language, Irish womanhood, patriarchy, the figure of the male breadwinner, and what the author calls the heroic remasculinization of the historical figures (61) are all addressed. Likewise, Barton emphasises the lack of cinematographic precedents depicting the Famine, an almost taboo theme, despite being one of the "most significant moments in Irish history" (63). The chapter emphasises the importance of knowledge of potential spectators seeing a depiction of the Famine, in the sense that the film leaves unexplored many of the factors laying at the very heart of those years, for example, the Poor Tax and the consequent evictions and executions of Irish peasants. Nonetheless, *Black' 47* tackles, through the use of characters such as the symbolic named landlord Kilmichael, Capitan Pope, and a journalist, the different readings of the catastrophe, by grading the involvement and guilt of both Ireland and Britain for the disaster. Also discussed is the dilemma about the many different denominations of the event: The Great Famine, The Hunger, or *An Drochshaol*. Names are here an echo of the debate between revisionists and nationalists, since what the revisionists termed "famine" was, for a significant number of nationalists, a "hunger" or "starvation", while the most radical among them referred to it as a "holocaust" or "ethnic cleansing". Considering the premises of colonialism, then, Barton turns to Ireland's experience, whose readings range from victimhood to agency, to explain trauma and silence, and arrives at the conclusion that *Black' 47* "disidentifies with the existing historical narrative of Irish victimhood" (71) by creating two major characters who express an insatiable thirst for revenge and by making all these discourses collide. This is how the film becomes "a project of devictimizing the Famine" (72). Barton ends the paper by presenting the true identity and origins of the two main actors as a means of explaining their selection for their respective roles. Although it might seem that the discussion here somehow diverges from its main purposes by drawing some parallels between Australians and Irish people, the writer proceeds in this way in order to explore the contradictory and conflictive sides of whiteness, power, and disempowerment in different territories.

Part II is dedicated to media and digital archives. In "Reflection of Trauma in the Prisons Memory Archive: How Information Literacy, Human Experience and Place are Impacted by Conflict", the historian Lorraine Dennis explores the Anglo-Irish Troubles (1968-1998) through visual materials obtained at the prisons of Armagh Gaol and the Maze/Long Kesh. The 175 records were filmed during 2006 and 2007 in these two prisons, which were already empty at the time. The unheard and unseen material (Dennis 2020, 86) constitutes an inclusivist approach that reconstructs truth and history from extensive site footage, photographs, films, historical records and the recorded stories of prison staff, prisoners, teachers, family visitors, chaplains, and probation officers about the virulent conflicts where "over 3,500 people were killed and hundreds of others maimed with life-changing injuries" (83). First to be examined here are the origins of the conflict, back in 1921, when Partition of the territory occurred. Without going into much detail, but in relation to the year 1921, Dennis speaks about the two *new* predominant identities in Northern Ireland and describes how the hostilities between both communities were to escalate over the twentieth century, to burst violently during the Troubles, a period known also as "the War" or "the Conflict". In this context the reader is given an exploration of "the fragility of peace" in a society where, despite the improvements brought about by the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, "trauma sits uncomfortably with the

new vision of prosperity” (84) in cities like Belfast, where a legacy of hurt and suffering impedes the healing of wounds. According to the author, despite the provisions brought about by the Agreement and various attempts at bringing the community together, the distance between the two factions has in fact widened, this due to an ill-advised approach based principally on an ethnocentric nationalism that constructs the *other* in opposition of the professed values and beliefs of the comparative concept of the equation, and which therefore openly places both sides in confrontation by emphasising difference. For Dennis, the key for cooperation between both Northern Catholics and Protestants is to be found in common ground and sharing elements, such as history, living in the same neighbours, and studying at the same colleges. In relation to this belief, this initiative was carried out at these two prisons and encapsulates the idea that due to the individual storytelling of those victims of this sectarian conflict, the limits between past and present are blurred, and hence healing might occur. Initiatives like this would help to construct a shared history in Northern Ireland and promote empathy, inclusivity, collaboration, and interaction between the two affected communities, not only in the territory, but also serving as a model for peace worldwide.

Patrick J. Mahoney’s “From the Maze to Social Media: Articulating the Trauma of ‘The Blanket Protest’ in the Digital Space” is thematically related to the former chapter, since it discusses the “Blanket” and the “No Wash” Protests which took place in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh Prison between 1976 and 1981. The author values here the marginalisation of this group of ex-convicts, and analyses “the lingering mental and physical implications of incarceration, and by continued government denial of the correlating institutional abuses which occurred” (2020, 104). As a way to combat the lasting trauma and to explore the history of the events, Mahoney considers the role of social media, forums, and other platforms with the same characteristics in today’s contemporary framework, in how these provide a sense of cohesiveness for the participants and offer updated freely-available information. The study is conceptualised around the importance of these “emotional communities”, or “safe spaces” (110), zones of encounter where physical boundaries and limitations of all kinds disappear, and where the recovery and renegotiation of individual traumas and healing can take place through the sharing of memories, the manifestation of support, and communal collaboration. Apart from their cathartic and therapeutic effects, these individual fragments of history become part of a collective and contrasted memory archive. This type of social media therapy, as it is popularly known, is put into practice by the author with the creation and description of the functioning of one of these blogs, where politics is left aside. Since the historical contextualisation of this chapter is very important for readers, Mahoney, in a concise but in a very informative way, manages to examine the genesis of these protests and other related events. In relation to these episodes, he explores the great success of the first ten months of the site’s existence, from 2016 to July 2017. The page includes the participation of former blanket men, families, and supporters who are revisiting the past. Through these stories, anyone can access the hitherto unknown and probably unrecorded information that can usefully complement official historical sources, thus offering harsh insights into the Troubles.

Part III of this volume is dedicated to the study of history through historical records. “‘The Women Who Had Been Straining Every Nerve’: Gender-Specific Medical Management of Trauma in the Irish Revolution (1916–1923)”, by Síobhra Aiken, explores female trauma and silence in the various forms that these took during the tumultuous period between 1916 to 1923, doing so by considering the Military Service Pensions Collection, the personal memories of those involved in the events, plus literary texts. Taking as a framework the strong, patriarchal, and newly-born Irish Free State, Aiken dissects these topics by paying attention to two signifi-

cant variables: gender and class. The chapter, therefore, address the discrimination suffered by many female republican revolutionaries during this period through the analysis of the different medical and non-medical treatments administered to those women with “exhausted nerves” (133). To this end, the study is based on the concept of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a term that alludes to psychological phenomena such as stress, anxiety and depression caused by violent, life-threatening episodes suffered by women like Siobhán Lankford and Lily Mernin, who fought side by side with their male counterparts. According to the same source, despite the normalisation of the use of the concept of PTSD today, “the highly competitive commemorative culture which emerged in post-independence Ireland offered little scope for the articulation of personal traumas” (135), and when this did occur, the conceptualisation never departed far from that of “the heroic male guerrilla fighter” (*ibidem*). The participation of women in the fight for national independence, and in the related discourse, was to be valued differently, since gradually a parallelism between the Irish woman and the national spirit was drawn and later enforced with the 1937 Constitution and subsequent legislation. This, together with a combination of the inherited forms of Victorian norms and customs, led to a further “gender-isation” of the public and private spheres. In the words of Aiken “women – both civilians and activists – were key agents during Ireland’s revolutionary period, as borders between private and military zones were systematically broken down” (*ibidem*); nevertheless, unease permeated the national discourse in recognising male combatant’s reliance on female comrades (136). Considering all these premises, Aiken examines how ideas of stoicism and Victorian social conventions of concealing distress and repressing emotions, particularly in public, obscured the harsh realities and trauma derived from war and experiences not only of those who actively engaged in the fight, but of those civilian women accidentally trapped within the conflicts. This is how violent psychological responses to these episodes were met with mild diagnoses or were treated with incorrect medication which most of the time aimed at a “refeminization and domestication of female combatants” (140), while often those studying the phenomena related “mental instability with somatic, biological explanations [...] rather than consider their psychological or social causes” (137-138). Mental institutions and emigration were other viable options to drug and electrical treatments. Aiken’s chapter is a captivating yet harsh view of the past. It constitutes a further piece in a larger puzzle and helps not only to reconstruct her-story and legitimise Irish women’s contributions in both the private and public spheres, but also addresses their suffering, traumas, silence, shaming and marginalisation over decades.

“Personal Loss and the ‘Trauma of Internal War’: The Cases of W. T. Cosgrave and Seán Lemass”, by Eunan O’Halpin, considers the personal stories of two of the founding politicians of independent Ireland, W.T. Cosgrave and Seán Lemass. O’Halpin observes here how the violent political climate, personal and collective loss, trauma, and memory experienced by both figures during the Irish Revolution were manifested soundly and paradoxically through the silence and reluctance of these two men, to discuss those tumultuous years. The author draws on new historical sources, such as those of the Bureau of Military History records (BMH) and the Military Service Pensions and Medals Collections. In first instance, the chapter establishes a parallelism between Cosgrave and Lemass by comparing their inner-city Dublin origins, their participation in the 1916 rebellion, the loss of family members, close friends and colleagues, the fact that they suffered incarceration, and that despite the experienced horrors, “neither Cosgrave nor Lemass claimed compensation for any physical or psychological damage” (O’Halpin 2020, 171). O’Halpin also looks at what made them different, considering aspects such as their political views and their views on and practice of Catholicism. The author follows here some of the premises presented in Chapter 6, in that he uses the prism of PTSD to measure

the impact of trauma, memory, and silence in the articulation of emotions in a society where “male reticence about personal loss was the norm in public life” (166), and where the contrary would have been considered unmanly behaviour. O’Halpin explores many details about Cosgrave and Lemass’s political and personal lives, although the most intimate aspects that might explain the reasons for their behaviour in this sense are not disclosed but rather supposed, and associated with the too-personal, painful past of each man (179). Their elusiveness, therefore, leaves plenty of room for speculation and confirms Cosgrave and Lemass’s paradoxical postures: they never denied their hardships and trauma, although they did not cite them in public, “and when in government, neither shirked from the use of extreme force against former comrades in defence of the state” (166).

Part IV is dedicated to music. In chapter 8, Fintan Vallely’s “Dim-rum-ditherum-dan-dee: Trauma and Prejudice. Conflict and Change as Reflections of Societal Transformation in the Modern-Day Consolidation of Irish Traditional Music” sets out to consider music, trauma, colonial relations, identity and gender representation. The chapter is thus rather ambitious, and the numerous themes dealt with, and the shifts from past to present in the different parts of the chapter may provoke in the reader a certain confusion. Furthermore, trauma is tackled here tangentially and superficially, especially in the last part of the contribution, while more emphasis is put on gender inequality in the artistic field than on the effects of this unbalanced situation on women. He talks about the success achieved by Irish music in the 1980s thanks to musicians such as Rory Gallagher, Van Morrison, The Pogues, U2, Sinéad O’Connor, The Cranberries, The Chieftains, Enya, The Bothy Band, etc. Through post-colonialist and nationalist lenses, Vallely explores the origins of what is nowadays referred to as traditional music by alluding to the Gaelic music performed largely on the harp, but also to how it was subsumed into the folk music. It is in this context, where folk music is considered the music of the poorer and unpropertied Irish, that Vallely places the concept of trauma, and links it both to music generally, and to the harp and the uilleann pipes in particular. The harp, for example, was transformed into a national symbol, played with pride as early as the thirteenth century and politically associated “with resistance to – if not contempt for – the British crown” (188) as a consequence of the frequent bans on its use. The beginning of the twentieth century consolidated the role of music in Ireland as “metaphor for Irish independence from colonial hegemony and tastes (189). Nonetheless, according to the author (*ibidem*) the historical suppression to which indigenous Irish music was submitted across the centuries led to an inferiority complex about it (188), and would only be transformed into confidence during the rise of the Celtic Tiger. Apart from identity, power and nationality, the author considers in the last part of the chapter gender and its relation to music through the recompilation of information from historical sources as writings and paintings. The author reconstructs the role of women in the evolution of music, and by extension dance, in Ireland, and concludes that nowadays there are “significant changes in traditional music practices” (196) positively affecting the involvement of women in these artistic forms. Nonetheless, Vallely also discusses the other side of the coin, that of inequality and non-representation for awards and what he terms “arbitrary gender prejudice” (200), where the percentages speak by themselves and illustrate the enormous differences between the numbers of men and women musicians receiving traditional Irish music awards at events such as *TG4 Gradam Ceoil*. Movements like FairPlé that seek to bring about the reconsideration and recognition of women’s contribution to the artistic field are also mentioned.

As the title of David Clare’s chapter “Traumatic Childhood Memories and the Adult Political Visions of Sinéad O’Connor, Bono and Phil Lynott” indicates, this study looks into the traumatic life-events of these Irish famous rock musicians. The author’s approach to trauma

here is multifarious, and it is observed how experiences and memories were channelled in songs that explore personal and social, political, cultural, economic, and religious issues in the Irish Republic. Sinéad O'Connor's life is recalled through the account of sexual and physical abuse inflicted on her by her mother at a young age, and the repetition of these experiences in one of the Magdalen asylums run by the Sisters of Charity, when she was a teenager. Considering this, it is not surprising, as Clare (2020) observes, that O'Connor's songs "repeatedly returned to images of abused or endangered children [...] not simply with an eye towards exorcising her own personal demons but also as part of her attempts to make strident political statements related to Ireland [, English colonialism and...] the wider world" (214), her position serving as model for similar protests and denunciations elsewhere (217). The experience of trauma by Paul "Bono" Hewson, member of the group U2, is here discussed in relation to the Troubles and the onset of the sectarian conflict in Dublin and Monaghan following the detonation of several car bombs in 1974. This section explores Bono's childhood in an uncertain terrain, where a religious war was to mark the singer's life forever. Andy Rowen, the eleven-year-old brother of Bono's best friend since childhood, witnessed the effects of these bombs, and Bono in turn would witness Andy's subsequent struggle with heroin abuse as a consequence of the trauma of that day. Inspired by the drama and trauma of Andy's life, and acknowledging the heroin epidemic affecting Dublin in the late 1970s and 1980s, Bono discussed these themes in his songs and attracted the attention of the Southern and Northern Irish societies alike in his exploration of hopelessness, unemployment, and the lack of prospects for the young in the economic and stagnant atmosphere of those decades of turmoil (223), his songs bringing "a message of hope in the dark times of the Troubles" (228). The story of Phil Paris Lynott's connections with trauma and its artistic depiction in music occupy the final part of the chapter. Phil Lynott's dark skin, inherited from his Guyanese father and his upbringing in Dublin with his maternal grandparents in the 1950s and 1960s, would mark his life through the marginalisation and stigmatisation he suffered. In a post-colonial context in which the Irish frequently identified themselves with oppressed black communities, Lynott problematised and questioned rigid notions on Irishness and blackness from a position suffused with hybridity that successfully forged an artistic blend of both elements of his identity; "when the visibly black Lynott performed explicitly Irish material, he suggested the possibility of, and can be said to have brought into being, a black Irish identity" (231). Clare's chapter is very revealing in terms of how music can be transformed into a utilitarian exercise, one which, which apart from the aesthetic qualities involved, can also set a social, cultural and political agenda.

Part V of the volume complements the themes and premises offered in previous chapters by presenting one piece of reflective writing, one of creative writing, and one interview. The first of these is Emer Martin's "Hungry Ghosts: Trauma and Addiction in Irish Literature", centring around one of the most recurrent characters that pullulate her literary works, the hungry ghosts. Depicted as disturbed phantoms "with their bulging bellies and skinny necks" (Martin 2020, 245), the hungry ghosts that appear in her books are haunted by traumas of the past that are replicated in the present, and, as a consequence, the *ghosts* are tormented by addictions. In the midst of such frequent discussions and readings of history propelled by frequent commemorations in which Ireland's nationalist discourses range from passivity to agency, from woundology, victimhood to trauma and silencing, Martin considers Ireland's history from a pure post-colonial perspective. She evaluates the territory's reputation for being a "First World country but with a Third World memory" (Gibbons 1996) by reflecting on Irish people's current dependence on alcohol and drugs as self-administered *panaceas* for those who have suffered traumatic experiences that have remained unhealed. Martin's position here resembles those of other scholars

in different fields (Danieli 1998; Moane 2002; Delaney 2013, 14; Mac Síomóin 2014) who consider “transgenerational transmission” (Danieli 2010), that is, the inheritance of certain psychological features and traumatic experiences that can be transmitted from generation to generation to the point of affecting the disposition of contemporary society. In this context, therefore, addiction to alcohol or drugs is only one of the legacies of colonialism, a pathology that responds to earlier, external, and coercive episodes of domination practised by England and perpetuated later by the authoritarian Free Government of Ireland and the Irish Catholic Church, and enforced nowadays by contemporary lifestyles and globalisation.

Following this is “Fellow Travellers” by Pat Boran. This nineteen-line poem recreates an encounter between a member of the settled community and a group of Traveller women. The poem fits within the discourses of recent decades in Ireland that have witnessed a wide range of changes in the perception of human rights and diversity. It is only in this context that the Irish Traveller community has received special attention from the state, academia, and Irish society at large, as an exercise in reconciliation after centuries of discriminatory policies, negative behaviour, and racist attitudes. These measures, together with the interpretation and representation of these minorities in the arts, constitute a recognition of cultural diversity, and an open condemnation of the erroneous conceptualisation of a former homogenous, rigid national Irish identity.

The final contribution in the volume is an interview by the editor, Melania Terrazas, with Pat Boran, which tackles themes such as Ireland, gender, trauma, identity, the human being and family bonds, the state, broadcasting, poetry, and Spanish translations of Boran’s works. This interview, then, is the perfect closure for this collection, since it reflects both directly and indirectly on many of the themes discussed in the volume, and does so through the vision of an artist whose work mirrors how trauma, memory and Irishness arises in so many diverse and unsuspected ways in culture.

Words can sometimes be subtle in expressing manifestations of trauma and suffering, and the analysis of representations of trauma depicted in more vivid colours or shades of grey, or represented through different textures or materials, such as visual arts like photography, sculpture and painting, might have enriched this volume. Nonetheless, the volume is definitely a kaleidoscopic reading of the past and the present, an insightful resource not only for specialists in Irish Studies, but for all those interested in Ireland’s culture, society, politics, religion, and history. As has been noted here, cultural production might delight the senses, but it also has the cathartic power to close-up wounds and to heal the soul.

I would like to thank CEI Patrimonio Almería for their support.

Madalina Armie

Works Cited

- Armie Madalina (2020), “What Made them Leave?: Myths and Realities of the Irish Woman Emigrant in the Contemporary Irish Short Story”, in Florence Nyemba, Rufaro Chitiyo (eds), *Immigrant Women’s Voices and Integrating Feminism into Migration Theory*, Heshey, IGI Global, 177-194.
- Danieli Yael (1998), *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma*, New York, Plenum Press.
- Delaney Liam, Kapteyn Arie, Smith J.P. (2013), “Why Do Some Irish Drink So Much? Family, Historical and Regional Effects on Students’ Alcohol Consumption and Subjective Normative Thresholds”, *Review of Economics of the Household, U.S. National Library of Medicine*, <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3646387/>> (03/2021).

- Gibbons Luke (1996), *Transformations in Irish Culture*, Cork, Cork UP.
- Gray Breda (2004), *Women and the Irish Diaspora*, London, Routledge.
- Horgan Goretta (2001), "Changing Women's Lives in Ireland", *International Socialism*, 91, <<http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/isj2/2001/isj2-091/horgan.htm>> (03/2021).
- Mac Síomóin Tomas (2014), *The Broken Harp: Identity and Language in Modern Ireland*, Scotts Valley, Createspace Independent Publishing Platform.
- MacPherson D.A.J., Hickman J. M.(eds.) (2014), *Women and Irish Diaspora Identities: Theories, Concepts, and New Perspectives*, Manchester, Manchester UP.
- Martin Emer (n.d.), "Crossing Borders: An Art and Poetry Collaboration with Moitreyee Chowdhury", *Emer Martin*, <<https://www.emermartin.com/art-1/crossingborders>> (03/2021).
- Moane Geraldine (2002), "Colonialism and the Celtic Tiger: Legacies of History and the Quest for Vision", in Peadar Kirby, Luke Gibbon, Michael Cronin (eds), *Reinventing Ireland: Culture, Society, and the Global Economy*, London, Pluto Press, 109-123.
- Nolan Janet (1989), *Ourselves Alone: Women's Emigration from Ireland, 1885-1920*, Lexington, UP of Kentucky.
- Redmond Jennifer (2018), *Moving Histories: Irish Women's Emigration to Britain from Independence to Republic*, Liverpool, Liverpool UP.
- O'Sullivan P.M. (1997), *Irish Women and Irish Migration*, Leicester, Leicester UP.
- Terrazas Gallego Melania (2020), *Trauma and Identity in Contemporary Irish Culture*, Oxford-Bern-Berlin et al., Peter Lang.
- Walter Bronwen (2002), *Outsiders Inside: Whiteness, Place, and Irish Women*, London, Taylor & Francis.

Eduardo Cormick, *El lado irlandés de los argentinos: El aporte de los descendientes de irlandeses en el entramado cultural de la Argentina del siglo XX*, Buenos Aires, El Bien del Sauce, 2020, pp. 216. AR\$ 900. ISBN: 978-987-86-5592-5.

One of the worst catastrophes to occur in Europe in the nineteenth century was the Great Irish Famine, caused by late blight, a disease that destroyed the potato plant. By that time, potatoes had become the staple component of the Irish diet because cereals, with Ireland still under the dominion of the United Kingdom, were mostly carried away to Great Britain. The consequences of the famine were devastating: one third of the Irish population died, and another third migrated to England, Australia, or the United States of America. However, around the 1870s a small portion of those survivors had reached the Southern Cone and settled in Argentina. Gradually, they came to be used to the ways of the land and its people, and some of them became eminent Argentines. It is with this group that *El lado irlandés de los argentinos* is primarily concerned since the volume invites its readers to explore the contributions of the Irish to the social and cultural framework of the Latin American nation on its way to modernization throughout the twentieth century. So far available only in Spanish, the book offers a wide but comprehensive panorama of that process with a particular focus on the individual lives of those *émigrés* of Irish ancestry who sparkled in Argentine science, politics, arts, and sports.

El lado irlandés de los argentinos contains a prologue written by the renowned Argentine historian Hilda Sabato in which the eclecticism and freshness of the stories in the volume are highlighted. Then, Eduardo Cormick himself tries to place his work in the poststructuralist tradition by wondering about the invention of Ireland and the Irish. Nevertheless, from the first story onwards, Cormick seems to abandon that stance, and he decidedly takes his readers to the deeper, more intimate, spheres of personal histories in a random, not essentially chronological, fashion. Those histories are presented as brief accounts of the lives of men and women of Irish descent who were able to move beyond the confinements of workplace or domestic concerns

into the realm of public affairs. The lives of Cecilia Grierson, Patricio Garrahan, or Santiago Fitz Simon, were dedicated to the advancement of Argentine science and education. Therefore, they deserved to be written as biographies of a relatively institutional quality. Other lives shone in the arts, such as those of Guillermo and Horacio Butler, Sylvia Molloy, or Patricio Mc Gough, and in those stories Cormick displays his abilities as an arts critic and a conscientious reader of fiction. There are also some sections that are not strictly biographical but rather anecdotal, mere moments in the lives of their protagonists whose significance remains deeply private, but which eventually became public. Climaxes among those are the disclosure of Juan José Cerati's suffering from cancer during an almost ritualistic tea presided by Lilian Clarke or the return of Susana Dillon's granddaughter, born to "disappeared" parents, by a paramilitary militia in the dead of a night in March 1978. The former inspired one of Gustavo Cerati's most famous pop songs; the latter stirred Dillon's involvement with Madres de Plaza de Mayo and her life-long fight for human rights. Thus, as the life of a person of Irish ancestry juxtaposes that of another, readers are reminded that all life is heroic in itself and that it is necessarily made up of both comedy and tragedy.

From that magma that is life, in *El lado irlandés de los argentinos* readers can hear the voices of the Irish turned Argentine emerge. This is one of the hallmarks of the publication. Cormick is highly knowledgeable of Argentine culture, and he is in command of an incommensurable reservoir of sources. The quotations that flood the pages of the book include excerpts from *zambas* by Buenaventura Luna, *chamamés* by Santiago "Bocha" Sheridan, tangos by Carlos Sanders and Miguel Treacey, and poems by Maria Elena Walsh, Eduardo Carroll, and José Sebastián Tallon. In all of them, Cormick seems to suggest, you can trace the flicker of Irish genius. Not less relevant are the historical and journalistic documents quoted throughout the volume. There are passages of the *Carta Abierta* and other texts by Rodolfo Walsh and a transcription of the brief but brave note that Miguel Fitzgerald sent to the British governor of the Malvinas/Falklands islands when he arrived in the archipelago on 8 September 1964, demanding the end of British rule over the islands claimed by Argentina. In a similar vein, the inclusion of the fearless narrative poem "A Margaret Thatcher", by Luis Alberto Murray, decidedly reveals a strong authorial position, which never eludes difficult yet unavoidable issues such as British colonialism, the Irish question, or the last Argentine dictatorship (1976-1983) and the pain and grief that they caused to their victims.

Yo vine a ser arriero, viniendo de los mares
Tirado en una vela de aquellas irlandesas. (73)

These lines by Eusebio de Jesús Dojorti, Buenaventura Luna, cited by Cormick, brilliantly encapsulate the idea behind *El lado irlandés de los argentinos*: from beyond the seas and brought by foreign sails, the Irish reached Argentina to become horsemen. Many of them, though, became the prosperous men and women whose achievements in almost every area of Argentine life are succinctly described by Cormick in his book. Unsurprisingly, also the Cormicks belong to that genealogy, and it is to his family that the author devotes the last section of the long list of Irish personalities contributing to the formation of Argentine culture in the twentieth century. The Cormicks travelled to Argentina in order to work the land, to become *chacareros*, and they spent most of their lives in the rural areas of Buenos Aires province. This also shows throughout the publication. Not everything in it happens, as is tradition, in Buenos Aires, the capital and largest city of Argentina. The narrative deftly takes its readers to the tough outback of the South American country, as they get to know about the Irish who settled in San Juan, Chubut, Cór-

doba, Corrientes, or Entre Rios. Besides, Eduardo Cormick is a skillful storyteller, and he tells stories the Argentine way. This is perhaps one of the most significant traits of *El lado irlandés de los argentinos*. The volume may not be catalogued as a history book in the exact sense of the term, but it tells a story with the serenity, the colour, and the time available for detail and precision with which tales are told in the pampas. That does not necessarily mean, however, that there was lack of reading or research in the making of the text. Throughout its pages, it perspires that Cormick is in possession of a strong, thorough knowledge not only of his Irish past but also of Argentine culture, both aspects which he dexterously integrates with one another in the book under consideration. The stories in it are also packed with romance, adventure, and epic, all elements common to both fact and fiction. Each person whose remarkable deeds are narrated in *El lado irlandés de los argentinos* most probably lived life to the full, and they made outstanding contributions to Argentine-ness in a land where life has not always been easy. Above all, they added to the blend that we Argentines are, the immense depth of the Irish spirit.

Enrique Alejandro Basabe

James E. Kelly, *English Convents in Catholic Europe, c.1600-1800*, Oxford, Oxford UP, 2020, pp. 232. GBP 75. ISBN: 9781108479967.

This new book represents a welcome contribution to the field of early-modern English Catholicism, and more broadly to the history of the English Catholics in exile. Based on an impressive and extended archival research in different English and European repositories, the author examines the complex process which brought to the establishment and development of the English female convents in the Spanish Flanders and in France between the early seventeenth century and the early nineteenth century.

One of the many merits of Kelly's book is to have literally opened a new pathway on a topic which, up until now, has remained in the shadow of mainstream historiography. Indeed, in the last twenty years an impressive array of articles, books, and essays have assessed the phenomenon of the development of the Irish collegial network, and to a lesser extent of their English and Scots counterparts. Yet the female foundations – commonly called convents – have been excluded from all this mass of studies. This book finally fills this gap by demonstrating how and to which extent the communities of English nuns gathered and developed an extended network of structures which acted not only as structures of clerical formation but also as points of contact between the English Catholics in exile and their fellow countrymen at home.

The book is structured in six chapters which – thematically arranged – brings the reader into the multifaceted world of the English nuns. The first chapter examines the recruitment's process by illustrating all the steps which brought a lay woman to make the crucial choice and how she entered a world in which the concept of national identity needed to be preserved at all costs. The chapter investigates a series of seminal points like the network which was developed between the entrant's family and the convent in which she decided to enter or the organization of the trip to mainland Europe. The chapter also vividly reconstructs the milieu of each English convent, demonstrating how each of them recruited women from specific areas of England.

The second chapter focuses on the thorny matter of how and to which extent the English convents sought to keep and implement the full closure which was their key aim. Yet this section of the book reveals how – though their strict rules – the convents interacted with the local community as well as with the English Catholics in exile. The third chapter explores how the communities of English nuns embarked on the major remodelling programs – both from

the artistic and architectural point of view – dictated by the Council of Trent. The author demonstrates that the English nuns were equally successful in keeping their national identity, and, at the same, to adhere to the universal salvific message of global Catholicism. The fourth chapter considers the context in which the convents were founded and how they reacted to the political upheavals both in England and at local level. The book clearly highlights how the English convents strove to find a precarious balance between their national exilic identity and as being part of the broader women's Catholic community. In chapter fifth the author analyses the daily liturgical and spiritual life by focusing on the devotional practices of the nuns towards the relics and the cult of the martyrs. The author well displays how the relics were used as a motivating means for the nuns to return home to fight against the spread of Anglicanism.

The last chapter fits the English convents within the broader context of the English Catholic mission and within the framework of the colleges founded by the Catholic clergy of the British Isles. By doing so, Kelly illustrates that the communities of English nuns were not isolated groups, but they were actively engaged in the missionary networks developed by the English Catholics in exile.

In conclusion, Kelly's book is an outstanding and well-researched analysis which has finally shed light on a world which has not been properly understood and examined. One of the many merits of this book is to have described the rich array of details on the entrant nuns, their family background, the organization of the journey to mainland Europe, and their life inside the convent. All this will whet the appetite of anyone – professional scholar or simple amateur – who wants to know more of a world which was apparently closed but which interacted with the complex and shifting European society of the early modern period. The fact that the book has been published by Cambridge UP is a further demonstration of the high scholarly achievements reached by this young scholar.

Matteo Binasco

Ondřej Pilný, Ruud van den Beuken, Ian R. Walsh (eds), *Cultural Convergence: The Dublin Gate Theatre, 1928-1960*, Basingstoke-Cham, Palgrave Macmillan-Springer Nature, 2021, pp. xviii+244. GBP 45.40. ISBN: 978-030-57561-8. ISBN 978-030-57562-5 (e-Book).

Audrey McNamara, Nelson O'Ceallaigh Ritschel (eds), *Bernard Shaw and the Making of Modern Ireland*, Basingstoke-Cham, Palgrave Macmillan-Springer Nature, 2020, pp. xxvi+274. GBP 89.99. ISBN: 978-3-030-42112-0. ISBN: 978-3-030-42113-7 (e-Book).

Historians of twentieth-century Irish theatre owe a considerable debt to Palgrave Macmillan, particularly for the special nature of their publications in the field; and this is certainly true of their two latest offerings: studies on the *Dublin Gate Theatre* and on *Shaw and the Making of Modern Ireland*. As publishers, they seem of late to be less interested in single-authored studies than collections of essays from a variety of hands, which in the context of theatre makes a great deal of sense. Theatre is a multi-disciplined art-form that benefits from a range of approaches and points of focus that keep readers alert to the complex intricacies, effects and challenges of a given production or single performance. The title of the Gate volume is indicative of where this strength lies: *Cultural Convergence* (though one might, on finishing a reading of its contents, be forgiven for wishing to adapt the phrasing to “Cultural Convergences”). The editors of this collection of essays take care to define “convergence” in this context as referring to a bringing together, not into uniformity (a dull sameness), but into interaction and dialogue in which the deliberate exploration of difference(s) is privileged.

How welcome and refreshing this approach is, after decades where Irish theatre history pursued a colonial/neo-colonial bias, which robbed theatrical experience of its multi-valency. Important though this perspective is, as these two volumes show, it is limited in its terms of reference to a mode of interpretation that hones in on text, thematic preoccupations and ideological underpinning. For some time, this approach to the Gate Theatre has been challenged in terms of the highly innovative staging methods of Hilton Edwards and the design practice of Micheál mac Liammóir, where the emphasis was decidedly on those aspects of performance; but there are limitations to this mode of approach too in that appreciation might appear confined wholly to aesthetic matters. It has taken many years to establish that there is a vast divergence between text and performance, between the experience of reading and that of being a spectator, which invites responses from all the senses to shape and fuel both emotional and intellectual insight. In the context of this revised approach to the study of Irish theatre history, the very format of each of these volumes is in line with that fundamental aim: an anthology of minds and voices from widely divergent, trained backgrounds and from equally divergent cultural traditions. The volume on the Gate brings together scholars from Ireland, America, Canada, England, the Netherlands, and Czechoslovakia. The editors admire the directors of the Gate Theatre for consciously developing what they term an “outward gaze” (2): that daring is now justified by an international co-authorship centring their several gazes back on a shared stimulus, but in a way that allows us to appreciate how richly nuanced and excitingly omnivorous the directors’ quest for a “theatre theatrical” (Hilton Edwards’s term) was in theory and practice.

The anthology of essays begins with an investigation of the directors’ manifestos as they changed in time and through experience, and it is good to be reminded that they wrote more than *A Mantle for Harlequin* (Edwards) and *All for Hecuba* (mac Liammóir). Next to be discussed are the personnel of the Dublin Gate, many of whom were lost sight of over the years (like Gearóid Ó Lochlainn, vital for his Irish language input and his political shrewdness, and Velona Pilcher, a watchful presence and valued inspiration behind the repertoire in the various Gate theatres established in London, Dublin and Hollywood), who helped shape the “Gate” experience along with those more familiar names of Peter Godfrey, Hilton Edwards and Micheál mac Liammóir. Precise and detailed family histories of major figures at the Dublin Gate (Edwards, mac Liammóir, Coralie Carmichael and Nancy Beckh) are rehearsed to demonstrate the transnational roots of all their biographies, quickly putting paid to the inaccurate classification, tirelessly exploited by adversarial critics of their enterprise, of Edwards and mac Liammóir as English. This essay shows how the Dublin Gate was international in far more than its creative ambitions. The success that has promoted the long-running presence of the Dublin Gate in European and American theatre history and criticism (despite its being patterned to some degree on Peter Godfrey’s initiative of the same name in London) is explored to tease out provable facts from the many fictions evolved over time through reminiscence. In the process of doing this with careful scholarly scruple, Charlotte Purkis makes some neat discriminations between terms such as inspiration, influence, association, referencing, or affiliation (all used over time in interviews and promotional literature by the three different Gate Theatres, English, Irish and American). Always, however, the very name of “the Gate” was understood to refer qualitatively to the very best in *avant-garde* theatre of its time.

While these first four essays deal with what in the broadest definition may be seen as history, the remaining four in the volume attend to Gate practice in the staging of work by four dramatists: two Irish, two European. Here again four different approaches are adopted: issues of translation, verbal and cultural; the role of design in staging; queer politics during

the repressions of the Emergency; and the proactive role of women in determining crucial historical outcomes, traditionally believed to be defined by men. It is with Ondřej Pilný's essay on Edwards's staging of *RUR* and *The Insect Play* by the Brothers Čapek that the theme of convergence aligns with the many issues involved with translation. Edwards relied on English versions of both plays which were created for London productions that might be better described as heavily cut adaptations rather than direct translations. *RUR* had in the original production been politically alert to the rise of Nazism in Germany so that the robots carried the same kind of pervasive symbolism as Camus' plague; but this quality and tension had been toned down in the London staging. Remarkably Edwards seems to have intuited the urgency and topicality of the original and found directorial means especially through sound effects to restore an ominous urgency to performances. *The Insect Play* had been translated and staged by Playfair as a kind of extravaganza that again largely ignored the political implications of the contrasting sequences; but working on the play in 1943 allowed Edwards and his adaptor, the Dublin satirist Myles na gCopaleen, to bring a much needed rigour to their version by making the text an overt exposure of divergent class attitudes at the time of the Emergency, showing how necessary it was to adopt an "outward gaze" and an international perspective to achieve political maturity. "Convergence" here became a kind of empathy, allowing a transcendence of the limitations that easily accompany translations not in tune with the cultural complexities permeating the original text and its accompanying vision and ideology.

A similar sensitivity and scruple (on Yvonne Ivory's showing) informed Edwards' production of Christa Winsloe's *Children in Uniform* (1934). In this instance it was possible that Edwards and mac Liammóir saw the original film and were influenced more by this than their knowledge of the London production, where the central theme of lesbian attraction was downplayed in favour of a critique of Prussian militarism. (Laughably, the Lord Chamberlain advised director and cast to ensure that the emotionalism in the play came over to audiences as "strictly German"). Confidently Edwards enhanced the lesbian themes by evolving a second lesbian relationship as a counter-interest in the play to that of the student, Manuela, and her teacher, von Bernburg; and by stressing how much the women's suffering came from their situation as outsiders in a repressive regime. The Gate production amongst the many German and English language versions of Winsloe's play was by far the strongest in terms of queer politics in placing sexual dissidence centre-stage rather than rendering it all-but invisible.

Padraic Colum's *Mogu of the Desert* (1931) did not fare so well as the works by Čapek and Winsloe: it followed in the wake of the highly successful play and film of Edward Knoblock's *Kismet*, which many in Ireland saw as plagiarising Colum's original invention. Elaine Sisson shows how the Gate's staging marks an interesting case of the directorate misjudging audience response to what is at base an Orientalist fantasy, (*Kismet* on film was subjected to the full Hollywood treatment) which for all his richness of invention mac Liammóir as designer could not match, given his highly limited resources. The production was not a success, because it could not match the lavishness of what Dublin audiences had already seen in the cinema and expected to see reproduced in the theatre. The only significant impact of the designs was to pander to upper-class and bohemian tastes for exotica and partygoing costumes "that allowed white women to perform a sexually liberating identity" (183). What clearly was wanted was a critical dimension (but "Orientalist" became pejorative and critically suspect in more recent decades) to counteract the flagrant escapism: the production never reached beyond camp indulgence. Here was an instance of cultural convergence from a variety of sources that did not unite to achieve a nuanced social insight of any complexity for spectators, rather it played into the hands of those critics keen to confine the Gate's achievements to the aesthetic.

The kind of subtle critical subversion that the staging of *Mogu* cried out for was powerfully present in the several productions of Christina Longford's historical tragedies, as admirably demonstrated in Erin Grogan's essay which closes the volume. Longford took a scrupulous approach to events in the historical past where heroism had previously been defined in plays and poems as the province of men and showed how (if viewed from a woman's perspective) women might be seen to be the true creative shapers of political situations. Longford's plays were daring in being highly critical of war and the motives for its promulgation, considering they were mostly written during the Emergency and its aftermath. This was a time when Irish playwrights and theatre personnel worked within a climate of repression especially where women's self-realisation was concerned, a recurring theme of Longford's drama. What seems remarkable in retrospect, given the forceful political dynamic of productions and the repertory at the Gate, is that the theatre and the directorate never faced censorship or closure. At some level in consciousness the value of the "outward gaze" asserted its primacy and healthfulness. The Gate's signal achievement lay in its policy of "cultural convergence", its unquestioning exploration of international experience and values as necessary. The Dublin Gate Theatre celebrated difference, but it takes the sum of these essays to define the exact meaning of the term with all its layers of significance and application.

In the editors' introduction to *Bernard Shaw and the Making of Modern Ireland* reference is made to Shaw's self-determination and interestingly in the final chapter the idea is somewhat recapitulated when Shaw is described as possessing a "carefully crafted persona" (252). The many essays that intervene between these two observations about Shaw's character incline one to question whether these terms are quite fair to the mercurially tempered Shaw: too easily they might be interpreted as implying a *fixed* personality when in his life, his social, moral, and aesthetic thinking, and in his playwriting, he continually manifests a *flexible* identity. This is not the same as Yeats's conscious re-making of the self; Shaw is more enigmatic, often deliberately so, a constant shape-shifting which it is difficult at any stage to pinpoint with any degree of confidence because of the disturbing element of Shaw's laughter, which continually renders his stance and his opinions ambiguous. It is that flexibility, in Anthony Roche's view that impressed the young Kate O'Brien, influencing her advocacy (in her novels as in her private and public selves) of resistance to social pressures to conform in the interests of safe-guarding one's private identity. She too celebrated flexibility as life-affirming in ways that impacted forcefully on her women readers particularly. David Clare shows by contrast how it was Shaw's troubling laughter that impacted on Elizabeth Bowen through its ability to elude dogmatism (especially in the authorial voice). Laughter of this kind is subversive but also an awakening to the value of questioning, a refusing to accept without first exploring possibilities. These were the most beneficial qualities to cultivate in the post-Independence Ireland of de Valera, if a woman wished to embrace her personal independence. (Both novelists are at their best writing about women's experience: what they learned from Shaw and passed on to subsequent generations of Irish women novelists was a real gift.)

Shaw was fond of announcing how little of his life he had actually spent in Ireland, even though he described himself as fundamentally an Irish man, and yet a wealth of evidence emerges from these essays that shows how much of his life was actually spent there, supporting causes, speaking publicly in defence of and championing innovative figures decried in the Irish Press, and generally immersing himself (especially between 1910 and 1925) in cultural, social and political circles seeking to shape a new Ireland for the future. This aspect of Shaw's life is particularly well served by Peter Gahan's impressive essay, "Bernard Shaw in Two Great Irish Houses: Kilteragh and Coole", which shows how his visits to either home with his wife, Charlotte, immersed

him instantly amongst the finest minds working to better Ireland's condition, politically and internationally. At Sir Horace Plunkett's residence, Kilteragh, he met social reformers, not least AE, actively engaged in transforming the social and working experience of impoverished men and women, while in Lady Gregory's domain he discussed with her range of visitors how art and theatre might be deployed to critique old ways, while cultivating and promoting new habits of mind and expressions of identity. Flexibility means pursuing an openness to potential, a keenness to examine the new and challenging: the popularity of Shaw's plays when staged at the Abbey ensured that his philosophy reached wide audiences beyond the intelligentsia. What impresses, as one reads through these chapters, is the sheer number of major figures actively encouraging change in the circumstances of Irish life whom Shaw met, befriended, consulted, advised, wrote about, and promoted, which quite justifies the choice of him in the international press as the personification of an emerging Ireland (see particularly Gustavo A. Rodríguez Martín's essay, "Shaw's Ireland (and the Irish Shaw) in the International Press (1914-1925)"). That closing date of 1925 might suggest that Shaw's appeal and impact came to a decided conclusion in that year, but the virtue of this whole volume is that it enhances one's awareness of how Shaw's engagement with Ireland directly or subtly extended into a future beyond the cultural amnesia and political stagnation of the de Valera years. As Aisling Smith persuasively argues, when exploring the long-term impact of *O'Flaherty V.C.*, Taoiseach Seán Lemass from 1966 embraced an agenda not majorly distinct from Shaw's (though without Shaw's expressly Socialist thinking). Arguably the richest aspect of this anthology in terms of the far-reaching effects of Shaw's plays are the essays which from various standpoints address his presentation of women in his plays and how he shows them finding agency, intellectual independence from men, financial security, and inner consciousness of their own wellbeing. Highly illuminating in this context are the essays that explore how such demonstrable processes of inner growth are to be discerned in the wider canon of Shaw's plays and not just the two specifically set in Ireland. The ultimate reward for readers of *Bernard Shaw and the Making of Modern Ireland* is that it not only broadens one's knowledge of the involvement that gives the book its title, but in the process enhances one's appreciation of Shaw's creativity in all its manifestations.

Richard Allen Cave

Gabriela Mc Evoy, *La experiencia invisible. Inmigrantes irlandeses en el Perú*. Lima, Fondo Editorial de la Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, 2018, pp. 256. USD 15. ISBN: 978-9972-46-632-8.

The result of deep and compromised research, *La experiencia invisible. Inmigrantes irlandeses en el Perú* by Gabriela Mc Evoy (2018) is the final stage of a study that resulted in a number of presentations in International Conferences, as well as articles that attracted the attention of specialists in Irish Studies. The most important and influential of these articles were "Irish Immigrants in Peru during the Nineteenth Century" (2011), published in *Irish Migration Studies in Latin America (IMSLA)*, and "El valor de los archivos en los invisibles irlandeses" which appeared in the same journal in 2014. Concerning its formal structure, the book has an introduction, five chapters and a conclusion, followed by an iconographic appendix and a documentary one, which add to the academic relevance of the publication. According to the assessment of its author:

This book creates, on the one hand, a bridge between past and present, and, on the other hand, it reincorporates the Irish Immigrant into the national Peruvian imaginary. When attempting to recover the

voices of these people, it writes part of the history of men and women who, with their decisions and actions, imprinted their culture in the Peruvian soil. (25)

Gabriela Mc Evoy characterizes her research as interdisciplinary, its aim being the study of the Irish characters and their personal narratives in the Peruvian space and the Peruvian history. This sociological approach and the resulting ethnographic information make it possible to explore the mechanisms of integration of the Irish Immigrant into the Peruvian society and, at the same time, their different life styles.

The first chapter is devoted to the study of the Irish presence in the most important periods of Peruvian history: under the Spanish power, during the movements leading to the Independence of the country and in the process of the construction of the Republic. In this chapter the author reviews, on the basis of twentieth and twenty-first century theory, the relationship between diaspora, transnationalism and identity. The second chapter concentrates on the study of all sorts of archives (traditional and non-traditional) in order to recover the lives of the anonymous Irish immigrants. The contents of this chapter consequently center on the lives of the immigrants belonging to the middle and lower classes. The third chapter is devoted to the study of the Irish working class, the Irish that arrived in Perú, broadly speaking, between 1849 and 1853: the proletarian diaspora, integrated both by adventurous people as well as those forced to leave Ireland as a consequence of the Great Famine.

The fourth chapter explores the lives of two figures that – though in very different fields – played important roles in the history of nineteenth century Perú: John Patrick Gallagher O'Connor (1801-1871) and William Russell Grace (1832-1904). Gallagher O'Connor was an Irish doctor with a notorious activity both in the medical field and in the field of business, whereas Grace's fame was based mainly on commerce and finance. Given the importance of letter writing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the last chapter centers its analysis on epistolary discourse. Letters are, no doubt, key means to study the lives of Irishmen and women in the new society. And, at the same time, they are an invaluable way to preserve family connections. The study centers on the letters exchanged between John Dowling, his brother Patrick and his son, James Edward. The letters show not only the strong family ties, but the socioeconomic conditions of the immigrants. They confirm the importance of business for the first generation and the beginnings of professionalization already evident in the second one.

Gabriela Mc Evoy's research aims at an understanding both of the lives of the Peruvian rising working class and of those that made money and placed themselves at the top of the social ladder. Its interest lies not only in the study of Irish immigration but in its impact on the foundations of modern Perú. The migratory experience can thus be seen – according to the author – as a life-changing experience both at a personal and national level. Though the nineteenth century is mainly marked by the processes of assimilation, the documentary sources show an early development of transnationalism, however restricted to those that were able to consolidate their economic position.

As the author of the book states:

The Irish immigrants survived in the new environment, they got accustomed to living in cities with climates very different from those of Ireland and new ways to contemplate life; even more, they learned a language unrecognizable to them at the beginning. At the same time, a transformation between old and new affections occurs, which, in a certain way, will be the clue for the definite establishment of the Irish in their new environment. (53)

Mc Evoy's book is written in a lively style, and its up-to-date sources – both concerning the theories the author resorts to and the specific data on the Irish migration in Latin America – turn it into an essential reading for those interested in the topic, both as amateur readers or academic experts.

Concerning the specific sources on the Irish in Latin America I want to stress two: the famous *Libro azul británico. Informes de Roger Casement y otras cartas sobre las atrocidades en el Putumayo* by Roger Casement (2011 [1912]), and the study of one of our pioneers in Irish Studies in Latin America: Laura Izarra's "Don't Cry for me Ireland – Irish Women's Voice from Argentina", *Ilha do Desterro: A Journal of English Language* 59, 2010, 133-146.

As a final remark, I would like to stress that the book *La experiencia invisible. Inmigrantes irlandeses en el Perú* by Gabriela Mc Evoy is a major contribution to the development of Irish Studies in Latin America, especially those focused on the Irish presence in our continent.

Cristina Elgue

Menna Elfyn, *Bondo/Gronde*, a cura di Giuseppe Serpillo, trad. di Giuseppe Serpillo e Luca Paci, Sassari, Lùdo Edizioni, 2020, pp. 125. € 10. ISBN: 978-88-31918-32-9

The word 'Welsh' derives from a Saxon word meaning 'foreign'; the vernacular word for the language, *Cymraeg*, derives from a compound meaning 'language of kingsmen' (R.B. Jones (1979), "A Brief History of the Welsh Language", in Meic Stephens (ed.), *The Welsh Language Today*, Llandysul, Gomer Press, 18)

R.S. Thomas once said to Menna Elfyn that poetry in translation is like a kiss through a handkerchief. Elfyn very aptly replied that a kiss whatever is better than nothing. She has a poem on this statement by R.S. Thomas. I cannot say that I have even a superficial knowledge of Welsh, therefore my assessment of this Italian translation of *Bondo* by Menna Elfyn is that of a reader of a text in translation only, expecting a kiss of sorts. What I know is that the received awareness of a translated text (its words and world) may be, potentially, very much removed from what was portrayed in the source language. And, though this is a fact, it must not be. Or rather it is permitted for it to be so only to some extent. Are there ways to fight against the thickness of the handkerchief? Has this book been worked out in that direction? I am unfortunately unable to say for sure not only how much but even if this is somehow so. I therefore ask the reader to be lenient with what I am going to write in the following lines.

I will, first of all, set the background against which I will make my comments and shape my appreciation.

In an introductory note to the twofold translation of one of the poems ("Y Glwyd", "Il cancello") the translators write: "Il traduttore è in primo luogo un interprete che accogliendo la natura [...] dei segni li fa propri e li elabora secondo direttive che pertengono alla propria cultura e alla propria sensibilità". I must say straightaway that I have little sympathy for this belief. If this were the correct approach to translation then translation should be labelled with a different name: imitation, re-writing, re-creation, adaptation, and so on and so forth. My opinion is that translation is only well defined as follows: it is a rendering of a construction such that the construction is re-made by means of different construction materials. This implies that the matter of the construction will, by necessity, be somewhat different from the original but the aim of the re-rendering must be that the *thing* remains very much the same in terms of what it was in the original shape and context. I trust translation is most often done according

to this assumption, though that may happen unawares. I mean that most often when *translation* is done, the act of translating imposes its own status independent of the translator's will. Giuseppe Serpillo's quotation from Paul Ricoeur, that a good translation can only hope to achieve assumed equivalence, is closer to my point.

As I said I have very little knowledge of the Welsh language and I trust these poems by Menna Elfyn to have had the upper hand of the translators at least to some degree. I think I can say that this somehow happened. In particular the language theme and the Aberfan disaster stand up poetically for the size of their import. What I would have liked the translators to make evident, the *nature of the poetry* of it all, is unfortunately not embedded only in the "story" but in the language carrying the story, in the manner of Elfyn's writing. Although my request may appear heretical, only a somewhat detailed commentary would have been able to convey it: footnotes for example (but footnotes are generally ruled out), or an introduction of some sort, to initiate the reader to the nature of the original poetical *manner*. Even only some hints at the original manner of the writing would have been very welcome help. What constitutes the literary value of Menna Elfyn's art must be part and parcel with the thing rendered in translation too.

A bilingual book assumes that the reader is likely to know not only the language into which the translation has been made but also – never mind the degree of knowledge – the language from which the text has been translated. As I do not think Welsh can be assumed to enjoy the status of a known language in Italy, some illustration of Welsh prosody would have been very welcome, to provide a measure of awareness of the original flavour. I trust the authors will agree with me.

As for Menna Elfyn's complaint for the weakness of the Welsh language (a main theme in the book, whose tragedy it is not for me to dispute) I cannot refrain from putting forward the following considerations. Languages, like anything human, undergo birth, growth and death. Life may be very long but that's all. Greek, Latin, Sanskrit have all died: to a degree only, though. Languages have a sort of never-ending biological life, they are never out of business. I do not mean that endless documents are still being made in these languages of course; I mean that they remain alive and kicking in the languages that succeed them, in their words, in their sounds, however laterally, in their articulations. An important book, *Surfaces and Essences* (2013), by Douglas Hofstadter and Emmanuel Sander, provides support and confidence, to counter pessimism. To remain within the scope of the Welsh language, it is very comforting to think of how much not only of the culture but of the very language use the metaphysical poets, G.M. Hopkins, Dylan Thomas, David Jones, to mention only some of the most outstanding actors, have transferred from the Welsh environment on to the English one, and from this to the rest of the world.

This book however has the merit of presenting to the Italian reader a well-established Welsh writer writing in Welsh and tackling universal topics. It is a fact that Welsh writers writing in Welsh do not often succeed in making their messages universal because of an excessive focus on the survival of the local culture. Cultures survive only when they can prove themselves outward-focussed rather than inward-centred. The small issue must be shown to be a universal issue, which is very often the case though unfortunately this truth may not be made obvious enough to strike the eye. The two main themes of this book, concerning linguistic minorities and the Aberfan drama, are very much shareable facts of human life. They are aptly presented as such by Menna Elfyn. The language issue for example is not confined to the survival of Welsh but covers the same risk of disappearing that many languages are faced with all over the global planet. The Aberfan disaster declares its universal applicability through its local identity: its implied pathos is the more smartingly perceived because of its being experienced on one's own doorstep. Other poems, to mention only a couple "Cloig Serch" ("Nodo d'amore") and

“Y fodrwy ar fys” (“L’anello al dito”), are among those deserving a special mention in terms of universal concern, being about the feeble grasp humans have on life.

While the book hosts two sets of translations, one by Serpillo and one by Paci, the poem I mentioned, “Y Glywid” (“Il cancello”), is tackled in parallel by both. The poem is about a mining disaster which occurred in the year 2011; the disaster triggered Menna Elfyn’s memory of a previous one in which her grandfather had died. This experiment with parallel translated texts is very challenging and appears to me to be a stimulating proposal for further future work. The experiment reveals that each translator has worked out a text in accordance with a philosophy or theory of his own, independent of controlled statement. Practice inevitably assumes theory. Some illustration of these respective philosophies or theories on the basis of a translated text would have been very valuable towards assessment of the original and of its translations.

Valerio Fissore

Deaglán Ó Donghaile, *Oscar Wilde and the Radical Politics of the Fin de Siècle*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh UP, 2020, pp. 264. GBP 80. ISBN: 978-1-4744-5943-3.

Besides testifying to an ongoing surge of international academic interest in Oscar Wilde’s personality and writings, Deaglán Ó Donghaile’s well-researched monograph deftly tackles a field that lends itself to illuminating investigation. As suggested by its title, *Oscar Wilde and the Radical Politics of the Fin de Siècle* intends to place Wilde’s output, standpoints and connections against a contextual backdrop that cuts loose from such widely known paths as, say, poststructuralist theory, postmodern readings, or the lens of Gender and Queer Studies.

Ó Donghaile’s analysis focuses on a precise historical phase – the last decades of the nineteenth century – and on the relationship between Wilde and various currents of political radicalism from those days. Although Wilde’s dialogue with political realities and issues is no uncharted ground, the topic remains a challenging subject, one capable of opening up a space for a general reassessment of the Irish author’s aesthetic tenets, dandiacal attitudes and notoriously flamboyant postures. Indeed, one might well wonder how Wilde’s alleged radicalism could be possibly reconciled with his fashionable figure, flaunted egotism and, needless to say, a whole series of pronouncements in tune with the proverbial statement “All art is quite useless”, from the Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Yet, at a closer look, as several authors and critics have pointed out, Wilde’s use of masks and “terror of not being misunderstood” should not be taken to mean that he systematically recoiled from intellectual or moral engagement. Shallowness and depth, surface and symbol are to him inextricably intertwined, in much the same way as paradoxical reasoning can be effective in pursuing and unravelling truth(s) and the clever, idiosyncratic remark might prove a winning strategy to unsettle bourgeois complacency and undermine accepted beliefs. In fact, Wilde’s protean traits, ambivalence and dandiacal performance sit quite easily with a stunning potential to reverse stereotypes and pointedly complicate received notions. In other words, the line between disengagement and agency is ultimately hard to draw. While resisting categorization, Wilde’s rhetoric and sparkling wit are often historically inflected and animated by cultural forces that set about eroding a matrix of social conventions.

Along these lines, *Oscar Wilde and the Radical Politics of the Fin de Siècle* appears to enhance an interpretative paradigm shift and convey a poignant appraisal of Wilde’s subversive discourse. Ó Donghaile brings to centre stage a field of enquiry that encompasses Wilde’s libertarian and individualist creed, his socialist and anarchistic thrust, his anticolonial views of bourgeois-imperial Britain and alliances with Irish republicanism, together with a sympathetic

closeness to the subjugated and dispossessed. Divided into seven chapters supplemented by an introductory and a concluding section, the book ranges widely over aspects concerning Wilde's radical stances in matters of codified social hierarchies and the pressure to conform to "philistine" rules, as well as the drawbacks and dark sides of capitalism, colonialist practices and the ascendance of consumer culture. Another distinguishing trait of Ó Donghaile's approach is its twinned emphasis on the "personal" and the "political" and, importantly, its systematic drawing on the author's *oeuvre*, from the literary works to interviews, speeches, correspondence, and even excerpts of unpublished material.

Taking the closing chapter as our starting point may help to better attune readers to the spirit of Ó Donghaile's research. In "Conclusion: Oscar Wilde – The Lost Revolutionary?", we are compellingly reminded of Wilde's "compassion for the dispossessed and the politically subjugated, along with his belief in the divinity of the oppressed", and of the extent to which "the broad spectrum of his literary writing underlines the consistency of his radicalism" (227). Some relevant contributions casting Wilde as the gifted and politically-aware Irishman who looked askance at centralization, state authority and British mainstream culture – such as Terry Eagleton's play *Saint Oscar* (1989) – are also cited in order to keep in sharp focus the socially charged logic of an oppositional and "liberating" Aestheticism:

Aligning Wilde with the key Marxist literary theorists of the twentieth century, Mikhail Bakhtin and Bertolt Brecht, Terry Eagleton has shown how his exploration of the relationship between art, cultural theory and political reality was expressed through his fusion and expression of a radical style that elaborates advanced and progressive ideas about commitment and identity. These questions came to the fore as Wilde was accused by his critics of being politically suspect, insincere, lazy or downright mad [...]. Wilde's engagement with this criticism emphasised the connections that bound art to subjective and social liberation by connecting the personal to the political. His radical Aestheticism was committed, as one contemporary reviewer put it, 'to the development of a taste for all that is beautiful on earth'. (231)

Otherwise stated, Wilde's aesthetic consciousness is never seen as severing ties with political awareness and the conviction that "the histories of power and resistance that were masked by beauty and distorted by violence could be made visible and discernible by art" (227). Therefore, a key theoretical point rests on the assumption that the "tension between the state and those it has dispossessed can be demystified through the medium of art" (229).

Retracing our steps to the beginning of Ó Donghaile's book, we observe how the opening "Introduction: Wilde and Politics" soon gets into the issue by inviting readers to ponder the ways Wilde's beliefs were variously mediated and eventually distorted by conservative factions. A framework is progressively set that, starting from the infamous portrait of the "conceited megalomaniac" drawn by Max Nordau in *Degeneration* (1895) and a vitriolic article appearing in the British periodical *Truth* in 1883, yields insights into the ideologically biased figure of Wilde as the Celtic intruder, effete/effeminate man, and harbinger of social decay. The high priest of an anti-Tory subculture, he was perceived as at once "queer, alternative and politically suspect" (1). A menace to British traditional values who would sneakily insinuate himself among the affluent and affluent, Wilde came to be stigmatized as the infiltrating Irishman who resorted to the armoury of a charming personality and hypnotically fluent talk in an attempt to fuel anti-establishment sentiments by means of hollow mental tricks and verbal acrobatics.

Ó Donghaile compares this belittling attitude to a sort of reassuring obliteration of Wilde's words and agency, which tended to be dismissed as the utterances of an entertaining but basically inconsequential representative of a curious, marginal counterculture. If, on the other hand, the "Irish Oscar" did strive to secure mentors and outstanding connections, one

would always catch there, so to speak, a tantalizing glimpse of the artist playing “court jester to the English”, to quote James Joyce’s famous words from “Oscar Wilde: The Poet of *Salome*” (1909). Indeed, having reached the heart of the British metropolis, Wilde was to pave the way for a critique of imperialist violence and repressive legislation in Ireland, especially through his speeches, reviews and public lectures. This would of course prolifically intersect with the author’s overall censorious views of the ethos of capitalism and imperial hegemony as opposed to the aesthetic ideals of self-development and self-culture. In a nutshell, Wilde “argued for unrestricted artistic expression during a time when culture was being rigorously policed” and allegedly conceived Aestheticism as “a social project that had explicitly political objectives as well as artistic ambitions” (7-8). By envisaging a transnational network of relations and affinities and promoting trends of literary internationalism, he encouraged solidarity across borders and class divides. In so doing, he located himself at a junction that allowed him to unmask the coercive apparatus of the English state and destabilize bourgeois culture and normative codes from within. The link between avant-garde art and a radical impetus was also forged via Wilde’s interest in a cosmopolitan anarchist movement, as confirmed by his contacts with Sergius Kravchinsky (“Stepniak”), John Barlas and Adolphe Retté, among others.

Ó Donghaile’s excursion into Wilde’s “rebellious resilience”, social criticism and anti-authoritarian protest is carried forward in Chapter 1, “Anticolonial Wilde”, where he further keys us into the author’s statements and lectures dating from the 1882 tour of the United States. Heed is paid to how the young Apostle of Aestheticism – or, rather, the “Bard of Erin” and worthy son of Jane Francesca Elgee, aka patriotic “Speranza” – did not hesitate to tell audiences of “the violence done by British imperialism to Irish people and their culture” through an injurious “programme of historical erasure” and a persevering attempt at “inhibiting the imagination of an entire people” (29). This chapter offers a sound rationale for Wilde’s self-identification as an Irish republican who called for a decolonization of the mind and creative potential of a persecuted community. It presents a nuanced picture that takes due cognizance of the hostile reactions of the American press’s conservative fringes; it also marks the boundaries between Wilde’s sanguine Irish feelings, including his moral sympathizing with the Fenian movement, and the tame, sentimentalized construction of Celticism that underpinned instead Matthew Arnold’s “On the Study of Celtic Literature” (1867), let alone John Ruskin’s curt pigeonholing of China, India and Ireland as a bunch of “inferior races” to be modernized and civilized.

In a daring assertion, Ó Donghaile concludes that while critics and biographers have generally depicted the American tour as “an extended exercise in self-branding”, Wilde turned it into “a radical political platform from which he repeatedly criticised British domination in Ireland” (37). By debunking patronizing descriptions of Irish culture as the expression of a primitive or degenerate society on the verge of disintegration, Wilde simultaneously brought under scrutiny the Anglo-Saxon episteme of scientific and rational progress.

The following chapters deal more directly with Wilde’s literary output, from *Vera; or, The Nihilists* to “The Ballad of Reading Gaol”. Never losing its grip on the overlapping areas between aesthetic components, political connotations and ineluctable historical contingencies, the analysis continues to tease out clues and speak vividly to the richly-textured levels of Wilde’s “doublespeak”. Chapter 2, “Coercion and Resistance: *Vera* ... or the Land War”, foregrounds the subversive edge of Wilde’s largely neglected, unsuccessful first play by illustrating how the distraught setting of Czarist Russia stood in dialectical relation to British imperial policies and the corresponding crisis in Ireland (namely, the Irish Land War). The revolutionary Russian context and its fight against tyranny is read as an allegory for an occupied, starved, and insurrecting Ireland, which yearned to regain its sovereignty in contrast with the draconian measures and

supremacist drives hidden behind the liberal façade of Victorian Britain. In this play, Wilde is supposed to have paralleled nihilism with Irish insurgency and prompted audiences to reflect on a kind of terrorism that was not “the mindless work of apolitical criminals, but the result of political despair” and unrelenting coercion (57).

It is no wonder that Wilde’s ideological proximity to socialist thinking should elicit a significant response in Chapter 3, “Class, Criticism and Culture: ‘The Soul of Man Under Socialism’”. Here, Ó Donghaile sheds light on the interconnections between Wilde’s anti-capitalist critique of authority in his 1891 essay and the ciphers of progressive thought of that period at large, from George Bernard Shaw and the Fabian Society to Peter Kropotkin’s ideas of instinctive solidarity and natural cooperation. These echoes are strengthened by other cultural references, such as Chinese philosophy, mainly thanks to Herbert A. Giles’s English translation *Chuang Tzū: Mystic, Moralist, and Social Reformer*, which Wilde reviewed for *The Speaker* in 1890 (“A Chinese Sage”). A multilayered counterview is thus brought into being where the marriage between beauty and genius, the abolition of private property and a “healthy” individualism, is set against the dehumanizing vulgarities of industrial capitalism and the wasteful, hard-hitting competition of the “bourgeois crowd”.

The proposition that art should blend individual expression and political agency, with the corollary of the artist as a dissident figure looking forward to social innovation, serves as an apt *trait d’union* with the following couple of chapters, where Ó Donghaile applies his critical lens to Wilde’s fiction. In Chapter 4, “Fairy Tales for Revolutionaries”, he builds on the premise that Wilde “used the folk tradition, the gothic and political satire to criticise late Victorian imperialism, property relations and authority” (122). A further referential landmark is to be found in Kropotkin’s anarchist theory of art and literature, especially in connection with the Russian revolutionary’s championing of solidarity, voluntary association and mutual aid as opposed to the compartmentalized atomism of capitalist ideology. At the same time, in Wilde’s stories the notions of mutualism, compassion and cooperative responses to suffering would be given full play through a radical interpretation of Christianity and a wider palimpsest that hinges on the principles of justice, equality and social harmony. An indictment of imperial rapacity and capitalism’s structural violence is seen as underlying fairy tales such as “The Happy Prince”, “The Selfish Giant”, and “The Young King”, from their moving depictions of grief-stricken children and the bleak reality of exploited labour to the protagonists’ final embracing a Franciscan faith of unconditional love.

Chapter 5, “The Politics of Art and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*”, posits the critique of capital as no less than central to Wilde’s novel, where Dorian is marked out as “corrupted by his addiction to commodities” and propelled by a “destructive craving for things” (150). Drawing on the aphorisms of the Preface and a number of critical contributions – most prominently, “Oscar Wilde: A Study” (1892), a politicized contemporary review by the poet and militant anarchist John Evelyn Barlas – Ó Donghaile penetrates beneath the surface of the gothic-romance conventions and addresses the issue of Wilde’s invalidation of late Victorian commonplaces about art, society and the individual. He gears our perception to the theoretical and political discussions involving Basil Hallward, Lord Henry Wotton and, eventually, Dorian himself, whose compulsive, sterile collection of objects constitutes a powerful trope for the self-devouring circuit of consumption. The acute, if somewhat far-fetched and hyperbolic conclusion of this chapter, assesses *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as a text capable of encapsulating the topic of revolutionary politics. By showcasing “the destructive consequences of capital which prove to be personally and morally disastrous for Dorian” (159), the novel was to give voice and shape to a programme of revisionist Aestheticism.

In Chapter 6, “Civil Disobedience and *The Importance of Being Earnest*”, the reader is faced with another hermeneutic challenge, this time regarding a masterpiece of Wilde’s artistic maturity. Intriguingly, his 1895 social comedy is said to interrogate the establishment’s political denial of rebellion and its attempts to contain memories linked to revolutionary outbreaks and class warfare. As better evidenced by its original four-act draft, *The Importance of Being Earnest* mordantly anatomized bourgeois regulative standards as an outcome of impositions that had been legitimized through a history of repression. In all probability, Wilde allusively appealed to collective memory by juxtaposing Jack Worthing’s status as a foundling discovered in a suspiciously anonymous hand-bag, with the bombing of Victoria Station by the Fenian dynamiters in February 1884, when a device hidden in luggage had been used to destroy the checkroom. As a result, Wilde’s play acquires climactic intensity in unison with the “confusion surrounding this profound void in Jack’s personal record”, given that, like

the infant Jack, Fenian bombs were deposited in sites of public circulation in inconspicuous hand-bags and suitcases, and despite his profession of unionist sympathies he is unable to extricate himself from the ‘worst excesses’ of revolutionary republicanism. [...] His indeterminacy is based not just on the coincidence of his discovery by a gentleman on his way to Worthing but also upon the contradictions that reside in his unionist self-identification with the British Empire. As Lady Bracknell complains, his strange origin story, like the issue of education, brings to the surface questions about civil disobedience and revolution. (190)

Chapter 7, “‘De Profundis’, ‘The Ballad of Reading Gaol’ and the Politics of Imprisonment”, fittingly completes the circle by giving a fair amount of space to the author’s prison writings, whether penned during his incarceration or soon after his release. It meditates on how prison experience rendered Wilde more sensitive to suffering, hardship, marginalization and, above all, the endorsement of routinized violence by the British state apparatus, with its brutalizing penal system and strategies of corporate control. Ó Donghaile corroborates the thesis that the reasons for Wilde’s internment were not confined to sexual practices, being also very much grounded in the latter’s anarchist sympathies and opposition to the British ruling class.

This final chapter brings home to us the political nature of Wilde’s prosecution and consequent detention, whereby the Irish artist would painfully find out for himself “the physical, psychological and material cost of his resistance to late Victorian authority”, with both “De Profundis” and “The Ballad of Reading Gaol” emerging as “anarchic texts centred on Wilde’s rejection of social and penal authority” (205). Alongside the letter to the *Daily Chronicle*’s editor, in which Wilde forcibly denounced the inhuman treatment of child prisoners, these memorable works rub salt in the wounds of a body politic whose methods of punishment and surveillance seemed to be designed to completely alienate and crush the subjectivity of the inmate. And this is certainly conducive to enriching the argumentative trajectory of *Oscar Wilde and the Radical Politics of the Fin de Siècle*, whose cogent exploration of a stratified discursive terrain makes it hard for anyone to still flirt with the idea that Wilde’s aesthetic and individualist tenets might be just synonymous with social detachment or political escapism.

Laura Giovannelli

Donnacha Ó Beacháin, *From Partition to Brexit. The Irish Government and Northern Ireland*, Manchester, Manchester UP, 2018, pp. 352. GBP 22.99. ISBN: 978-1-5261-3295-6.

One of the most striking features of Ó Beacháin’s timely overview is his assured tone on a particularly contentious topic. This reflects his experience in researching and writing on the

complex, multi-faceted problem of the partition of Ireland that has afflicted the country, as well as its abettor, Britain, for 100 years. This is a work of mature assessment and often unexpected nuance. His preface and introduction contain very useful guidance on terminology, political parties and key themes for anyone reading themselves into the subject. Given the extraordinary breadth of the topic, it is to be expected that a volume of this nature would have something of the character of a synthesis. *From Partition to Brexit* does indeed comprise an amalgam of sources and its fresh take is rooted in the careful selection of items for the author's skilful assessment.

In a dangerous precedent of rejecting democracy, Britain did not accept the result of its own December 1918 General Election which in Ireland overwhelmingly backed Sinn Fein's manifesto for an independent republic. The War of Independence ensued in January 1919 and was waged with sufficient vigour by the Irish Republican Army and electoral success of Sinn Fein to force London to concede an uneasy "Truce" in July 1920. By then, the British Government had manoeuvred to partition Ireland and detach six of its hitherto natural and historic thirty-two counties. Holding on to valuable heavy industry and appeasing violent "Empire Loyalists" amid the onset of post-World War One economic decline were not immaterial factors.

What was sold after the fact to the undefeated IRA and Sinn Fein negotiators in London as a temporary compromise and stepping-stone to imminent reunification, along with independence, proved instead to be the durable, highly repressive "Orange" statelet run by Stormont under Westminster. When Stormont could not or would not do the bidding of Westminster, "Direct Rule" by British Civil Servants was imposed. As late as 1969 London permitted the pro-British "Unionist" regime in Stormont to reduce the franchise of "Nationalists" within the gerrymandered jurisdiction. This patent injustice, in conjunction with systematic discrimination *vis-à-vis* housing, employment and cultural activities, had the desired effect of disproportionate Nationalist emigration.

Beset by a ruinous Civil War in 1922-1923, which London did much to foster by pressurizing backers of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, the fledgling Government of a truncated Ireland struggled to manage the crisis in the North from Dublin. Few would deny that the travesty of the Boundary Commission was anything other than an unmitigated disaster that doomed the elected powers on both sides of the Irish Sea to endless friction. The often crass cynicism of many of the key British participants in the Boundary Commission is laid bare by Ó Beacháin in one of the strongest early segments of his study. The grim outworking of such attitudes has been witnessed in every decade to the present and all major episodes are mentioned in this volume.

By accessing and presenting information from private correspondence, memoirs, state papers and "on the record" interviews, Ó Beacháin manages the feat of making numerous "original" contributions to an already massive bibliography of the wider subject. Wisely, the temptation to delve into the fascinating minutiae of the many campaigns of the IRA is passed over. Other specialised texts may be accessed for such detail. Sufficient notice, however, is taken of the major IRA offensives of 1939-1945, 1956-1962 and, of course, 1969-1997. Vital context on the armed dimension is covered to explain the travails of many Irish Governments of differing degrees of ideological commitment and capacity regarding the National Question.

Since the imposition of partition in 1921, Ireland had veered between phases of negotiation, both public and very private, and some of the most concerted violence experienced in Western Europe after 1945. The armed campaign the IRA had not planned to wage in 1969 split the Republican Movement into three major elements by 1974 and pushed the very militant Provisional tendency into the forefront of a war that Britain was content to fight. The conflict was drawing in its third generation of IRA Volunteers prior to the historic August 1994 ceasefire which opened the door to meaningful progress built on the hard lessons of flawed political

initiatives in the 1970s and early 1980s. The fascinating circumstances of how separate strands of mainstream politics in Dublin, London and Washington DC merged to achieve the 1994 breakthrough are outlined in their essence in Chapter Seven.

Unanticipated factors of domestic politics in the UK and Ireland led to the collapse of the accord in February 1996. The IRA had reason to believe that acts of bad faith in London, partially endorsed by the calamitous endorsement of the so-called “Washington Three test” by a leading Irish politician, deviated from what had been agreed when it called a de facto cessation. Reviving conditions necessary to re-instate the permanent ceasefire in July 1997 was no easy task for any of the key protagonists; not least the IRA which underwent a further damaging schism in November 1997. London, for its part, counted the financial and reputational cost of losing two additional stock exchanges. Ultimately, the Good Friday Agreement of April 1998 paved the way for an interim settlement with a constitutional pathway for reunification.

The intricacies of such matters cannot be set down or discussed in just one book of 328 pages. However, the major positions, most important personalities and seminal events are addressed in a manner that anyone unfamiliar with the general dynamics of the subject can readily grasp. Useful appendices and a focussed up to date bibliography will guide a keen reader to deeper levels of analysis across the spectrum of a hundred years of Irish political history. A well-written and compelling narrative.

Ruan O'Donnell

Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, *Little Red and Other Stories*, Belfast, The Blackstaff Press, 2020, pp. 178. GBP 12.99. ISBN: 978-1-78073-263-3.

Little Red and Other Stories is Éilís Ní Dhuibhne's eighth collection of short stories, a genre she has favoured along a writing career of over thirty years. It is in the realm of the short story that her voice finds a most suitable and effective expression, taking into account love and loss, past and present, tradition and modernity, and wandering in space and time, from small villages in Ireland to the elsewhere of foreign countries, from the past to the present of traditional and contemporary Ireland.

Ní Dhuibhne's academic background in folklore has always had a strong impact on her short story writing, as she makes a very personal and original use of folklore in her fiction, intertextually juxtaposing a traditional story and its modern counterpart. Her experimental technique with old legends recurs in a variety of short stories, from “Midwife to the Fairies” to “The Mermaid Legend”, to the structural organization of her 1997 collection *The Inland Ice*.

This new collection of eleven stories is a welcome return after the publication of *The Shelter of Neighbours* in 2012 and her *Selected Stories* in 2017. In between Ní Dhuibhne published her remarkable memoir, *Twelve Thousand Days. A Memoir of Love and Loss*, in 2018, a moving account of her life spent with her late husband, Professor Bo Almquist, and of the short illness that led him to death.

A historian of the lives of women for decades, in *Little Red and Other Stories* Ní Dhuibhne follows two clearly identifiable lines of investigation that show continuity with her past and most recent writing but also new ways of elaborating her intertextual technique of storytelling.

Indeed, the themes of ageing, loss and the sorrow of separation from one's beloved, as well as survival, dominate this new collection and are interspersed in several stories. The stories mostly focus on survivors of dramatic and traumatic changes in their lives, trauma taking different forms and generating different reactions. In the title story, “Little Red”, Fiona tries

online dating after her divorce, following the advice of a stranger on a plane. A streak of humour underlies the story as she realizes that what she assumes to be complex algorithmic calculations are actually based on religious persuasions. In “Baltic Amber” the missing amber earrings Linda treasures as her late husband David’s gift bring back the memories of his sudden death and the bereavement that followed. In her typical use of simile, Ní Dhuibhne exploits animal imagery to convey the sense of loss: “For a long time after David’s death, Linda felt like a small animal, a small starved cat, or a mouse. A spider” (118-119). The repetition of the adjective “small” gradually disappears as the animals chosen become smaller and smaller, which is emphasised by the isolation of the one-word sentence “A spider”. “Odd” is a word that accompanies Linda’s life: she “has lost a hundred-odd earrings”, “Odd is the right word” (114), even her socks are odd and mismatched (117), occasionally she wears “two odd earrings”, but they “make her feel, and probably look odd. In the sense of eccentric, possibly forgetful, possibly crazy” (114-115). The range of meanings of the adjective, mismatched, uneven, weird, is an indirect description for the feeling of disorder, insecurity and loneliness in her life as a widow, to which she reacts with “restlessness”, and “life became a series of stepping stones, a frog-hop from one to the next” (119). David returns in her dreams as if he were alive, something that occurs also in the story “New Zealand Flax”, in which Frieda visits the cottage in Kerry on the pretext of cutting the grass, but mostly to feel the presence of her husband. With a touch of magic realism, Elk comes back to share the evening meal and the wine, “he comes out of the study and sits in his own place at the table” (161). The world of the living and the dead overlap, “He looks like himself” (161), “His voice is his voice” (162). Ní Dhuibhne’s use of simile provides the closeness between the real world and the underworld. Elk’s voice is “like a mellow burgundy” and “Like a purple orchid”, a coreferent to the Chablis on the table and the orchids Frieda has been looking after in the garden. Both David and Elk are scholars; reference is made to their books filling the bookshelves and boxes in an ideal link with Ní Dhuibhne’s memoir *Twelve Thousand Days* and her husband’s books.

Death and storytelling are interspersed in some stories. In “Visby” the first-person narrator’s stay in Sweden and her day of cycling are interrupted by a phone call announcing the sudden drowning of an acquaintance and his family. The suspicion that the man deliberately murdered his wife and children comes to her mind: “Was Maurice one of those men who seem normal and kind at work, but at home metamorphose into a monstrous bully? Street angel, house devil” (79). Meeting Hulda, the lady with whom she practices her Swedish, the protagonist becomes the audience for a storyteller: “And she told me the story of the Eriksons” (81) who lived and died on the island of Gotland. Opening the sentence with the conjunction “and” provides a sense of continuity between the death of Maurice and the tragic circumstances of Olaf and Karen’s death, as Olaf’s smothering his demented wife and then killing himself is an act of love.

If the language of loss looms large in several stories, the language of storytelling and the presence of traditional stories are also clear. Some of them are stories arising from Ní Dhuibhne’s own background as a folklorist, and direct references alternate with forms of rewriting. For example, in “New Zealand Flax” a missing article about “The Dead Lover’s Return” is mentioned, while in “Berlin” the context of the fall of the Berlin Wall provides the opportunity for checking fiction against reality, so that real life mirrors an ancient story. Lolly’s visit to the Humboldt Library in East Berlin in 1979 as a PhD student allows her to continue her research on the history of a story she has been working on. “The story was a fairy tale about an abandoned child, a bit like Hansel and Gretel, a scary story that ended well being a fairy tale, but that contained metaphorical references to infanticide, child exposure and such unspeakable customs [...]” (127). On this occasion she meets the librarian Gerhardt, and they briefly keep in touch by letter for a while,

before long years of silence. Lolly has a family of her own when he writes again mentioning a brief visit to Dublin, but at the airport only the little girl Gisela arrives, Gerhardt's daughter. Lolly witnesses the old story she had worked on translated into part of her own and her family's life, and keeping the child is a way to protect her from her father's abandonment.

From this point of view, Ní Dhuibhne provides a sort of continuity and a variation of her intertextual narrative technique based on the juxtaposition of a traditional story and its modern counterpart, giving prominence to the modern part, so to speak. This is what happens for example in "Lemon Curd", a story that has appeared elsewhere with different titles and with slight differences. Here, Ní Dhuibhne plays with the traditional nursery rhyme "Little Miss Muffet", which exists in many different versions and so resembles the various versions of an old legend. The lyrics refer to an incident in which a girl is frightened by a spider, and "An enormous spider" (58) frightens the unmarried retired teacher Miss Moffat, an open reference to Little Miss Muffet, at the end of a day marked by small traumatic incidents. Variations of spider figures frighten her in her encounters with men dressed in black she assumes to be criminals, people she either meets on the bus or sees from the bus she is travelling on, a one-legged man all dressed in black – "black hoodie, black jogging pants, one black shoe" (47) – aggressively threatens to "cut the bollocks off your mother" (46); and a "short man with black hair and a bird face, with a black moustache. A black t-shirt" (51) grabs a young girl cycling on the footpath. These men in black provide a layer of potential violence anticipating the end of the story when the radio news of the arrest of a man "suspected of murdering a twenty-seven-year-old woman" (57) not far from Miss Moffat's house attracts her attention. A "long ring. Long. And loud. An aggressive ring" late at night (*ibidem*) is the epitome of her fears and defencelessness, pushing her to take shelter in the bathroom, where a further enemy in the form of a spider awaits her.

"Lemon Curd" is a multi-layered story that can be read at different levels, as a focus on female loneliness, as an insight into the social pattern of the city of Dublin with its attention to the language divide between North and South Dublin. However, it can also be read as an implicit variation of "Little Red Riding Hood", with the violent men in black as alter egos of the big black wolf and the violent behaviour and language they use based on "fucking" or "bollocks" recall the wolf's threatening words "All the better to eat you with!"

"Little Red Riding Hood" is intertextually present in the title story, "Little Red", though it openly appears at the end of the story, when Fiona thinks of the way her little grand-daughter Ellie wants the story to be told, "the version that is not scary" (18). In Fiona's life there is a version that instead is scary. Having started online dating after her divorce, she finds it entertaining for a while, until one Sunday afternoon a man arrives at her house: "A figure appears outside the patio door" (10), "He is tall, with a long pointy face, a crest of grey hair springing back from his forehead, a sunburnt complexion. Neat clothes – jeans and a pale grey shirt, a grey anorak" (11). He introduces himself as Declan, "Is that Declan the plumber or Declan the electrician or Declan the serial killer?" (10), and manages to get into the house uninvited expecting something to eat. A sense of threat and fear dominates the paradoxical situation, which might, or might not, turn out to be quite innocent after all with the suggestion of a walk. As a matter of fact, Declan too seems to be a wolf in disguise, which is textually highlighted only at the end of the story when the scary episode is replaced by the recollection of Ellie's wish to hear the version that is not scary.

"Little Red Riding Hood" also appears in the final story, "As I Lay Dying", whose title recalls William Faulkner's novel of 1930. Faulkner chronicles the death of Addie Brunden; the first-person narrator in Ní Dhuibhne's story imagines her own death and the look she might have on her death bed, "I look different – like some old schoolteachers I had [...]. Or like the granny in 'Little Red Riding Hood'" (166).

An interesting experiment with the transformation of traditional fairy tales is “Nadia’s Cake”, set somewhere in the little village of Helansi in Eastern Europe. This establishes a link to “Lemon Curd”, in which Miss Moffat’s bus ride in Dublin revolves around the course in Russian she has been attending since her retirement and the difficulties the new language presents. “Nadia’s Cake” is mostly told in the present tense and concerns Jen’s desire to learn a new and unusual language spending some time in a remote Balkan village in the house of a woman named Nevena. She needs “a new country, a new language, new food. New people, new stories” (112) as a form of rebirth. Her curiosity about the new environment and the unfamiliar customs, and her interest in a language she does not speak and understand very well, intertwine with her inquiring mind which leads her to record local stories for the sake of anthropology. “Some of the stories are about ghosts and some are about vampires and some are about the Ottomans and some are about stepmothers and bears and wolves and the gypsies” (97). She considers the prejudice against the Gypsies: “The prejudice against travellers in Ireland is as nothing compared to this” (97-98). Though warned not to venture into the forbidden part of the nearby town, the Gypsy settlement, she does anyway. What she finds exotic turns into danger, as she is abducted by Gypsies, taken to a house and robbed of her belongings, including her camera and credit card.

The house is a negative mirror of the gingerbread house of “Hansel and Gretel”: far from attractive, dark and dim, the two men that captured her are father and son, they have in their eyes “an expression that is a mixture of ferocity and hopelessness”, and one of them “has enormous teeth” (102) just like the wolf in “Little Red Riding Hood”. The woman of the house, Nadia, looks after Jen providing her with food and taking care of her basic necessities; she is constantly cooking, using mostly the produce of her garden. She shares some features with the witch in “Hansel and Gretel”, who feeds her two prisoners in order to eat them. Besides there being realistic details in Nadia’s kitchen, the oven recalls the one into which Gretel manages to lock the witch and help her brother escape. Yet Nadia is not a witch and the cake she starts baking early one morning – “There’s sugar, a slab of butter, eggs [...] A jug of something that looks like cream” (109-110) – offers Jen a chance to get free. By and large “Nadia’s Cake” reworks motifs in fairy tales of children lost in a wood, an unknown country in this case, villains – the two Ivans, father and son – recall the ogre in “Tom Thumb”, and Nadia is in a way a fairy godmother. Her cake remains in Jen’s mind when she comes back to Nevena’s house, and dominates the final part of the story: “She wonders what happened to Nadia’s cake. Who ate it? What did it taste like?” (112). It is a metaphor of her adventure among the Gypsies but also a cross reference to Hansel and Gretel’s gingerbread house.

Some stories in the collection deal with family issues and childhood memories, leaving space to broader concerns. The old lady’s independence in blocking her daughter’s telephone number in “Blocked” changes into vulnerability and dependence when she falls and breaks her leg. The first-person narrator recalls her life as a child and how Bronwyn, her mother, made a life for herself and her children after her husband’s death and in her old age she favours the company of a neighbour who will turn out to steal all her money from her bank account. In a similar way, “White Skirt” focuses on the first-person narrator’s memories of a favourite aunt coming for visits from England when on holiday, in order to shed light on expected behaviour and religious differences in Ireland in the 1950s.

“The Kingfisher Faith” opens on Ciará’s return from Australia and on the letters from the Breast Check Clinic she finds upon her arrival: “There were three envelopes and three letters [...] They had written three times” (142). The choice of a subsequent one-word single paragraph, “So”, is a stylistic strategy that expresses whatever remains unspoken because it is unspeakable,

the amount of fear that accompanies the narrative core of the story revolving around Ciara's second step of investigation, a common experience for a lot of women facing the same situation. The story's title introduces the bird imagery that underlies the text and appears already in the first paragraph. In Australia Ciara felt "weightless", "she had imagined herself a bird, a migratory bird, a swallow, sailing swiftly above her own life" (140). The use of alliteration sheds light on the bird's flight as well as the sense of freedom embedded in flying. Bird images are evoked later on when at the hospital she tries to pass the time learning a poem, "Swallow, swallow, swallow, the poem starts" (147). Only in the final part does the kingfisher of the title become prominent, when by mere chance walking along the river she sees "the flash of blue", and once again Ní Dhuibhne resorts to a one-word paragraph, "Kingfisher", to convey Ciara's excitement. The lack of the definite or indefinite article personifies the bird and makes the encounter even more special ("She had never seen one before", 151), an almost magical event leaving the end of the story open on a feeling of extraordinary joy that surprises Ciara with faith in the future: "It was, she thought, a good omen" (152), as a kingfisher is generally considered a symbol of peace, prosperity, abundance, grace, it is all in all a very positive sign of life and continuity.

The textual organization of the stories in this collection is often based on Ní Dhuibhne's usual alternation of past and present, which highlights the obsessive presence of the past. "Little Red" opens in the present tense as a narrative tense, "A thing Fiona does is online dating" (1), a stylistic choice that is prevalent in the story, leaving the past tense for flashbacks and past events. In "Lemon Curd" Miss Moffat's bus journey in the space of the city is also a journey in time and memory, recollecting a meeting with an old boyfriend at the local supermarket. The episode brings back memories of the social ambition marking the group of law students he belonged too, people who were going to be successful and whose language was a matter of distinction. "They spoke in the accents of the best south Dublin suburbs, as Miss Moffat did herself" (54). Attention to language and the sociological implications in the language divide between North and South Dublin overlap with the protagonist's attempt to learn Russian. She has not managed to make the North side her new home yet, which is clear in her reaction to the words that surround her, words that both fascinate and repel her. "The language of this part of the city is still foreign" to her (47-48), like the Russian she is trying to learn. However, she occasionally appropriates the local language, "Get off the fucking bus. (See. She's picking up the local dialect, without even trying)" (48).

Notably, Ní Dhuibhne's typical use of expressions or phrases in brackets recurs as a way to enter the mind of her character, a technique she frequently exploits in several stories as a form of continuity and a distinctive mark of her writing. A few examples may be taken from "Little Red": "Cushy told her about a friend of hers, who was a widow. (That's not the same thing, Fiona thought. Being divorced is worse)" (5), "Blocked": "She had my aunt for company (she didn't like her much)" (29), "Visby": "They both loved doing crossword puzzles. (The neighbours knew all this apparently. How they knew, if they never got inside the apartment, wasn't clear to me. I let that go)" (83), "Nadia's Cake": "The look she calls 'communist'. (Everything you cannot quite understand is called 'communist' – shrug – in this country, especially everything negative)" (106).

Little Red and Other Stories marks a significant step in Éilís Ní Dhuibhne's career as a writer of short stories. This latest collection displays a form of continuity and development in her writing, as well as the flexibility of changing and expanding her established patterns succeeding in avoiding repetitions in plots, characters and characters' presentations or textual organization. Her voice always has something new to say for the attentive listener.

Giovanna Tallone

Rosalie Rahal Haddad, *Shaw, Crítico*, Santa Rosa, Universidad Nacional de la Pampa Publishing House, 2019, pp. 381. NPG. ISBN: 978-950-863-371-2 (e-Book).

If something characterizes George Bernard Shaw's theater, it is its breaking of each of the conservative perspectives of nineteenth century drama. His need to denounce the traditional works that lulled the audience, his deep critical character, his goal of educating the people instead of just amusing them and his attack on stereotypes are some of his most notable characteristics, those that make him persist with so much validity even in the present. It was a theater that was born at the end of the nineteenth century to establish itself as antagonistic to conventional theater: it roundly rejected the idea of entertaining its audience and opted for a transformation of its viewers, ripping them out of that passive nature and turning them into a critical audience. At a time when the theater was ruled by conventions without innovations, Shaw tried to show the hypocrisy and responsibility of the ruling-classes, defended social rights, and fought hard against censorship. Few playwrights stand out for accounting for the aforementioned values in their works. However, Oscar Wilde is another of the great critics of his time in the theater, who is referenced also in this book.

In this framework, Rosalie Rahal Haddad's book, entitled *Shaw, Crítico* and published in 2019, contains selected essays by Shaw present in *Our Theaters in the Nineties*, *Shaw on Theater* and *Prefaces*, writings that reflect how Shaw defined theater. The original version of the book reviewed is in Portuguese, and it was the first in the collection *Da Irlanda para o Brasil*, which compiles texts of literary criticism and valuable research by specialized scholars. Its translation into Spanish was the result of the joint work of the research team coordinated by Prof. Laura P. Z. Izarra, of the Department of Modern Letters, Faculty of Philosophy, Letters and Human Sciences of Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil, and of the teams of research of the Faculty of Human Sciences of Universidad Nacional de La Pampa, Argentina, among which is the Contemporary Literatures in Dialogue Research Program, directed by Prof. María G. Eliggi. Such exchanges constitute an important incentive to different critical points of view by expanding the reception of books such as *Shaw, Crítico* to a Spanish-speaking public, promoting the studies of English-speaking authors in Latin America. The translation of the Introduction from Portuguese to Spanish was carried out by María G. Eliggi and Shaw's essays were translated from English to Spanish by María Elena Pérez Bustillo. The translated texts were also carefully revised by María G. Eliggi and Graciela Obert.

The book reviewed is made up of a few preliminary words by María G. Eliggi, a preface by Laura P. Z. Izarra, an introduction by Rosalie Rahal Haddad and a selection of thirteen critical texts by Shaw. Each of the texts has a brief summary by Haddad, where the main idea developed by Shaw is pointed out. The selected critical texts allow the reader to enter Shaw's theater based on his own essays and evaluations of plays, theater critics, actors and playwrights of his time.

Haddad's introduction highlights the importance of Shaw's theater for the nineteenth century and how revolutionary his writings were as they were framed in a Victorian environment governed by extremely rigid moral values. In addition, the author states that theatrical performances were controlled at that time by a small group of conservatives whose sole interest was to please the public, an idea against which Shaw rebelled. The selection of Shaw's critical texts that follows the Introduction, made by this specialist in Anglo-Irish studies, provides an account of how the concept of theater is built for the playwright.

In the first place, the text "Las disculpas del autor", in which Shaw alludes to the conservative works that are successful among the bourgeoisie is presented with the aim of criticizing them for their lack of didactic content. The three texts that follow are reviews of theatrical performances

of his time. The first is “Dos Nuevas Obras”, where Shaw focuses on *An Ideal Husband* by Oscar Wilde, a work that the playwright praises and applauds because comedy exerts a powerful criticism of London society. The second is “Una Nueva Obra Vieja y Una Vieja Obra Nueva”, directed at two performances: *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde and *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* by Arthur Wing Pinero. Wilde’s comedy, in this case, did not generate the same satisfaction as the previous one: for Shaw it was an empty comedy, without any critical teaching. On the other hand, the playwright makes a harsh criticism of Pinero’s work for treating a subject such as “the woman with a past” in a highly melodramatic way, adhering to the perspective of conventional theater. The third of this group of texts is “La Vieja Actuación y La Nueva”, a review of an 1895 performance of William Shakespeare’s *The Comedy of Errors*, where, although he alludes to it as being a satisfactory play, his comments about the parliaments are really harsh.

The following three texts are appreciations made of specific members of the theatrical field of the nineteenth century. The first is “GBS Respecto de Clement Scott” a text addressed to a well-known critic of the time whom Shaw points out for being complacent and speaking with fervor of feelings, a manifestation that, for him, should not be found in a critical opinion. The second is “William Morris como Actor y Dramaturgo”, where it is possible to appreciate the admiration that Shaw had for Morris, despite his few visits to the theater. The third is “El Teatro del Nuevo Siglo”, dedicated to an association of enthusiasts who sought to regenerate the theater in England. Shaw then makes a critique of the works *The Yashmak* by Cecil Raleigh and Seymour Hicks and *Skipped by the Light of the Moon* by G. R. Sims.

The next two critiques of Shaw reflect the conditions of the theater at the time: “No vale la pena leerlo” shows how little an actor earns and compares it to the critic’s work. On the other hand, in “Prefacio de El ‘Mundo’ Teatral de 1894, de William Archer” he wonders why people do not frequent the theaters, unless it is to go to a renowned theater to see a work that has already reached recognition, and such lack of attendance is linked to the conditions of the theaters themselves: the transport combinations to reach them, the costs and the comforts of the cheapest seats, which, according to Shaw, are below the level required in a third-class train.

Shaw’s last four critical writings reflect explicitly his vision of the theater. The first is entitled “Una Obra a mi Manera”, where he talks about the art of telling stories and alludes to the stories that are recurrent in his works. In the next text, “Reglas para los Directores”, Shaw exposes what is the role that the director must assume to “provide a guide for beginners”, as he calls it. Then follows the text “Principalmente acerca de mí mismo”, a writing in which Shaw reflects on his profession as a playwright. Finally, the book ends with “Prefacio de *Mrs. Warren Profession*”, the preface to one of his plays, where the topic of prostitution is central and the prostitute is seen as a victim of a society that does not take care of her or give her opportunities.

The work of compiling each of these critical writings by Shaw, adding a brief summary, giving an account of the trajectory of this theater and its influence today, and translating them into Spanish attributes to this book a great value for any Spanish-speaking student and researcher of modern theater. Shaw’s theater broke with the structures of his time: his revolutionary visions conveyed a new theater with more didactic objectives that have influenced many works from the twentieth century to the present, demonstrating that his ideas continue to be valid even a century and two decades later.

Particularly in the Spanish-speaking world, having this Spanish translation of *Shaw, Crítico* is of great interest to the academic community dedicated to Shaw’s work and late nineteenth century drama.

Manuela Shocron Vietri

