

Recensioni / Reviews

Sara Brady, Fintan Walsh (eds), *Crossroads: Performance Studies and Irish Culture*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2009, pp. xii+255. ISBN 978-0-230-21998-4

In one of the essays contained in the collection edited by Sara Brady and Fintan Walsh, *Crossroads: Performance Studies and Irish Culture* (2009), J'aime Morrison writes that “[b]ecause of their double focus, crossroads are important spaces for reconsidering Irish identity” (82). This is a more than fitting description of the main objective of this volume, which, in its entirety, represents an attempt to rethink Irish culture and to chart the several ramifications of twenty-first century Irish identity.

Crossroads is divided into five parts: I. “Tradition, Ritual, and Play”; II. “Place, Landscape, and Commemoration”; III. “Political Performances”; IV. “Gender, Feminism, and Queer Performance”; V. “Diaspora, Migration, and Globalization”. Clearly these sections are meant to encompass the main cultural (and political) hot spots that, at least in the eye of the foreigner, usually define and permeate Irish identity – i.e. traditional cultural expressions such as mumming, folk music and storytelling, lush green landscapes, en masse emigration, and religious and territorial issues. Throughout the collection, these components of Irish culture are (re)considered using the broad-spectrum lens of performance studies.

The editors claim that they wish to “[...] impress the need for performance as a paradigm and as an object of study to be considered in greater depth in the context of Irish culture” (8). Partly this is because at the time of publication Brady and Walsh were both affiliated with a drama department in Ireland, but more significantly, they feel that performance studies have the potential to develop new critical perspectives in fields that are not typically associated with performative arts. Not exactly surprising is the fact that famous political speeches and acts – as in Anne Pulju’s essay on De Valera’s political oath – or sports events are considered to be pieces of performance, while it comes more as a surprise to see religious pilgrimages, and even roads taken into consideration. *Crossroads* can be read as an all-embracing survey on the concept of performance as a viable interpretative tool for all things Irish. The result is undoubtedly refreshing and thought provoking.

The first part of the book is the longest, with five essays on traditional subjects. It starts with the contribution of Jack Santino, “Performing Ireland: A Performative Approach to the Study of Irish Culture”, which delves into the performative qualities of what he calls “ritualesque”. In his analysis of public events, such as the Bloody Sunday commemorations or the Gay Pride Day

celebrations, he highlights a certain aspect that he believes to be neglected by academic studies. Santino claims that these events do not simply function as a public display of mourning in the first case, or of “carnavalesque excess” in the second, but that they try to pursue “social change as well as personal transformation” (16). It is this specific aspiration toward a change in society that makes them expressions of the “ritualesque”.

The section continues with Bernadette Sweney’s “Performing Tradition”, a discussion on the staging of traditional folk rituals (such as mumming, wakening, Wrenboys, Strawboys and Patterns) in the Irish theatre, and with Sara Brady’s extremely interesting essay on Irish sports, “Sporting ‘Irish’ Identities: Performance and the Gaelic Games”. Brady’s examination of Gaelic games leads to an insightful analysis of their role in the construction of an authentic Irish identity. Starting from the end of the nineteenth century, from the founding of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) in 1884, games such as hurling, camogie, Gaelic football, handball and rounders were bound up with notions of authenticity about the Irish race and nation. Although the Gaelic antiquity of the games has been questioned, Brady explains how the GAA has been absolutely successful in “creating viable and competitive games [...] [which] have become immensely popular, uniquely ‘Irish,’ and”, most importantly, “clearly *distinguishable* from British games” (37; italics in the original).

The relatively recent economic growth has transformed Ireland from a place of emigration into one of immigration. The games have become the site where “communities make contact, offering new immigrants and established Irish opportunities to negotiate [...] cultural expressions, and to forge ‘new’ ideas of what it means to be ‘Irish’” (39). The fact that immigrants play hurling problematises the games’ established association with a genuine Irish identity. As a matter of fact the GAA has been recalcitrant in the recognition of these foreign participants, even though nowadays more and more people (especially the young) with diverse cultural heritages contribute to both the prestige of the association and to the popularity of the games.

The first part ends with two essays, one by Mike Wilson and the other by Scott Spencer. Wilson’s “‘It’s beyond Candide – it’s Švejk’: Wise Foolery in the Work of Jack Lynch, Storyteller” is an examination of the performances of Jack Lynch and of the state of affairs of contemporary professional storytelling. Spencer in his “Traditional Irish Music in the Twenty-first Century: Networks, Technology, and the Negotiation of Authenticity” muses on the continual negotiations that pervade “concepts of authenticity and traditionality within traditional Irish music” (69), and explains how they are influenced by modern sound recording technologies.

The second part of *Crossroads* consists of four essays and deals mainly with memory and commemoration. J’aime Morrison’s “‘Tapping Secrecies of Stone’: Irish Roads as Performances of Movement, Measurement, and Memory” provides an original exploration of Irish roads. By emphasizing roads’

particular quality of engendering movement, and hence of bringing people together, she claims that “roads run at the intersection between history and memory” (74), thus playing a fundamental part in commemorating the Irish past. On a similar note are the contributions that follow. In these, both Emily Mark FitzGerald (“Commemoration and the Performance of Irish Famine Memory”), and Matthew Spangler (“Performing ‘the Troubles’: Murals and the Spectacle of Commemoration at Free Derry Corner”) focus on the strong bond between public commemoration and tourism.

The essay that closes this section is David Cregan’s “St Patrick’s Purgatory and the Performance of Pilgrimage”, which exploits the paradigm of performance to analyse religious pilgrimages. Cregan’s starting point is that although faith in organized religions has been dwindling significantly over the last few decades, pilgrimages have increased remarkably in popularity. According to the author, the reason for this renewed fascination lies in the high-tech routines of contemporary life. During their journeys pilgrims “unplug” themselves from the humming of everyday machinery, and so they end up seeing the hassle-free space of the pilgrimage as a way of achieving harmony, a “unity of body and soul, a desire to belong to the community of humanity over the commodities of commercialism” (122). This is the result of a bodily performance that even though it is extremely tiring, and it does not however discourage the modern traveler. Cregan then concludes that even though the religious pilgrimage might have lost its connection with religion, certainly it has not lost its appeal to people, because of their need for “something spiritual” (124).

The third part of *Crossroads*, comprises Matthew Causey’s compelling essay “Jus Soli/Jus Sanguinis: The Biopolitics of Performing Irishness”. In his disquisition Causey takes three different events into consideration: the 2006 protests and riots that ensued from the Love Ulster march in Dublin, the 2006 celebrations for the centenary of Samuel Beckett’s birth, and the 2004 amendment of the Irish constitution after the successful result of the referendum to restrict citizenship rights of children born to foreign parents. The author’s thesis is that:

Each of these events suggests an uneasy relationship of elements in contemporary Ireland to new models of Irish identity and represents unique strategies for control. The struggle exists at the level of personal and cultural identity, but spreads out to economic concerns of cultural tourism, which markets an authentic branding of Irishness. [...] In effect, what these events and legislation enact is a situation in which citizenship and identity cannot be performed but can only be transferred, bestowed, inherited, i.e., controlled. (153)

Drawing on the notions on biopolitics expressed by Giorgio Agamben (via Michel Foucault), and on Alain Badiou’s model of performable subjectivity, Causey turns to the xenophobic drift that has characterized the Irish political and identitarian discourses of the last decade. After having analysed the response of the press to the assault on a Mongolian immigrant during the

riots in Dublin, the exploitation of Beckett's name and oeuvre to "sell" Irish culture to tourists, and the anti-immigrant feelings that fuelled the amendment of the constitution in order to avoid "baby and citizenship tourism" (162), Causey concludes bitterly that Ireland appears as a country preoccupied with "state control of *bare life*" (164; italics in the original). Although Ireland has been welcoming to foreign workers during the Celtic Tiger years, it looks like it could have become a less hospitable country.

Charlotte McIvor's examination of the tragic episode of the burning of Bridget Cleary, "Ghosting Bridgie Cleary: Tom Mac Intyre and Staging This Woman's Death", opens the fifth part of the collection followed by Gabriella Calchi Novati's survey on Amanda Coogan's arts, "Challenging Patriarchal Imagery: Amanda Coogan's Performance Art", and by Fintan Walsh's investigation of Irish beauty pageants, "Homelysexuality and the 'Beauty' Pageant". Walsh's essay revolves around the concept of homelysexuality: "not a place, or even a stable subject position, but rather the default aestheticization of female sexuality designed to match nostalgic perceptions of Irish cultural experience" (200). According to him the ritual of beauty pageants, such as the Rose Of Tralee or the Calor Housewife of the Year, in Ireland became not just a way of channelling customary notions of national identity, but they also represented a chance for women to monetize their potential within strictly sanctioned ideals of quaint femininity.

These types of pageants held sway until the 1980s, when the derelict Miss Ireland was revived by conspicuous corporate investments. Whereas the Rose of Tralee and Housewife of the Year disappeared, Miss Ireland survived as a successful competition because it suited the modern international role of Ireland: "With its international focus [...] Miss Ireland always aspired to a more cosmopolitan than local appeal, and the tempering of sexuality was neither fostered not especially valued. Miss Ireland has always been less committed to domestic affairs *per se*" (203). Walsh concludes with an overview of queer beauty pageants such as Alternative Miss Ireland and Mister Gay Ireland and compares them with their traditional counterparts. Giving full credit to Alternative Miss Ireland for raising money for AIDS charities and "disturb[ing] the homogeneity of international beauty pageants" (204), the author also warns against the possible risk run by Mister Gay Ireland of "com-modifying homosexuality" (206).

The three final essays of *Crossroads* are dedicated to Irish identity, immigration and ethnicity. In this section anthropologist Eileen Moore Quinn ("Taking Northern Irish Identity on the Road: The Smithsonian Folklife Festival of 2007") describes the strategies used during the the Smithsonian Institution's Festival to provide new narratives of Northern Irish past in order to reconfigure its identity. Eric Weitz's contribution ("Who's laughing Now? Comic Currents for a New Irish Audience") takes a look at audience responses to the work of Arambe, an African theatre company based in Dublin.

In the Introduction to their volume, Brady and Walsh affirm that “[d]espite the number and variety of essays gathered here, this volume aims to be representative and suggestive rather than encyclopedic or exhaustive” (8). Indeed its interdisciplinary quality makes the volume a multilayered account of contemporary Irish culture, a map to hidden treasures and solitary landscapes. Even if some of the essays may seem to appeal more to an academic audience, thanks to its broad-ranging scope of investigation *Crossroads* can be largely enjoyed also by the common reader. However, its appeal does not just lie in the variety of its subjects, but also in its readability. The intent of the essays is to provide a point of entrance into one of the many expressions of Irish culture, and not to strand the reader in some lengthy dissertation about well-known Irish artists. For instance, whoever is interested in the art of Alastair MacLennan will enjoy Carmen Szabó’s examination of his work, and readers who want to know more about parading will appreciate Holly Maples’ new perspective on the Dublin St Patrick’s Day Festival parade. Finally, for once it is stimulating to walk off the beaten paths of the land of leprechauns, W.B. Yeats and James Joyce.

Arianna Gremigni

David Cregan, *Frank McGuinness’s Dramaturgy of Difference and the Irish Theatre*, Peter Lang, New York-Washington, D.C./Baltimore-Bern-Frankfurt-Berlin-Brussels-Vienna-Oxford 2011, pp. 231. ISBN 978-1-4331-0933-1

Dr. David Cregan comes from a fascinating background. He earned his doctoral degree from the Samuel Beckett School of Drama at Trinity College in Ireland, but before becoming an associate professor, he worked as a professional actor in New York City for four years. He toured the U.S. and Europe with different productions, and now he is the Chair of the Theatre Department at Villanova University in Philadelphia. There he has created the Philadelphia Theatre Research Symposium, a site where scholars and practitioners are invited to discuss what is happening in the field of the performing arts. His research interests mainly concern modern and contemporary Irish theatre.

Throughout his career Cregan has looked at dramatic arts through the lens of Queer and Gender Studies. His first edited volume *Deviant Acts: Essays on Queer Performance* (2009) provides an exhaustive overview of the Irish theatrical scene as a place to explore queer identities and practices. His latest accomplishment, *Frank McGuinness’s Dramaturgy of Difference and the Irish Theatre* (2011) is no exception. In it Cregan concentrates on the work of one of the most prominent playwrights of contemporary Irish theatre: Frank McGuinness (1953-). McGuinness is a prolific and successful author who has won various awards and who, as Cregan immediately points out, has proved to be like “[n]o other Irish playwright of his generation”, since nobody else “has had the professional consistency, or occupational longevity

that has characterized McGuinness's theatrical career" (1). McGuinness has worked incessantly from 1982, producing more than twenty original plays and adapting nineteen others – by authors such as Henrik Ibsen, Bertold Brecht, Anton Chekhov and others – both for the stage and for the screen. Besides this already impressive opus, we can include a recently published novel, *Arimathea* (2013), and five collections of poems.

In his book Cregan takes into account a considerable number of McGuinness's dramatic creations. His intent is to highlight "his diverse representations of gender and sexuality", because he feels that "little critical attention has been paid to [this] most unique and challenging aspect of his writing" (1). In order to do so, he adopts a "queer perspective". Cregan makes clear the scope of this perspective in the "Introduction", where he explains how he conceives Queer Theory. He sees it as a tool that is effective to interpret (and decode) the historical and social variables that enable the marginalisation of certain subjects. This means that Cregan's work is not (only) preoccupied with queer sexualities, but with a broad spectrum of factors. This standpoint makes his exploration of McGuinness's dramaturgy open to textual, historical and social analysis: "Consequently, this book is not a monograph but a theatrical liberation of queer themes that account for the hidden or repressed stories of Irish sexual identity" (3).

The book is divided into six chapters and has two intriguing appendixes. Each chapter takes into consideration several of McGuinness's plays, while the appendixes comprise two interviews. The first is an interview of Frank McGuinness himself by Cregan, while the second is with Patrick Mason (1951-), who is a longtime collaborator of McGuinness's. He is the award winning director of several of his plays and back in the 1980s he was the first one to recognize his talent. He is also the former artistic director of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin (from 1993-1999).

As anticipated by Cregan in the introduction, Chapter 1, "Defective Histories: Re-presenting History in *Innocence*, *Mary and Lizzie*, and *Mutabilitie*", draws heavily on Michel Foucault's theories. The chapter delves into three of McGuinness's plays, *Innocence*, *Mary and Lizzie*, and *Mutabilitie*, all three of which are based on real people and historical facts. *Innocence* (1986) is based on the life of the Italian painter Michelangelo Merisi, also known as Caravaggio (1571-1610); *Mary and Lizzie* (1989) deals with Mary (1823-1863) and Lizzie Burns (1827-1878), who were the lovers of the illustrious Marxist thinker Frederick Engels (1820-1895), while *Mutabilitie* (1997) revolves around the figures of two of the greatest writers of English literature: Edmund Spenser (1552-1599) and William Shakespeare (1564-1616).

In this first chapter Cregan argues that McGuinness' "queer fictional accounts" (19) defy the commonly accepted vulgate regarding the lives of these people. Therefore these plays "create 'defective' versions of historical biography" (*ibidem*). The concept of defective histories comes from Foucault's notion of "effective history". Foucault's idea is that official history is a result of

power struggles that end up obliterating other, alternative versions. According to this line of thought, history does not provide the future generations with a multifaceted – and more real – account of past events. What it passes on is the version of the strongest. Effective histories, instead, are queer. They grapple with unauthorized stories and break the uniform surface of dominant historiography. Cregan analyses each of these plays in order to explain the ways in which McGuinness manages to represent the non-traditional and the non-normative. As he writes, *Innocence, Mary and Lizzie* and *Mutabilitie* are “queer because [they explore] hints of sexuality, and the politics of gender to analyze the discourse of history, and expose how this discourse has constructed ‘reality’ in western culture” (20).

Chapter 2, as stated in the title, “‘Queer Nation’ Homosexual Representations of Irish Identity in *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme* and *Dolly West’s Kitchen*”, focusses on two plays. The former is set at the beginning of the First World War and is centred around the experience of eight young volunteers enrolled in the 36th (Ulster) Division. It was first staged in 1985. The latter is set in County Donegal during the Second World War, and it depicts the life changing events that war brings to the members of the West family. It was staged for the first time in 1999.

In this second chapter Cregan’s argument revolves around issues of nationalism and national identity. His line of thought concerns McGuinness’s ability to confront his audiences with “versions of diversity never before imagined on the Irish stage” (59). This diversity is embodied by McGuinness’s gay characters. Their stories take place against the masculine backdrop of the military life, and question the heterosexual orthodoxy of official History by representing “alternative subject positions” (*ibidem*). This dramaturgical device is intended to urge the audience to recognize, reconsider, and reformulate their established notions of Irishness, i.e. of national identity, and of gender. In Cregan’s words: “[if] McGuinness’s use of gay bodies as a dramatic strategy for the disruption of basic national ideologies is true, then cultural concepts of homosexuality must somehow penetrate the theatrical imagination to impact an audience’s sensibilities” (65).

History and biographical memoir are also the topic of the third chapter, “The Wilde Irishmen: ‘Theatre Theatrical’ in *Gates of Gold*”, which is probably the most interesting and original part of this work. Here Cregan steers away from nationalism and deals with “openly gay identity and popular conception in twentieth-century Ireland” (91).

In his 2002 play *Gates of Gold*, McGuinness stages the lives of Irish theatre practitioners and longtime romantic partners Micheál MacLiammóir (1899-1978) and Hilton Edwards (1903-1982). Although they were called “the boys”, their partnership was never acknowledged publicly. Simply “they were ‘known’ to be a homosexual couple” (92). According to Cregan this uncertainty regarding the realities of their lives comes both from a patronizing attitude of the public

and the media towards homosexuality, and from the ways in which MacLiammóir and Edwards mastered the art of concealment. To put it more clearly:

Edwards and MacLiammóir had their own unique way of representing themselves publicly, a method which simultaneously revealed and concealed information about their intriguing lives. This technique of representation created a blend of certainty and uncertainty about the ‘facts’ of their lives, a balance that stimulated the interest of the Irish public, however patronizingly, in their story for decades. (93)

That is to say that their popularity was somehow, whether openly or not, rooted in popular misconceptions and myths about homosexuality. Cregan points out how McGuinness’s play captures the essence of the life of these two men – i.e. this mixture of public and private, of real facts and fiction – better than any “attempt at historical biographical precision” (*ibidem*). However, McGuinness is absolutely not committed to providing the audience with the ultimate truth.

Most importantly *Gates of Gold* establishes a sort of continuity among the homosexual artists of Irish theatre: “a queer legacy” (93), as Cregan defines it, which passing through Edwards and MacLiammóir, goes backwards from McGuinness to Oscar Wilde. This queer legacy operates to disrupt and disappoint the expectations of the audience regarding the intimacy of gay characters. McGuinness refuses to reveal the sexual stories of MacLiammóir and Edwards, even though the promise of being fed salacious insights is perhaps what enticed the audience in the first place.

In the following chapter, titled “Camping in Utopia: *Carthaginians* and the Queer Aesthetic”, Cregan explores the campy aesthetics of *Carthaginians* (1988). In this play McGuinness engages with a sadly famous event of Irish recent history: the tragic massacre of 1972 in Derry, known as Bloody Sunday. Cregan uses the lens of camp in order to analyse the queer way in which McGuinness tackles this dreadful incident and creates an artistically engaging work. Camp is finally shown to be a viable tool to interpret the many different levels that are at stake in theatrical representation.

Chapter 5, “Holy Irreverence: The Gospel According to Judas”, is a fascinating examination of the unpublished monologue *The Gospel According to Judas*, in which Judas is the only character on stage. As mentioned in the “Introduction”, McGuinness is deeply interested in religious issues, and he has always found a way to stage the influence of Roman Catholicism on Irish society “with a measured balance between criticism and inspiration” (152). While McGuinness has always acknowledged the fact that Catholicism and homosexuality are two conflicting positions, here, as Cregan points out, he tries to find a way to re-conciliate them through “a queer theological narrative” (153).

In this thoughtful and thought provoking work, McGuinness stages a series of contradictions that penetrate the images of Judas, of Christ, and the

Catholic doctrine itself. Indeed, it stages the millennial dispute around the corporeality and incorporeality of Jesus, and that irredeemable tension between the sublimated and at the same time carnal love that the Catholic believer has to demonstrate for Jesus. Cregan explains how this tension is inherently heretical because it forces the Catholic believer to acknowledge the flesh and blood of Christ in all its mundanity, and at the same to negate it in order to embrace Christian piety and asceticism. This is particularly unsettling for the male homosexual practitioner, because the strength with which the Church condemns homosexual desire is counterbalanced by the sensual adoration of the naked body of Jesus that it encourages.

The exploration of McGuinness's theatrical production ends with a chapter titled: "There's No Place Like 'Home': *The Bird Sanctuary*, *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me*, and *The Factory Girls*". In this last chapter Cregan deals with the notions of "home" and "family" in McGuinness's plays *The Bird Sanctuary* (1994), *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me* (1992), and *The Factory Girls* (1982), all three of which are attempts to redefine traditional visions of domesticity. For a long time now, queer subjects have struggled to validate alternative family formations, and the characters in these plays "exhibit the growing awareness of the benefits of these new queer alliances and the effects on individual lives" (194).

David Cregan's book fulfils its promise and provides the reader with a rich and intelligent exploration of Frank McGuinness's work and ideas. Although the premises can seem demanding for the uninformed reader, Cregan writes with a degree of clarity and sharpness that is not always found in scholarly dissertations. Moreover, his declared queer viewpoint is not a way of encapsulating the entire production of McGuinness into the gay paradigm. Instead he tries to put the plays at the centre of intersecting discourses that go beyond the horizon of a homosexual life. This, he explains, is the trap in which critics and the public are often caught when they consider McGuinness's work. Indeed, in the "Conclusion" chapter, Cregan lucidly explains that McGuinness is one of the most influential figures in contemporary theatre for reasons that cannot (and must not) be ascribed to his open homosexuality.

This stance can be clearly seen in the conclusive passage, when Cregan clarifies how his analysis is primarily concerned with McGuinness's employment of "deviance" as a

theatrical strategy used to preach a dramatic sermon proclaiming difference as the new aesthetic. Diversity is the mirror McGuinness's work turns on the Irish theatrical tradition, and the ideology that supports it, in order to expose its homogeneity. By defecting from the norm and, at times, flaunting social or cultural standards, McGuinness's work struggles to free the imaginative dramatic fiction from the confines of 'reality' which, ultimately, only accommodates normality. (205)

Arianna Gremigni

Maria Edgeworth, *Harrington: romanzo*, trad. di Raffaella Leproni, Introduzione e note di Carla De Petris, Salomone Belforte, Livorno 2012, pp. lxx + 271.

Readers of *Studi irlandesi* will immediately recognize the potential value of this new translation of a major work by Maria Edgeworth (1768-1849), complete with a lucid introduction and extensive contextual materials by Carla De Petris, herself a noted translator of Irish literature. The value resides initially in the fact that so little of the work of Edgeworth, a significant figure in Irish writing in English, exists in Italian translation at all. Even Pietro Meneghelli's 1999 translation of *Castle Rackrent* (1800), the author's most frequently read and written-about work, is out of print, as is another of Edgeworth's best-known works on Ireland, *The Absentee* (1812), in Amalia Bordiga's 1967 translation, *L'assenteista*. So, the prolific and influential Edgeworth is represented in Italian today only by Chiara Vatteroni's translation of the early *Letters for Literary Ladies* (1795) as *Se nasce femmina* and two of Edgeworth's stories for children "The Purple Jar" and "The Little Merchants", "Lampolla viola" and "I piccoli mercanti", brought together in *Due racconti* (2009) by the translator of *Harrington*, Raffaella Leproni.

If its potential value is clear, what then about the edition itself? In short, it combines a thoughtful, flexible, and readable translation, complemented by a rewarding translator's note (67-70), with an introduction at once thorough and incisive (9-42), along with an extremely valuable "Scheda storica" (43-53), a "Scheda biografica" (55-59), a bibliography (51-56) and extensive annotation in the form of footnotes.

Harrington: a tale is simple enough in outline. (We might question Prof. Leproni's decision to translate "tale" as "romanzo"? but Susan Manly's generally excellent Broadview edition [2004] of the work evades tricky issues of genre by omitting the subtitle altogether). The first-person narrative, set in England in the second half of the eighteenth century, opens with the eponymous hero, spending his first night in London at the age of six, looking in fascination from his father's town-house window at unfamiliar city-sights, including the street lamp-lighter and an old Jewish rag-collector. Unwilling to go to bed, he is frightened into compliance by an irresponsible maid who threatens that if he continues to disobey she will call the white-bearded rag-collector, Simon the Jew, to take the boy away in his great bag. The result is to prompt a pathological fear and hatred of Jews in the young boy that continues, with the encouragement of his father, into early manhood. In the course of the fiction, Harrington will learn to overcome his fear of and prejudice against Jews as he encounters a number of Jewish characters, including the young pedlar Jacob, the (real-life) mathematician and rabbi, Israel Lyons, and the virtuous and benevolent Mr Montenero, with whose daughter, Berenice, he will fall in love.

Often thought of as a pivotal figure in Irish literary history, Edgeworth is rarely more so than in *Harrington*. Here, we find ample evidence of the Enlight-

enment values she inherited from her father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, whose serious interest in education she shared, while the fiction itself often reads like the kind of thesis-novel made familiar in the 1780s and 1790s by writers like Thomas Holcroft, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft. If the political and social values of Wollstonecraft and Edgeworth were often very different, then the two writers shared both a suspicion of the excesses of sensibility and a belief in the importance of education. Both are evident in *Harrington's* powerful opening scene where the irresponsible maid, lacking in modern ideas of education, plays on her charge's over-wrought imagination to produce the anti-Semitic young man Harrington will become. *Harrington* also looks forward, however, and not just in their explicit engagement with Jewish themes, to such works as George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876) or Israel Zangwill's *Children of the Ghetto* (1892) but, less directly, to the opening scene of Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1861), for example, where Pip's life is overshadowed by his meeting with Magwitch, much as Harrington's is by his encounter with Simon the Jew.

It is, however, Shakespeare, and the figure of Shylock, who cast the greatest shadow over Edgeworth's tale and, perhaps, over Edgeworth herself. *Harrington* is an early example in English literature of a work that engages with, and offers a critique of the stereotypical figure of the malevolent Jew. While Professor De Petris rightly draws attention to Richard Cumberland's drama, *The Jew* (1794), it would have been appropriate to have mentioned also Tobias Smollett's much earlier refutation of Shylock in his depiction of a benevolent Jewish merchant, Mr Manasseh, in *Ferdinand Count Fathom* (1753). That this depiction, albeit of a minor character, resulted from Smollett's espousal of Enlightenment values is certain, following on views expressed in his early poem "Reproof" (1746), in which the poet declares:

Jew's, Turk's, or Pagan's: hallow'd be the mouth
That teems with moral zeal, and dauntless truth. (ll. 27-8)

Edgeworth's decision to write on the theme of anti-semitism was very differently motivated. In 1815, the already celebrated writer received a letter from a young Jewish woman living in the United States. Rebecca Mordecai wrote, in respectful tones, asking Edgeworth why she, so often an exemplar of "justice and liberality" should have been prejudiced in just one respect, prejudiced enough indeed to "instill that prejudice into the minds of youth" (letter of RM to ME, 7 August 1815). In so writing, Mordecai had in mind not only the negative stereotype of the Jew introduced into Edgeworth's adult fictions, *Castle Rackrent*, *Belinda* (1801) and *The Absentee*, but also those in "The Prussian Jar" and "Good Aunt", stories included in *Moral Tales* (1801), intended for children. Edgeworth seems to have had no immediate answer to the question but instead of ignoring the letter or apologizing to her correspondent she set instead about writing *Harrington*.

When complete, the tale appeared in a three-volume publication as *Harrington: a tale* and *Ormond: a tale* (1817, London), the first edition title-page being most helpfully reproduced in the present edition (71). The reproduction is useful, not least for anyone engaged in Irish Studies, for it draws attention to an important feature of Edgeworth's fiction: the lack of a clear division in the author's own mind between her "Irish" and her "English" works. In her lifetime, Edgeworth was as renowned for *Belinda*, *Patronage* (1814) and *Helen* (1834), all set in England, as she was for her "Irish" fictions. Now, Edgeworth holds a precarious position in the study of "English" literature, narrowly conceived, but remains a powerful presence in studies of Irish fiction. Today, the Irish *Ormond* – with its memorable account of Cornelius O'Shane, King Corny of the Black Isles – is more read than *Harrington*, not least because the two novels are today invariably published separately (even, sad to say, in the Pickering & Chatto edition of *The Works of Maria Edgeworth*).

One of the virtues of the present edition is Carla De Petris's recognition that the subject matter of *Harrington* cannot, and should not, be neatly separated from the concerns of Edgeworth's Irish fictions. While the tale opens around the time of the 1753 Jewish Naturalization Act debate, its climactic scene is set in 1780 during the anti-Roman Catholic Gordon Riots. Here, a virulently anti-Jewish noblewoman and her daughter, caught up in mob violence, are saved by the joint efforts of the "warm-hearted" Irishwoman, a barrow-seller of oranges, and the morally upright Jew, Mr Montenero. The orange seller is, as she admits, "a little bit of a cat'olick myself, all as one as what *they* call a *papish*" ("io pure sono un po' cattolica, tipo quello che *loro* chiamano *papisti*" [202]) and so doubly the subject of English prejudice, both as a Roman Catholic and as an Irish woman. Yet it is she who recognizes, without prejudice, Montenero's moral worth: "Never fear, jewel! Jew as you have this day the misfortune to be, you're the best Christian any way ever I happened on" ("Non temere, tesoro! Anche se oggi hai la sfortuna di essere ebreo, sei il miglior cristiano che m'è mai capitato a tiro" [201]). Here the socially conservative Edgeworth conflates, confronts and confounds national, religious, and ethnic stereotypes, drawing the attention of English readers in particular to the varieties of contemporary prejudice. In doing so, Edgeworth moves from the merely personal – her response to Rebecca Mordecai – to engage with a long and itself varied line of pleas for individual tolerance and political toleration. It is a line that can be traced back through works both Irish and English: Edmund Burke's Irish writings of the 1790s and John Toland's *Reasons for Naturalizing the Jews in Great Britain and Ireland* (1714), and *Nazarenus* (1718), or Locke's *Letter Concerning Toleration* (post-1667) to *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656) by James Harrington, the English republican who very plausibly, if unexpectedly, gave his name to Edgeworth's tale. Edgeworth did not know all these works at first hand – Locke's *Essay* was not published until 1876 and, *pace* De Petris's comments on Toland's

Reasons, the work was not republished between its first edition in 1714 and the twentieth century, while the first edition is so rare that only two copies survive, in the New York Jewish Theological Seminary and in Trinity College Dublin – but the thrust of the argument for toleration was certainly familiar to her, allowing *Harrington* both to constitute an attack on anti-Semitism and to encompass that purpose within wider considerations of prejudice, the need for education, tolerance and toleration.

The present edition, imaginatively included in the *Collana di Studi Ebraici*, published by the firm of Salomone Belforte, founded in 1805, is generally very well presented. A few errors creep in, particularly in English or French words and names: “*Naturalising*” for “*Naturalizing*” (47), “*Peterborough*” for “*Peterborough*”, “*Cocluded*” for “*Concluded*” (61), “*Marylin*” for “*Marilyn*” (63; though Professor Butler’s name is spelled correctly elsewhere), while French words seem to favour acute accents at the expense of grave accents throughout. These, though, are very minor blemishes on an excellent edition that deserves to draw attention to a work and to a writer still underrated both, and not only in Italy.

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