

Recensioni / Reviews

Liam Chambers, Thomas O'Connor, eds, *College Communities Abroad. Education, Migration, and Catholicism in Early Modern Europe*, Manchester, Manchester UP, 2018, pp. ix+238. £ 75.00. ISBN 978 1 7849 9514 0.

The topics of the Irish Colleges which were founded by the Irish exiled clerics on continental Europe between the last decades of the sixteenth century and the seventeenth century can by now boast a well developed scholarship. The recent collection of essays edited by Thomas O'Connor and Liam Chambers on the collegial communities abroad is a significant contribution to this subject which sheds new light on these institutions which, from the sixteenth century, began to dot the map of the main Catholic countries of Europe. One of the strengths of this volume is that it gathers a series of groundbreaking essays written by the leading historians in the field, and which do not limit to focus on the institutions founded by the exiled clergy of the British Isles during the early-modern period.

The editors have wisely decided to include investigations which focus on the German College and the Maronite Colleges of Rome as well as on the seminaries founded to train the Dutch Catholic priests in exile. This choice greatly enriches the volume because it helps to demonstrate how the process of founding the structures which had to form an educated clergy according to the Tridentine norms followed, to a certain extent, the same path. Indeed the lack of adequate funding, the constant struggle between the student-body and the rectors, and the low-quality of some seminarians are but few of the common problems which beset the activity of the collegial Catholic communities on continental Europe during the early-modern period. Another strength of this volume is that all the essays are fitted both in a national and in transnational frameworks which provide a groundbreaking platform to understand the establishment and the development of the colleges in their host countries, but also their contribution to the local church at home. A further feature which strongly enhance this volume is that all the essays unveil the existence of many different networks - clerical, cultural, and political - which the colleges succeeded to establish on continental Europe and the British Isles.

In conclusion this collection of essays is a meticulous and extremely well organized analysis which provide a new understanding of the collegial com-

munities in exile. The fact that the contributors come from different countries is a further demonstration of the editors' capacity to have gathered a group of leading historians who adopted a transnational perspective to investigate a transnational phenomenon.

Matteo Binasco

Carole Nelson Trio, *One Day in Winter*, CD Blackstairs Records (689232111922), 2017. \$ 15,00/ € 13,40.

One Day in Winter (Blackstairs Records, 2017) is an album by Irish composer, pianist, and saxophonist Carole Nelson, a concept album directly inspired by the landscapes of Carlow, the land-locked county in South East Ireland where the composer lives. It is an accomplished album, evocative and introspective, in a way that manages to be compelling. As a lyrical jazz concept album from Ireland, *One Day in Winter* is a unique proposition. Beyond its strictly musical merit, the album also has significance as an artwork which places itself in a tradition of engagement in, and development of, Irish cultural specificity.

One Day in Winter is the first venture of the Carol Nelson Trio, which sees Nelson on piano (and soprano saxophone in one track), supported by Cormac O'Brien on bass and Dominic Mullen on drums. The album is largely instrumental, with lyrics in two tracks, spoken by Nelson. The Trio is a tight ensemble, but in fact the musicians originally came together for a once-off performance for the Trio Trio Trio Piano Festival in Dublin in 2015, and the idea of the band slowly grew from there. Carole Nelson is best known as one half of Irish jazz-pop duo *Zrazy*, and her involvement with the band she created with vocalist and composer Maria Walsh in 1991 has continued without a break. In fact, *Zrazy* released their sixth album, *The Art of Happy Accidents* (Alfi Records), in early 2017, while Nelson's own *One Day in Winter* was released in November of the same year, on the back of the promotional tour with *Zrazy*.

While the Carole Nelson Trio has a remarkably different musical character from that of *Zrazy*, there are important points of contact between these overlapping albums. *Zrazy* is described in its official website as "a unique amalgamation of pop, jazz and celtic influences"¹. Their take on jazz, while generally upbeat, is also associated with politically committed lyrics which do not shy away from controversial issues; one of *Zrazy's* most memorable feminist interventions was the recording and performing of a song consisting entirely of the repetition of an actual phone number to access informa-

¹ *Zrazy* official website, <<http://www.zrazy.com/about.html>> (05/2019).

tion on abortion, at a time when to publicise such a number was illegal in Ireland. By contrast to the outward-directed high energy of Zrazy, the Carole Nelson Trio's sound is lower and slower, the feel introverted, the rhythms more fluent, the politics muted, and Zrazy's pop buoyancy and electronic fluency have been dropped here in favour of a gentle detached contemplation.

Nelson and Walsh have composed for Zrazy separately and together, with Nelson's interest in expansive, lyrically heavier songs being apparent in *The Art of Happy Accidents*, which, remarkably for a music album, was in fact launched by an acclaimed Irish writer, Frank McGuinness. Nelson sang her own lyrics for the first time in that album, in the autobiographical "Night Crossing". The song opens with: "I grew up in London in the same house where / we looked after my father until he was taken. / The house is still standing, someone else lives there. / I took the night crossing back home to Ireland". This interest in narrativity is carried into the very structure of *One Day in Winter*, which is set in one unfolding day. One song is shared by the two albums: the Trio's "Snow is Falling" is a reworking of Nelson's "Snow" for Zrazy.

The more introspective songs in *The Art of Happy Accidents*, and those concerned with memory, were penned by Carole Nelson. Anticipating *One Day in Winter* in its setting, the Zrazy song "Teampall na mBó", about a burial ground for unbaptised babies—a rather unlikely topic for a jazz song—, was inspired by a ruined church in Carlow. "Song for Jim" (co-written with Walsh), dedicated to Nelson's father, is about the precious moments spent with someone waiting for death, and ends with an open question: "I know you think there's nothing else, / we fade away ... / But I have never been that sure". That query is fully investigated in *One Day in Winter*.

The tracks

In devoting itself to a seldom publicly celebrated part of rural Ireland, Carole Nelson Trio's *One Day in Winter* makes a fresh contribution to the Irish jazz tradition, which has tended to prioritise disengagement with Irish themes and with the Irish musical canon. There are important exceptions, such as Irish-inflected work by guitarist Louis Stewart and bassist Ronan Guilfoile, or vocalist Melanie O'Reilly's intersection of lilting and scat. In addition, we have vocalists Dorothy Murphy and Christine Toibín's work with Irish literature (Joyce, Yeats, Muldoon), the *sean-nós* imprint on saxophonist Michael Buckley or vocalist Sue Rynhart, or blues singer Mary Coughlan's taking the pulse of Irish affairs in song commissions, but it has been more common to find once-off trad raids or Irish-content versions.

One Day in Winter is also a rarity as a concept album, a format long ago blasted to bits by single track downloads. As the press release explained, the album "traces the course of one winter's day, from before dawn to moonrise"—rather than sunset, a significant decision as we will see. Further, this one day stands for a lifetime, from the development of consciousness in infancy

to its fading in old age and death. In a remarkable coincidence, Ronan Guilfoyle's jazz suite *Life Cycle*, to premiere in November 2018, will also offer a concentrated vision of a lifetime, an autobiographical account prompted by Guilfoyle's sixtieth birthday. Such a concept may be a rarity in music, but not so in literature, where an allegory of the journey of life is a classical theme in both secular and religious writing. *One Day in Winter's* parallel structure is thus similar, for example, to that of Woolf's novel *The Waves*, where the unfolding lives of a group of friends mirror the trail of the sun raising and sinking above the sea on a single day.

One Day in Winter begins just before sunrise, with "Beata Viscera" (trans. "Blessed Flesh"), as the landscape is astir with anticipation. It is a striking opening, because the tune is a reworking of a song of the same name for single voice, written around 1200 by the French composer Pérotin. Pérotin is crucial to the development of Western music, because he created a system of notation for rhythm, which allowed different speeds and rhythms to coexist in ever more complex compositions, and he was among the first to compose using chords (as opposed to two lines of plainchant, or "Gregorian" chant), thus opening the way for a "decentering" of the melodic line, and for a new sophistication of harmonies and "commentaries". It makes sense for a jazz album to pay homage to this moment in the history of music, and even to reclaim it. It is also worth noting that composers and aficionados of minimalist and serialist Western music often feel an aesthetic affinity with early music from the medieval period, that is from 500 to 1400. Nelson's version of "Beata Viscera" is in fact reminiscent of the treatment of the song by the Estonian group Vox Clamantis (in their album *Filia Sion*, ECM 2012), an ensemble which specialises on plainchant, early polyphony, and contemporary classical music, and is associated with the style-bridging work of Arvo Pärt. Not coincidentally, Irish modernists working in the first half of the twentieth century often hailed medieval Celtic art and monasticism, partly no doubt as a strategy to sidestep the Reformation.

As unexpected as medieval music is in a jazz album, the choice of song also comes as a surprise. The lyrics of Pérotin's "Beata Viscera", omitted from Nelson's rendition, are a Latin text reworking Psalm 45 to honour the Christian figure of the mother of Jesus, seen here as a miraculous virgin mother who, after the physical upheaval of giving birth, retains her "completeness" (*integritas*, often translated as "purity" to signify a body "unsullied" by sexual intercourse, according to Christian teachings). This religious context is perplexing at first. Historically, there are links between jazz, West African religions, and American gospel, but with "Beata Viscera" as a presentation card, Nelson's album is declaring its kinship to European religious music. *Viscera* can be translated as entrails, womb, or offspring, and at one point in the original's lyrics we learn that "the sun, freed, rises pure", so that the metaphorical sun of Jesus can be equated to the day emerging from the womb of

mother nature. The Christian – here Catholic – tradition can thus be transmuted into a form of pantheism, where Nature (as Gaia, as White Goddess, or as interrelationship in deep ecology) generates and extinguishes, while retaining her “completeness”. With this conceptual ablution and praise, the album readies itself for the eternal renewal or resurrection of each new day. A tinkling of bells is heard in the background, but rather than church summons they evoke the bells of sheep or cattle moving to pasture, and are suitably grounding.

The second track in *One Day in Winter*, “Sun Rising over the Blackstair”, is another instrumental piece. It starts with a gentle slow movement, which metamorphoses into a cascade of light, settling on the piano while the bass comes in – like shadows forming all at once –, and the melody steadies itself, punctured by controlled flickers. The title refers to Blackstairs mountain (732m.). With a distinctive black and grey top, and overlooking vast flatlands, the mountain gives its name to the Blackstairs range, marking the border between county Carlow and county Wexford. Here is where the album, already swerving away from an accepted international language of jazz by invoking early medieval music, situates itself, in a dramatic closeup after “Beata Viscera”, on a very specific location. The press release for the album gave the coordinates: “Living between the River Barrow and the Blackstairs Mountains in Carlow gave Carole both the physical and mental landscape for composition”. Reviewers have linked Carole Nelson’s style to jazz pianists Keith Jarrett and Paul Bley², and we may hear too the gentle confidence and self-absorption of Bill Evans, who is often described as the epitome of the European jazz tradition.

With strict temporal logic, the third track is titled “Low Light through bare Trees”. It opens with a gently marching drum: the noun, adjectivated by the piano. With several breaks and a rhythm change, the tune perfectly evokes the unexpected shapes, the playful strangeness, of objects whose profile seems to be shifting.

Since the album’s story arc stands for a lifetime, this section would seem to correspond to the rise of consciousness and the sketching of individuality, as some kind of uniform voice tentatively emerges in spurts and starts and silences, to then collect itself. It does so by picking up the opening, and moving to a higher note, a higher plane. In track four, “Snow is Falling”, we arrive at childhood. With a subject tentatively in place, a predicate begins to be drafted. A curved melody scoops up the mind of a child. Neatly corresponding with the delight in language, this song introduces the spoken word

² See Daniel Rorke, “Carole Nelson Trio – *One Day in Winter* – Album Review”, *Jazz Ireland*, 16 January 2018, <<https://www.jazzireland.ie/blog/album-reviews/168-carole-nelson-trio-one-day-in-winter-album-review.html>> (05/2019).

into the album. Carole Nelson's commentary is poised between the poetic and the documental. She says: "You wake up and feel / the cold air take your breath away / And all is new and beautiful / like when you were a child". In a game of perspectives, the speaker is an adult communicating with her adult self, as it recalls itself as a child, when "you make the first footprint / in the perfect snow". After, "[y]ou feel the drift of the land east to west"; that is, you feel, and inaugurate, *time*.

Track five, "Cold Rushing River", also begins in uncertainty with a stretch of undefined sounds, from which gently springs a reprise of the opening "Beata Viscera" with a faster rhythm, followed by variations, as if the same basic substance (rather than just the same basic melody) could reshape itself into a multitude of morphologies, when life literally rushes forward. After evoking the lack of a course, a trickle emerges, and a direction is pursued, but with currents overlapping. The next track, "The World is Full of Love", is firmly delineated. Another instrumental piece, it is driven by a bolero-like pulsing, reminiscent of the popular song "Besame mucho" (trans. "Kiss me a Lot"), an international hit in 1941 and a popular tune with jazz singers and musicians ever since. In the original, the core lyrics demand: "Kiss me, kiss me, kiss me / as if tonight was the last time. / Kiss me, kiss me, kiss me / 'cause I am afraid to lose you again". Composed by the Mexican Consuelo Velázquez when she was a young woman, she later explained that she had written the song before she had ever kissed anyone, simultaneously attracted and repelled by the sinfulness she associated with lust and romance. In Carol Nelson's day-as-life narrative, "The World is Full of Love" may thus remit us to erotic awakening.

In track seven, "The Sky Darkens", the speaker's voice returns. The album's sleeve notes explain that the text is "an adaptation of the Buddhist meditation on ageing and death". Invoking Buddhism in an Irish artwork is, beliefs aside, as effective in bypassing the catholic-protestant divide, as the mediophilia of Irish Revivalists and early modernists once was. The opening words declare that "[a]ll that I hold dear I will leave behind", and remind us that "it is the nature of all things to fade away". The melody meets this with an impassible surface, and unexpectedly incorporates a warmth and frisson perhaps intended as a counterweight, in a joyous treatment of the *tempus fugit* theme. The repeated coupling of "A crow flies / The sky darkens", calls upon us to focus on the present – regardless of its ostensible irrelevance –, and it also serves to relocate this Buddhist idea to Ireland, where the crow is a symbol of the Morrigan, goddess of war (and by way of carrion, associated with crones). "The Silence in Between", the eighth track, is the quietest in the album, and the one where the separate components of the Trio become most conspicuous. Here we fully appreciate the imaginative and rather self-sufficient percussion of Dominic Mullen, and the bass of Cormac O'Brien, who has been described as a "perfect juggler of risk-taking and foundation"

(*ibidem*), and whose contribution is perhaps excessively muted in the album, by contrast to the live performance. A good many songs in *One Day in Winter* start in slowness and lack of definition – here, the tentativeness is sustained, with the deliberate discretion of a spider’s web, more emptiness than thread.

Again, there is a remarkable contrast with the tune that follows, “Stories by the Fire”, which has the familiarity of a standard Hollywood film score, and the reassuring rhythm one may find on a meditation track or an Irish ballad, where the melody is a means rather than an end. All the preceding gliding and rushing seems to give way to sauntering here – somewhat unjazzily steady. “Stories by the Fire” sounds as if it was meant to accompany lyrics but, alas, there are none. The title’s reference to storytelling places the album in a tradition of not merely oral, but aural storytelling, where music also has a place. The title also reminds us that the album is structured as a parable, with the concentration and complexity of a Dickinson poem, but written in the free and easy lexicon of a Whitman. The *One Day in Winter* story comes to an end with the track “Moon Rising over the Blackstair”, which takes up some of the preceding threads and moods, with some aural affinity to the sun rising (in track two) and to the safe progression of a story by the fire (in track nine). The track and the album close with two lines on the piano, one grounding and assuring, and another featuring a slight rush of anticipation rising to an unfinished point. The moon is up, and the silence stands before us with a certain majesty. It is an honourable end.

Irish references

The specifically Irish locatedness of *One Day in Winter* has yet to be mentioned by commentators, while, remarkably, Carole Nelson’s English background is regularly noted by them. As strikingly, reviews make no mention of the album’s concept, which is one of its greatest strengths. Nor are the lyrics commented upon, suggesting a discomfort with autobiography, with poetry, or both. Also remarkably, reviews have characterised Nelson’s music by a “lack of complexity”, which clearly makes the reviewers a little anxious, and which is as clearly gendered. Consider this, from Cormak Larkin: “The London-born pianist and composer may not have all the flashy chops of some of her male colleagues, but the directness and honesty of her playing – spacious, meditative and open-hearted – more than makes up for it”³. With similar double-edginess, reviewer Daniel Rorke declared that: “The compositions are always interesting, yet avoid overt complexity – no small feat indeed for Nelson as composer”⁴.

³ Cormak Larkin, “The Best Jazz This Week: Carole Nelson Trio and GoGo Penguin”, *The Irish Times*, 13 January 2018, <<https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/music/the-best-jazz-this-week-carole-nelson-trio-and-gogo-penguin-1.3349652>> (05/2019).

⁴ See Rorke, “Carole Nelson”, n.p.

One Day in Winter is firmly planted in rural Ireland, and crucially produced by a resident rather than a visitor. Irish connections are further invoked twice, once on each of the tracks with lyrics. In “The World is Full of Love”, the speaker refers to her companion as *mo chroí*, a gaelic term of endearment meaning “my heart”, or beloved. The Irish language is often used to signal authenticity in a self-conscious manner, in literature, art, and the media. This particular intervention is unobtrusive, but it signals allegiance, not just to the beloved but to the culture, who become fused by this simple spell. Some years ago in a brief conversation with the composer, she retold an incident when someone had referred to her as the epitome of Irishness, and Nelson ended the anecdote by saying: “Me! A *sassenach*!”. A gaelic term for the English, normally used as a term of abuse, *sassenach* is rare enough in Anglophone Dublin, where the conversation took place, and rarer still in self-deprecating mode. There is the same sense of knowing appropriation in this song’s use of *mo chroí*, more self-aware than tokenistic.

“Snow is Falling” alludes to the work of Joyce. The speaker describes waking up after a restless night caused by “the stupid debris of life”. At the window, delighted by the visitation of snow, she is pulled back in time to the infinitely vast and luminous days of childhood, “[t]he big freeze” of a time without responsibility: “Nobody’s going to work today / We’re all going out to play”. The speaker chuckles, and the melody gently tumbles up, and then stands and slips and slumps – getting up again. Naturally, music has a special relationship with time; it is “made of” time, we may say, and it is perceived as a sequence. “Snow is Falling” leaves the Joycean quote for the end: “Sleep lies heavy, a blanket of snow / on all the blessed dreamers. / And you remember a story you once read / [where] snow was falling ‘on all the living and the dead’”. Again, the unobtrusive literary intertextuality (like the cultural intertextuality of *mo chroí*) hits the right note. Joyce’s short story “The Dead” (1914), where the quote comes from, is set in Dublin on a winter’s day, and it deals with memory, and the thawing of certainties. The ending of the story, like the song’s intimation of snow-as-death, also rewrites all that went before.

Modernism and jazz

It is not just in terms of an Irish connection that the invocation of Joyce in *One Day in Winter* is relevant, but also as a nod to the stylistic tradition that he represents. We could see Nelson’s intertextual aside as a declaration of affinity with modernism. It is rarely acknowledged that jazz is a key development in the movement. The improvisation and syncopation associated with jazz in fact have made a greater impact within, and beyond, its own medium, than cubism or stream of consciousness have made in theirs, to give two iconic examples of modernist innovation. There is a tendency in Modernist Studies (which is exacerbated in Ireland) to focus on literature, despite the awareness that modernism was an attack on traditional styles and themes in all fronts, from painting

and architecture to dance and design. Music has tended to be studied separately, with Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* (1913) almost invariably cited as the eye of the storm, with the occasional addenda of Schoenberg's atonality. The links between popular music and modernism have only begun to be investigated in earnest in the last few years⁵. In classical music in an Irish context, Mark Fitzgerald has recently discussed the "belated arrival" of modernism, suggesting Rhoda Coghill's *Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking* (1923), which sets to music a Whitman poem, as a kind of proto-modernist Irish composition on account of its "harmonic ambiguity" and "unresolved ending"⁶. Those descriptors could as easily be applied to *One Day in Winter*. Fitzgerald goes on to review other composers' "mildly modernist tendencies" and to suggest a belated peak of postwar modernism in Ireland in Seóirse Bodley's *Meditations on Lines from Patrick Kavanagh* (1971)⁷.

One way of defining the styles of modernism, in every medium, is as a series of reconfigurations of rhythm, and with those, a rethinking of the human conversation with time. It is well established that theorists of time such as Bergson or James were influential on the first modernist wave. Their work highlights a special relationship between time and consciousness. Consider the sliding thought patterns in Dorothy Richardson's *Pointed Roofs* (1915) or, in a concentrated form, Woolf's "The Mark on the Wall" (1917). In film editing, a syncopated rhythm matches a psychopathic strain in *The Seashell and the Clergyman* (Dir. Germaine Dulac, 1928) or in *Borderline* (Dir. Kenneth Macpherson, 1930). The mobile furniture by designers such as Eileen Gray may be seen as a reconfiguration of once-static matter to accommodate the fluid needs of the modern mind. The wave-based dance style developed by the choreographer (and theorist of movement) Isadora Duncan, sought to reproduce an organic, eternal continuity. In painting, we can see cubist and surrealist imagery as exercises in simultaneity. And so on. If we make the modest and uncontroversial claim that Time and the perception of Time play a role in modernism, then jazz, which consists of a reorganisation of time patterns in music, is in a privileged position to showcase that role.

One of the interesting aspects of considering Jazz an exemplar of modernism in the West, is that it has carried on unabated from its beginnings at the turn of the twentieth century, as a powerful force in the "roaring twenties", with a second peak of influence in the Swing era in the early and mid 1940s, to the development of Bebop, Acid Jazz, and beyond onto the pre-

⁵ For example, Carol J. Oja's *Modernism and the Jazz Age* (2000), or Alfred Appel's *Jazz Modernism* (2005).

⁶ Mark Fitzgerald (2018), "A Belated Arrival: The Delayed Acceptance of Musical Modernity in Irish Composition", *Irish Studies Review* 26, 3, 349.

⁷ Fitzgerald used "mildly modernist" to describe Frederick May's *String Quartet* (1936, 352). For Bodley, see *ibidem*, 354.

sent day. Within an evolving form, there has been an unbroken continuity throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty first century. The end of Western modernism has been subject to debate; it is generally given in literature as no later than WWII, but the post-war years saw a flourishing of a second wave of modernism in classical music, architecture, and film, and an overall closing line tends to be drawn in the 1970s, when the movement is superseded by postmodernism. However, a neomodernist wave of stylistic and conceptual experimentation has been identified in current work in fields as diverse as architecture, design, and literature. Contemporary Irish composers of classical music such as Gráinne Mulvey or Ann Cleare, for example, have been associated with modernism (356). This neomodernist wave, which “prolongs and surpasses modernist innovations”⁸, may be explained by the fact that postmodernism has “nowhere to go”⁹, or as an exercise in nostalgia. But either explanation presupposes a break – jazz is proof, if proof is needed, that modernism never went away. I see Carole Nelson Trio’s *One Day in Winter* as an example of Irish neomodernism.

Ireland and jazz

1934 saw the culmination of an “anti-jazz” movement in Ireland in a demonstration in Mohill town, county Leitrim, with thousands in attendance and the explicit support of the then Taoiseach Eamon de Valera. The event was commemorated by Zrazy in *The Art of Happy Accidents*, with the cheerful track “Down with Jazz!” The instigator of the campaign, the Gaelic League activist Peter Conefrey, a priest in the village of Cloone, declared at the demonstration’s rally that jazz “is borrowed from the language of the savages of Africa, and its object is to destroy virtue in the human soul”¹⁰. It is easy to caricature this manifestation of rural conservatism, but its effects have been lasting. Informed by the campaign, the Public Dance Halls Act of 1935, which made it illegal to hold public dances in Ireland without a license, is still in force, though its application has softened. Jazz had reached all corners of Ireland through the wireless, and it would be in the 1970s that a wave of jazz musicianship would coalesce influenced by Chas Meredith’s jazz programmes on Irish national radio.

Carole Nelson is one of a number of Irish artists with an international vocation who has resisted the lure of the city and is rewriting the association

⁸ Monica Latham (2015), *A Poetics of Postmodernism and Neomodernism: Re-Writing Mrs Dalloway*, London, Palgrave, 8.

⁹ Anne Fogarty (2018), “After Modernism? Joycean Traces in Contemporary Irish Fiction”, Unpublished paper, *Joyce Studies Symposium*, Bizkaia Aretoa, Bilbao, University of the Basque Country.

¹⁰ Quoted in Cahal Brenan (2011), “The Anti-Jazz Campaign”, *The Irish Story*, <<http://www.theirishstory.com/2011/07/01/the-anti-jazz-campaign/#W5KlsEZKjIU>> (05/2019).

of rural Ireland with stagnation. Online projection and marketing have allowed a freedom that would have been inconceivable twenty years ago. Some of the most successful and respected creative Irish enterprises have chosen rural Ireland as their base: Cartoon Saloon, the animation film company based in Kilkenny, or Guth Gafa, the international documentary film festival based in Kells, are two examples. Despite Father Conefrey's racist evocation of savagery, jazz has of course been traditionally associated with urban modernity and eclecticism.

Interestingly, the Irish jazz scene is somewhat at odds with that assumption. To begin with, the Irish capital's jazz profile is not as cohesive or as stable as one may expect. In 2008, Dublin, Cork and Belfast may have formed a "dependable circuit" for visiting and local jazz musicians¹¹, but with the closure of J.J. Smyth's in April 2017, after thirty years in operation, the Dublin jazz scene suffered a blow, although Arthur's Upstairs is slowly establishing itself as a blues and jazz venue, and a number of pubs and cafés regularly host live jazz. The majority of dedicated Irish jazz musicians and performers must still consider relocating in order to have a viable career. If they stay in Ireland, compromise is inevitable – non-specialised private tuition in instrument or voice is the main earner for many jazz musicians in the country, while most others resign themselves to separate their professional lives from their musicianship.

There are a number of important jazz festivals in the main cities in the island, however. Led by Cork, which has hosted an annual jazz festival since 1978 (thus celebrating forty years in 2018), there are well established festivals in Limerick and in Belfast (both nine years old in 2019), and a host of other, newer festivals. Most of them were originally set up by jazz fans or jazz musicians rather than by promoters, and often grew from smaller events. One of the exceptions is the City of Derry Jazz & Big Band Festival, created by the City Council in 2001 after identifying "a gap in the market for a music festival to fit within the Council's existing events diary", as the council explained in the depressingly mercantilised language now generally used to refer to cultural events¹².

Most remarkably, in the last two decades a series of successful international jazz festivals has been created away from the main Irish cities. Some of them in towns such as Bray in county Wicklow (celebrating twenty years in 2019), Kinsale, or Sligo. And annual jazz festivals are also taking place in small villages. For example, in the villages of Doonbeg in county Clare (also

¹¹ Kevin Stevens (2008), "Now's the Time: The State of Irish Jazz", *The Journal of Music*, <<http://journalofmusic.com/focus/news-time-state-irish-jazz>> (05/2019).

¹² City of Derry Jazz Festival website, <<http://www.cityofderryjazzfestival.com/start-ed>> (05/2019).

celebrating twenty years in 2019), Ballydehob in county Cork (since 2007), Cloughjordan in Tipperary (since 2011), or Ramelton in Donegal. The official website from the Ballydehob Jazz Festival anticipates its potential audiences' surprise at such a location, in "this improbable corner of the world", presenting the anomaly as an asset, by offering "world class talent couched in a pretty little country village"¹³. A similar marketing ploy is used by the only festival in Ireland dedicated to a single musician, gipsy jazz king Django Reinhardt; the "Django Sur Lenon" Festival, the official website declares, takes place "in the picturesque village of Ramelton"¹⁴.

Clearly this phenomenon is part of a reaction to the boom in massive outdoor music festivals (generally focusing on pop and pop-rock), with smaller festivals offering a less impersonal or more "authentic" experience, while retaining all the inherent contradictions of boutique hotels, glamping, and bespoke tours. The rural jazz trend is also tuned to the Irish Tourism Board's strategy of branding Ireland as the "green island", but there is something jarring about this juxtaposition of village life, picturesqueness, and jazz. Writing in 1924, music historian Paul Stefan praised jazz as "[a] reflection of the times: chaos, machines, noise, the highest peak of intensity"¹⁵. Hardly a slogan for arcadian reverie. In another way, the very remoteness of those rural settings is an imaging of the commitment and connoisseurship nowadays associated with jazz practitioners and audiences.

Yet in Ireland, "the rural" is a complex proposition. The colonial imprint of "big house" landlordism, followed post-independence by a "cultural affiliation between the state and the rural", and the population's widespread aspiration to individual land ownership, have translated into a permissive rural housing policy facilitating internal migration towards rural areas and away from cities¹⁶. It has been claimed by human geographers that this context has resulted in the last few years in a kind of "spatial anarchy" in the Irish countryside, "allowing rural communities to grow and diversify" in unexpected ways, for example by encouraging a "broader" social mix than in rural England (64, 67). Thus, the sprouting of rural jazz festivals across the island, and the very existence of an album such as *One Day in Winter*, may actually signal a socially fertile soil for a diversity of aesthetic choices.

¹³ Ballydehob Jazz Festival website, <<http://www.ballydehobjazzfestival.org/about/>> (05/2019).

¹⁴ Django sur Lennon Festival website, <<http://djangosurlennon.com/>> (05/2019).

¹⁵ Quoted in James Donald (2010), "Sounds Like Hell: Beyond Dystopian Noise", in G. Prakash (ed.), *Noir Urbanisms: Dystopic Images of the Modern City*, Princeton, Princeton UP, 45.

¹⁶ Menelaos Gkartzios, Mark Shucksmith (2015), "'Spatial Anarchy' versus 'Spatial Apartheid': Rural Housing Ironies in Ireland and England", *Town Planning Review* 86, 1 56.

Musicologist Mark Fitzgerald has suggested that “[p]erhaps a new history of Irish modernism will be constructed around an examination of how modernism, abandoned by practitioners in literature, migrated instead at a later junction to other art forms” (Fitzgerald 2018, 356). Jazz and rural Ireland, in a syncopated tune by the Carole Nelson Trio, will have to be part of that new history.

Aintzane Legarreta Mentxaka

Giulia Bruna, *J. M. Synge and Travel Writing of the Irish Revival*, Syracuse, Syracuse UP, 2017, pp. 256. GBP £29.59 (paperback). ISBN 978 0 8156 3533 8.

Readers and scholars familiar with the works of John Millington Synge will be aware of the controversy surrounding *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907). Following the opening performance of *Playboy*, Arthur Griffith infamously described the play as “a vile and inhuman story told in the foulest language we have ever listened to from a public platform”. In 1926, with reference to *Playboy*, William Butler Yeats declared to rioters protesting Sean O’Casey’s *The Plough and the Stars* (1926), “You have disgraced yourself again. Is this to be the recurring celebration of the arrival of Irish genius?” It is such controversies and praise for *Playboy* that have contributed to the popularity of this play, as well as Synge’s other dramas. As Giulia Bruna notes:

Synge traditionally sits among the pantheon of Ireland’s greatest playwrights and founding figures of the Irish national theater. His plays, from *Riders to the Sea* to the controversial *The Playboy of the Western World*, have been praised by critics for their unflinching portrayal of rural Ireland and for their bravura in the use of Hiberno-English. (2)

Yet, while Bruna acknowledges that Synge’s nonfiction “has been analyzed primarily as a kind of rough work for his plays” (3), central to her study is the contention that Synge was among the pre-eminent travel writers of the Revival period.

Bruna declares her study aims to adopt a new approach; “Provid[ing] a new context in which Synge’s travel writing can be read and sheds light on a critically overlooked genre: travel writing compiled by Irish artists and activities affiliated with Revival networks” (4). In broad terms, Bruna historicises Synge’s travel writing and does so with ease as she places Synge’s writings on Aran, Kerry, the Congested Districts and Wicklow in the wider contexts of Travel Writing, Journalism and Revivalism. More importantly, Bruna argues Synge refused to Romanticise the West like Yeats and Augusta Gregory (to name a few) and refutes the generalisations written by Patrick Pearse and Desmond Ryan. Bruna is keen to demonstrate that her study does not seek to reproduce the efforts of Tony Roche, John Wilson Foster and Nicolas

Grene in tracing the literary influences on, and of, Synge's works. Instead, she draws upon their restoration of "the historical contingency in which Synge's [works] were produced" (5). This is emphasised by her nuanced and sensitive exploration of Synge's works, as well as contemporaries such as Mary Banim, William Bulfin, Emily Lawless and Robert Lynd. However, Bruna's decision to borrow from "various theoretical frameworks" (14), notably Postcolonialism, Ecocriticism, Travel Writing, Literary Journalism and Mary Louise Pratt's "contact perspective" (33) is jarring and distracting. Rather than employing different theoretical frameworks in each chapter, this study would have benefited from the adoption of a more concrete model.

Accompanied by a discerning "Introduction" and brief "Epilogue", Bruna's study is divided into four chapters, each of which highlights "Synge's potential as a nonfiction writer" (14). Chapter one, "The Cuckoo with Its Pipit", is devoted to a discussion of Synge's most well-known example of travel writing, *The Aran Islands*. Bruna argues, Synge depicted island communities embedded in modernity; his Aran Islands are peopled by gramophones and residents with a strong awareness of the outside world. Significantly, Bruna confidently demonstrates that in Synge's writing, as in reality, the Aran Islands were not the pristine spaces of other Revivalists' imaginations. Instead, the Aran Islands were a "contact zone", "a site where different encounters were taking place not only in a colonial sense but also in a nationalist and revivalist sense" (20). In stressing this point, Bruna further refutes the over romanticised and fictional attitudes of the Aran Islands and their inhabitants as an example of the authentic Teutonic Ireland. In a similar vein, Chapter Two "Reimagining Travel and Popular Entertainment", draws attention to relations of travel and displacement in the area, "challenging one-dimensional representation[s] of the anthropological field as characterised primarily by dwelling communities" (14). Sensitively arguing that an anthropological and polyphonic approach is at the forefront of Synge's *Kerry Essays*, the voices of the Kerry people take centre stage. This is evident, as the question of "national" spaces, spaces embedded in transnational cultural and economic currents, are challenged" (74). Moreover, and lending more support to her assertions, is Bruna's comparative exploration and analysis of Synge's *Kerry Essays* with Lynd's *Rambles in Ireland* (1912), throughout which she speculates that Lynd's book owed much to Synge's demythologisation "as it depicts the harsher reality" (68) of Kerry life.

In Chapter three, "Traveling Journalist", Bruna focuses on Synge's trip to Connemara and Mayo, which was sponsored by *The Manchester Guardian* in 1905. Drawing on visual materials, notably Jack B. Yeats's pen-and-ink illustrations and sketches, journalistic sources such as magazines and periodicals, Bruna accentuates that Synge's unpatronizing and empathetic understanding of the "history from below" provides a damning critique of colonial structures like the Congested Districts Board. Quoting Declan

Kiberd comparison of Synge's Contested Districts to George Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), Bruna points out that Synge "investigates in a subversive way this differential of marginal and dominant forms – the persistence of backwardness and poverty within the framework of modernizing agents such as the CDB" (87). In the final chapter, "J. M. Synge in the Garden of Ireland", Bruna turns her attention to Synge's complex representation of Wicklow's physical and human-built environment (15). Focusing on Synge's interest in the landscape of the coercive institutes, Bruna effortlessly shows that Synge's style of travel writing embraced modernity as well as tradition; as not only were natural sites of beauty explored but so are "human-built sites of coercion and hegemony, such as workhouses and mental institutions, where cultural loss and disconnect emanate more strongly" (146).

There are some issues which detract from the impact and insightfully nature of Bruna's study. Notably, the decision to employ a variety of theoretical frameworks is distracting and reduces the coherence of Bruna's overall argument. Bruna's suggestion that Synge's accounts of the Congested Districts may draw from the same works by Marx, Engels, and Kropotkin that inform contemporary "socioecological theories and that Synge read while in Paris", (114-115) is somewhat tenuous. However, this study is written in a clear and concise manner that avoids theoretical and technical jargon. As such, it will appeal to general readers, students and scholars with limited knowledge of this subject. One particular strength of this study is the exploration of Synge's contribution to literary magazines such as *the Gael* and the *Shanachie*, and in its contextualisation of Synge's photographic work in the west of Ireland. Moreover, Bruna offers readers a concrete position from which to expand and further consider Synge's non-fiction, Irish Travel Writing and journalism during the Revival period. Therefore, students and scholars from a number of disciplines will find this study an engaging, stimulating and valuable addition to the body of criticism on Synge.

Robert Finnigan

Melania Terrazas, ed., *Estudios Irlandeses*, special issue, *Gender Issues in Contemporary Irish Literature*, 13, 2, 2018, pp. 145. ISSN 1699-311X.

2018 marked hundred years since women achieved the vote in the United Kingdom (also in what is today the Republic of Ireland). Furthermore, the 25th May 2018, saw the vote of the referendum to repeal the 8th Amendment of the Constitution in Ireland, finally giving Irish women full control over themselves. It could not have been a better year then, for the prestigious Spanish journal of Irish studies, *Estudios Irlandeses*, to publish a special issue focused on gender studies.

The editor for this issue, Dr. Melania Terrazas, from Univesidad de la Rioja, counts with a magnificent career on her back both in Irish and gender studies, which shows in the delicacy and exquisiteness in which this issue is edited. Born also from her own academic interests about why have women artists and the question of gender in Irish studies achieved more focus and relevance in recent years, *Gender Issues in Contemporary Irish Literature* counts with top academics in the area and writers, which accompanied Dr. Terrazas in her search for answers about the lives of women in relation to Irish literature through nine brilliant essays and two personal critical commentaries.

The first article that can be encountered is José Lanter's "Groping towards Morality: Feminism, AIDS, and the Spectre of Article 41 in Thomas Kilroy's *Ghosts*", which opens a section of the issue dealing with men writers. This paper focuses on the reasons behind the changes in Thomas Kilroy's adaptation of Ibsen's *Ghosts*. It is brilliantly explained the ways into which Kilroy decided to transpose the context of the Ireland of the time, the 1980's, into Ibsen's classic play by including the AIDS crisis, the power of the Catholic Church in society and even some social change that was starting to emerge in Ireland.

After this, Maureen O'Connor presents part of her research examining Tim Robinson's writing in " 'Informed Love': Human and Non-Human Bodies in Tim Robinson's Ethical Aesthetic". O'Connor sets ground in her article making obvious the relation between gender and the environment. Her expertise in eco-criticism opens new doors and windows in meaning from the work of Tim Robinson, establishing important critical debates and the legacy of Robinson as an environmentally conscious writer.

The third and fourth papers in the issue deal with the work of John Banville from two different perspectives. First, "The 'Woman' as a Frame for the Self: Femininity, Ekphrasis, and Aesthetic Selfhood in John Banville's *Eclipse*, *Shroud*, and *Ancient Light*" by Mehdi Ghassemi, approaches Banville's latest trilogy *Eclipse*, *Shroud*, and *Ancient Light* through its main characters. Ghassemi explores throughout this paper concepts such as the self, following some of Nietzsche's and Paul de Man's theories, in relation with the depiction of women as an enigma in the three books, bridging up the question of alterity and the unfinished self.

Then, Mar Asensio Aróstegui examines in "The Role of Female Characters in the Narrator's Quest for Identity in John Banville's *Eclipse*" to which extent male gaze and objects of desire play a role in the novel *Eclipse*, regarding female characters and their part as erotic objects in a male story. Subject to the male gaze, whether as mundane objects of desire or idealized *objets d'art*, this article aims at showing that women in *Eclipse* refuse to be mere erotic or artistic objects.

The last essay in the male fiction section, José Díaz Cuesta's "Representations of Masculinities in John Michael McDonagh's Satirical Film Text *The Guard*" introduces a discussion in audio-visual media through satire. The

role of the gender perspective in this article brings to the table masculinity issues and an unique insight of McDonagh's work.

The second half of the issue opens up with "Thematic Transgressions and Formal Innovations in Edna O'Brien's *The Country Girls Trilogy* and *Epilogue*" by María Amor Barros del Río, which explores O'Brien's narration as a female Bildungsroman, the censorship issue behind the story and its implications for political and social issues in Ireland both at the time of publication and nowadays.

Then Alicia Muro Llorente discusses in her essay, "The Modernization of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: Identity and Gender in Iris Murdoch's *The Black Prince*", the concept of Irishness through a careful and in-depth reading of Iris Murdoch's *The Black Prince*. Muro Llorente explains the juxtaposition of male and female views as key for the story and draws a parallelism between Julian in Murdoch's story and Shakespeare's Ophelia.

Continuing with the theatre, Edurne Goñi Alsúa looks at Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion* in "Translating Characters: Eliza Doolittle 'Rendered' into Spanish". Goñi Alsúa explains that Shaw's play has been translated into Spanish four more times in the last century, and argues that all these translations were not able to successfully express the meaning behind the complexity of the characters. She focuses on the character of Eliza in order to analyse the changes in the different versions and how this affects how the character is perceived by an audience in such different manners.

Closing the academic essays, Ekaterina Muraveva's essay, "Exploring Advertising Discourse Critique and Female Identity Problem in The Dystopian World of Louis O'Neill's *Only Ever Yours*", focuses on gender issues from a multidisciplinary perspective. Muraveva aims to question media discourses regarding femininity using an issue of *Cosmopolitan* and also Louise O'Neill's novel *Only Ever Yours* (2014). She deals with problematic issues such as female identity in contemporary Ireland, commodification, ageism and the popular culture images that are rooted in everybody's subconscious.

Finally, the issue concludes with two brilliant critical pieces by Rob Doyle and Evelyn Conlon. First, Rob Doyle reflect on gender issues and the role of men in Irish literature, giving his unapologetic view on modern masculinities. Then Evelyn Conlon thinks about the role of literature in society, paying special attention to how it helps to shape one's mind regarding gender issues and the different roles of women in Ireland for centuries.

Overall, *Gender Issues in Contemporary Irish Literature* explores Irish artistic production from new and thought-provoking perspectives. Dr. Terrazas achieves her goal by bringing together a team of experts and way-pavers, which together set the basis of future research in gender and representation in Irish studies. This issue introduces as well basic bibliography which will allow any young scholar, delving into the fantastic area of Irish studies, a point of departure in this up-to-date topic along with new approaches and themes being raised and questioned thoroughly.

Jorge Rodríguez Durán

Carmen Concilio, ed., *Imagining Ageing. Representations of Age and Ageing in Anglophone Literatures*, Bielefeld, Transcript Verlag, 2018, pp. 212. € 29,99. ISBN 978-3-8376-4426-5.

Chi ha paura della vecchiezza? Credo che non ci siano altre esperienze che abbiano prodotto tanti luoghi comuni e tante circonlocuzioni eufemistiche per descriverla e esorcizzarla. Del resto, c'è poco da metaforizzare: "vecchiezza e i mali di vecchiezza" – "age, and age's evils" per dirla con G.M. Hopkins – si basano anche su dati oggettivi, che la psiche provvede successivamente a caricare di valori simbolici. Di dati oggettivi offre un'ampia panoramica "Ageing and Neurological Disease", l'ultimo degli undici saggi di cui si compone il volume. Enrica Favaro, ricercatrice presso il Dipartimento di Scienze Mediche dell'Università di Torino, con la fredda lucidità dello scienziato, offre un quadro desolante dei limiti e dei mali indotti dall'accumulo degli anni: sarcopenia, malnutrizione, demenza, Alzheimer, Parkinson, depressione. Le parole più frequenti che ne descrivono la condizione sono *decrease, degeneration, reduction, weakening* (180-182): tutti termini, come si vede, che sottolineano la perdita di qualcosa. Compare, certo, anche un vocabolo che sembrerebbe segnalare il contrario, *increase*. Finalmente qualcosa che cresce invece di diminuire! Come no? La pressione arteriosa, il rischio vascolare, il volume della prostata. Non c'è da stare allegri! Vero è che la studiosa dedica l'ultima parte del saggio a quegli interventi che possono ridurre gli aspetti degenerativi della tarda età, che consistono prevalentemente nella prevenzione attraverso un controllo della dieta e la modificazione di abitudini o condizioni particolarmente nefaste, quali l'obesità, l'inattività fisica, il fumo. Il riavvolgersi degli anni e la scomparsa di quei segni che il tempo e le esperienze hanno lasciato sul corpo appartengono al mito e all'utopia, che semmai infine si configura piuttosto come distopia e assume i colori dell'incubo, come per esempio in *And Again?*, un romanzo del 1979 di Seán O'Faolain, neppure il migliore della sua produzione letteraria: nel testo viene data ad un uomo la possibilità di ricominciare una nuova vita a sessantacinque anni, ma percorrendola all'indietro fino ai primi vagiti di neonato: un *jeu d'esprit*, come lo definì il critico del tempo del *Sunday Telegraph*; a me parve più una fantasia grottesca, e credo che ne avesse consapevolezza lo stesso O'Faolain.

Questo di Enrica Favaro è peraltro l'unico saggio che si interessi prevalentemente degli aspetti fisiologici della vecchiaia. Tutti gli altri, con l'eccezione del primo, "Ageing in a Faraway Land" di Licia Canton, scrittrice canadese di origine italiana, che si potrebbe leggere più come una memoria che come un saggio, riflettono sulla vecchiezza attraverso il filtro della letteratura, che di questa condizione dello spirito, piuttosto che fenomeno puramente biologico, si è immediatamente impossessata, dai poemi omerici e dai lirici greci fino ai giorni nostri, e presumibilmente continuerà a sondarne i sensi profondi finché ci sarà un uomo che invecchia sulla terra. Licia Canton

racconta, più che descriverla, la vita degli anziani emigrati di prima generazione in Canada. È un racconto gentile, sfumato di tenerezza, soffuso della malinconia che nasce dalla consapevolezza della solitudine di quanti, dopo una lunga vita di impegno e assunzione di responsabilità, vedono conclusa la loro funzione sociale e vivono nell'attesa di una visita da parte dei figli, perché "They are lonely. They need to talk" (16).

"Solitudine": ecco una delle variabili sulle quali si sono innestati nel tempo i molti luoghi comuni sulla vecchiezza e stereotipi sulla figura del vecchio. Naturalmente, come avverte Carmen Concilio nell'introduzione generale, "ageing processes vary according to innumerable variables, depending on genetics, geography, social status, income, gender and education" (12), ma ci sono delle costanti che comunque sembrano inevitabili, almeno nelle culture occidentali, riferibili a questo periodo conclusivo della vita umana: lo sconforto per la decadenza del proprio corpo, la tristezza, la smemoratezza, il senso di rincrescimento per quanto non si è potuto realizzare nel corso della propria vita, il pensiero della morte imminente, la solitudine appunto, e un diffuso senso di fallimento. Tali costanti compaiono pressoché in tutti i saggi raccolti nel volume con maggiore o minore enfasi, in gran parte determinata dai testi letterari presi in considerazione, perché – non dimentichiamolo – si tratta pur sempre di esplorazioni, come ricorda Carmen Concilio nell'introduzione di "Literary Representations of Ageing in British and Anglophone Literature" (4). Come avviene per le riflessioni e le rappresentazioni della morte, la mente si rifiuta di cedere alla violenza dell'inevitabile e costruisce strutture e percorsi alternativi, che la esorcizzino o ne rendano meno penoso l'impatto: la saggezza, la bonomia, l'equilibrio, la solidarietà, l'immaginazione creativa, ma anche l'accettazione o alternativamente la sfida contro "la detestata soglia" leopardiana. Così il saggio di Paolo Bertinetti, "Shakespeare's Grandiose Old Men", che si sofferma soprattutto sulle disgrazie di Lear, Gloucester e Falstaff, si conclude con tre magnifici versi di Dylan Thomas per il vecchio padre morente: "Do not go gentle in to that good night. / Old age should burn and rave at close of day; / Rage, rage against the dying of the light" (23), versi che riportano alla mente tante poesie di W.B. Yeats in cui compaiono figure di vecchi che urlano e combattono contro l'insulto della vecchiezza. Il vecchio in Yeats è figura ossimorica e, com'è nella natura stessa dell'ossimoro, contiene in sé una forza esplosiva, che gli deriva dalla qualità stessa di possedere forze contraddittorie, che ne fanno una figura dialettica. Il vecchio può avere un corpo decrepito, ma il giovane che è al suo interno spinge con forza su quella carne, dandole luminescenza e una forza che può configurarsi come violenza, ossia una violenza che si oppone alla violenza degli anni che trascorrono e alla morte che attende dietro l'angolo.

Proprio con una riflessione sulla duplicità della figura del vecchio in Yeats si apre il bel saggio di Lucia Folena "Ageing and the Attainment of Form in *Robinson Crusoe*", che ne risolve l'apparente dissociazione in una superiore

sintesi di esperienza artistica, per la quale vita e arte, solitamente in insanabile opposizione, trovano nel vecchio, consumato nella sua veste mortale dal “sacro fuoco di Dio” (“God’s holy fire”), il loro momento di congiunzione, espresso nell’artificio dell’eternità (“Sailing to Byzantium”). Nonostante l’apertura, illuminante, sull’opera di Yeats, il saggio di Folena si concentra sul *Robinson* di Defoe, individuando nella vicenda umana del personaggio, dalla giovinezza alla età avanzata, la sequenza temporale che procede teleologicamente verso l’acquisizione di quel distacco e quella prospettiva, che permette di ordinare gli innumerevoli frammenti del passato secondo una sequenza logica che dia loro un senso, che non necessariamente avevano quando si verificavano o venivano prodotti. Anche nel saggio di Pier Paolo Piciucco sul romanzo di Julian Barnes, *The Sense of an Ending*, si presenta il dilemma di una personalità in cui convivono due nature, ma questa volta tutto si svolge in una dimensione narratologica: il narratore e il protagonista sono la stessa persona? E quanto c’è di affidabilità nell’uno o nell’altro? Il contrasto fra un “older self” (40) e il presente del narratore, in cui si riconosce solo in parte, si configura ancora una volta come dialettica fra gioventù e vecchiaia. Quest’ultima vorrebbe dare senso ad un passato disordinato e colpevole attraverso una confessione ad un agente esterno, a un’autorità, che potrebbe essere il lettore stesso, ma che in realtà dialoga con il proprio super-io, o finge di farlo. Insomma tutto un grande inganno, e non, come vorrebbe apparire, “confessional fiction”, quanto piuttosto una sua parodia.

La ricerca di senso per ciò che rischierebbe di non averne è anche il tema centrale del saggio che segue, “‘Making Sense or No Sense of Existence’: The ‘Plot’ of Thomas Kinsella’s *Late Poems* in the Light of Norberto Bobbio’s *De Senectute*” di Donatella Badin, che torna a uno dei suoi soggetti preferiti, ossia Thomas Kinsella, di cui può dirsi sia diventata la maggiore esperta in Italia, e di cui esamina i “Late Poems”. Anche per Kinsella il dilemma è sempre quello di integrare i frammenti di una lunga esperienza di vita in un insieme, in un tutto, che giustifichi l’uno e gli altri. Ciò avviene attraverso un sondaggio nella memoria individuale alla ricerca di un “bene” che giustifichi non solo la propria vita, ma la vita così come ci si presenta, che potrebbe non significare nulla senza una forma di compensazione che ne giustifichi l’insensatezza. La ricerca del bene nell’esperienza potrebbe condurre all’accettazione – ecco una qualità alla quale faranno riferimento altri saggi contenuti in questo corposo e solido volume e le opere che vi vengono esaminate e discusse – alla pace, all’intuizione che ci sia un ordine nell’universo. Ma responsabilità del poeta, per Kinsella, non è solo di trovare una struttura, un’armonia superiore alla quale fare riferimento, ma di trasmettere quanto ha scoperto alle generazioni future. Tuttavia, per quanto Kinsella cerchi di non cedere ai pensieri di distruzione e di morte, che l’età molto avanzata continua comunque a riproporgli, il suo costante riferimento allo spreco (*waste*), alla desolazione, indica che la sua ricerca è lungi dall’aver trovato un punto di stabilità, e che in

fondo la vecchiaia, per il fatto stesso di non contemplare il futuro, non viene consolata dal rivolgersi alla memoria delle cose buone del passato. Una risposta potrebbe essere quella dell'accettazione di una circolarità dell'esistenza – "Everything will happen again and again" – o, per dirla con T.S. Eliot in "East Coker", uno dei *Quattro Quartetti*, "in my beginning is my end", ma anche "in my end is my beginning". In questo potrebbe trovarsi il senso della vita, e sono l'arte – la musica e la poesia in particolare – e la contemplazione della natura che possono comunicarlo. Una conclusione quasi mistica, che mi ricorda l'escalmazione gioiosa di Juliana di Norwich: "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well".

Non sono sempre gli anni e gli acciacchi prodotti dall'età a produrre le condizioni psicologiche che si è soliti attribuire alla vecchiezza; spesso un incidente, una malattia degenerativa, un profondo disagio esistenziale possono indurre il senso di una fine imminente e nello stesso tempo, per reazione o illuminazione, determinare svolte esistenziali radicali, produrre quella che potremmo definire una palingenesi, una rigenerazione, un percorso alternativo verso quella ricerca di senso, che dia un ordine unitario ai frammenti sparsi dell'esistenza. Nel saggio di Irene De Angelis sulla raccolta poetica *Human Chain* (2010) di Seamus Heaney, la studiosa si sofferma, più che sulla vecchiezza, sulla condizione di impotenza e paralisi indotte da un improvviso attacco cardiaco, che colpì il poeta nel 2006. Nel ricordo di quei momenti drammatici, più che il dolore e l'angoscia sono l'amore, la solidarietà, la gratitudine e l'accettazione a emergere e affermarsi. Questi sentimenti colorano di nuova spiritualità anche le riflessioni sul senso da dare agli anni che trascorrono verso l'inevitabile fine, che non si configura come caduta nel nulla, come nella terribile poesia di Philip Larkin "Aubade", ma nella celebrazione di quanti – amici, intellettuali, familiari, gente comune – hanno illuminato la sua vita e reso la morte "a liberation, a passage to a higher state of being" (97).

Anche i due saggi di Carmen Concilio, uno su un racconto di Alice Munro e sulla sua trasposizione filmica della regista canadese Sarah Polley, l'altro su un'analisi comparata di un romanzo di J.M. Coetzee, *Age of Iron* e di *Mrs Dalloway* di Virginia Woolf, presentano situazioni e personaggi in cui l'età anagrafica ha minore importanza degli effetti indotti sul corpo e sulla mente da patologie come il morbo di Alzheimer, nel primo caso, e quell' "existential malaise" (142), come la definisce la stessa Concilio, di cui è permeata la vita di Mrs Dalloway e che tormenta, seppure per altre cause, quella della protagonista del romanzo di Coetzee. Sono condizioni di impedimento mentale e psicologico che rinforzano – se ce ne fosse bisogno – l'idea della vecchiezza come riduzione della propria autonomia, fisica e mentale. Sia nel primo che nel secondo saggio, peraltro, Carmen Concilio evidenzia possibilità di riscatto, di superamento di una condizione, che se tende a distruggere l'identità personale di chi ne è affetto, ha anche effetti devastanti sulla socialità, inducendo isolamento e solitudine, due dei mali tradizionalmente associati all'età

avanzata: il racconto di Alice Munro crea un personaggio femminile, quello di Fiona, che si avvia volontariamente e serenamente verso la clinica privata che l'accoglierà per gli ultimi giorni della sua vita, nel momento in cui viene a sapere di essere affetta dall'Alzheimer. Nella gratitudine per chi le è stato vicino e nella comprensione per chi, dopo la sua scomparsa, potrà ricostruire quella vita che a lei è stata negata, il narratore intravede una risposta di dignità a quella condizione – figlia di una malattia a torto o a ragione associata alla vecchiaia – che sembra avergliela negata. Nel secondo saggio, i due romanzi ci pongono di fronte ad altrettanti protagonisti, capaci di scelte in grado di smentire l'equivalenza automatica fra degenerazione fisica e declino morale.

Due saggi, quelli di Blossom Fondo, che insegna *postcolonial studies* all'Università di Maroua in Camerun, e quello di Paola Della Valle, ricercatrice specializzata anche lei in studi postcoloniali particolarmente per quanto riguarda la letteratura Maori in Nuova Zelanda, rovesciano completamente la prospettiva "Western centric" (169) da cui di solito si legge la vicenda della tarda età. L'invecchiamento e i suoi problemi, come osserva Fondo, sono il "missing theme" (124) degli studi post-coloniali ovvero vi è assente l'ottica che contrappone vecchiaia/negatività a giovinezza/positività. Il romanzo di Coetzee, *Iron Age*, già oggetto di analisi in un saggio di Carmen Concilio, è letto dalla studiosa camerunense da un punto di vista diverso, ossia da quello della sua struttura formale, che affidando gli stati psicologici cangianti di una persona alla fine della sua vita allo stile epistolare, non vi sovraimpone quella prospettiva "occidentale" che inevitabilmente finirebbe per emergere attraverso il tramite di un narratore. Lo stile epistolare permette al lettore di seguire il percorso psicologico che conduce la protagonista a riconsiderare i valori, ovvero disvalori, che hanno orientato le sue scelte di vita nel paese sudafricano afflitto da razzismo e apartheid, per giungere alla condanna della società coloniale e al riconoscimento di una comune umanità, in cui ogni individuo ha diritto al rispetto della propria dignità indipendentemente da categorie discriminanti come il sesso e il colore della pelle.

Nella minoranza indigena Maori di Aotearoa, Nuova Zelanda, vecchiaia e invecchiamento sono considerati in modo totalmente diverso. Per gli scrittori Maori gli anziani sono spesso considerati come i tesori (*taonga*) della comunità. Esiste uno scambio costante e produttivo fra il vecchio – che continua a fornire aiuti anche concreti alla famiglia, sia quella nucleare, sia quella allargata, oltre che essere custode dei valori culturali sui quali la comunità si regge – e la comunità stessa, che garantisce al vecchio protezione e cure, affetto e considerazione.

"A truly civilized society", scrive Della Valle citando Martha Nussbaum, "is one that guarantees the rights of the 'weaker' categories" (175), una riflessione che richiama le parole con cui Licia Canton conclude il suo saggio-narrazione: "When I think of the elderly, I think of their vulnerability. But I also think of their wisdom and experience, and how much we could learn

from them if we took the time to do so” (14). Già, perché non lo troviamo questo tempo?

Giuseppe Serpillo

Michela Marroni, *Dialoghi traduttologici. Il testo letterario e la lingua inglese*, Chieti, Solfanelli, 2018, pp. 203. € 15. ISBN 978-88-3305-056-0.

Il discorso sulla traduzione ha una lunga storia, in quanto l'attività del tradurre è parte integrante della necessità umana di comunicare e conoscere, ma allo stesso tempo è anche una storia ancora tutta da scrivere, poiché si tratta di un campo in cui teoria e pratica sempre s'incontrano, favorendo la riflessione e la ricerca. Partendo da un'idea di traduzione come interdisciplina, per l'ampiezza delle tematiche affrontate e per il numero di discipline coinvolte, *Dialoghi traduttologici* di Michela Marroni s'inserisce nel dibattito critico considerando approcci teorici diversi e numerosi esempi che mettono in luce sia l'importanza cruciale della traduzione letteraria nelle dinamiche culturali, sia il ruolo del traduttore come figura fondamentale in quella che Lotman chiama “semiosfera”.

La monografia presenta un articolato capitolo introduttivo seguito da quattro saggi, due incentrati su Sarah Austin e George Eliot traduttrici e due sullo studio comparativo di diverse versioni italiane di *Mansfield Park* e *Ulysses*. Muovendosi tra riflessioni teoriche e metodologiche, *Dialoghi Traduttologici* è un libro ricco di stimoli, non solo per lo specialista della materia. L'autrice pone al centro della sua indagine la traduzione dei classici, in quanto essa sfrutta pienamente tutta la ricchezza del linguaggio letterario: una peculiare complessità che chiama in causa le competenze del traduttore, fornendo così l'occasione per ridiscuterne il ruolo, il suo rapporto con il mercato editoriale, la sua visibilità e dignità.

È la complessità a caratterizzare in primo luogo il lavoro traduttologico, come appare evidente nel primo capitolo del libro, dedicato appunto alle traduzioni e ai traduttori. La polisemia e la multilivellarità del testo letterario pongono il traduttore di fronte ad una vera e propria sfida, che concretamente si configura nei termini di un percorso decisionale non privo di rischi, nel quale bisognerà considerare “una oggettiva impossibilità di transcodificazione” (19) o l'eventualità di perdere qualcosa. Un esempio è dato dal romanzo *Mary Barton* di Elizabeth Gaskell, in cui la variante dialettale del Lancashire, che distingue i personaggi appartenenti alla classe operaia, impone un inevitabile addomesticamento. Talora la perdita semantica dal punto di vista filologico e storico-culturale si realizza sin dallo stesso titolo dell'opera, come nel caso dell'eliotiano *Middlemarch* o di *Almayer's Folly* di Conrad.

Da un'altra prospettiva, se si mette da parte quello che Susan Bassnett definisce “the language of ‘loss’”, i grandi capolavori della letteratura offrono

al traduttore l'occasione di dispiegare le sue competenze e la sua creatività. Ciò è tanto più evidente in testi densi di rimandi letterari come quelli joyciani, in cui il traduttore non potrà esimersi in una certa misura dal re-inventare la lingua. Un caso esemplare è quello dalla traduzione di *Finnegans Wake*, per la quale, scrivono Enrico Terrinoni e Fabio Pedone nella "Nota dei traduttori", si rende necessaria una vera e propria "riesecuzione musicale", che dà luogo a significati nuovi e imprevisi, o *bonus meanings* (25) nel testo di arrivo.

Il dialogo tra testo di partenza e testi di arrivo costituisce il principale filo conduttore che percorre i vari saggi raccolti nel volume: Marroni sottolinea l'importanza della traduzione in senso dialogico, in quanto essa stabilisce un confronto non soltanto tra autore, traduttore e rispettive culture, ma anche tra traduzioni di un medesimo testo, in senso diacronico. Per il traduttore letterario si prospetta pertanto una duplice sfida, poiché alla complessità retorico-linguistica e storico-filologica dell'originale si aggiunge una genealogia traduttiva con la quale non potrà non fare i conti: una "dialettica diacronica che – dal punto di vista della ricerca letteraria – non può non significare un arricchimento della cultura di arrivo e, nel contempo, una crescita della prospettiva critico-filologica intorno a un autore, e comunque un movimento intorno al canone letterario" (36).

Ogni nuova traduzione in qualche modo riscrive l'originale, espandendone i significati, in un processo che non è mai concluso, ma che piuttosto appare come una cristallizzazione momentanea, secondo l'efficace immagine di Friedmar Apel richiamata da Marroni per evocare le idee di incompletezza e imperfezione come cifre caratterizzanti la traduzione. Non esiste una versione perfetta, né una che possa pretendere di aver esaurito tutte le potenzialità dell'originale; anzi, esso si disvela in un certo senso solo attraverso le sue traduzioni, come ben sottolinea l'autrice citando Christian Kohloss: "Something of what and how the original significsis first revealed in the moment of translation and not a single moment before" (47).

Particolarmente significativo da questa angolazione è il caso delle traduzioni italiane di *Ulysses*, cui è dedicato interamente il capitolo quinto. Partendo da un noto brano del romanzo *The Hours* di Michael Cunningham, in cui è evidente il richiamo all'incipit joyciano, l'autrice mostra come l'intertestualità possa andare del tutto perduta in un'altra lingua per la disattenzione del traduttore al quale sembrano sfuggire tanto le risonanze letterarie quanto le tensioni fondamentali che strutturano il testo, con una conseguente "riduzione dell'impatto espressivo dell'intero episodio" (152). Si passa quindi ad analizzare l'incipit di *Ulysses*, mettendo a confronto tre versioni italiane del romanzo: quella mondadoriana a cura di Giulio De Angelis (1988), l'edizione Newton-Compton con la traduzione di Enrico Terrinoni (2012) e l'edizione Einaudi a firma di Gianni Celati (2013). L'autrice dà risalto ai diversi approcci traduttologici attraverso un'analisi attenta delle scelte dei traduttori, dai singoli lessemi e sintagmi ai richiami letterari. Scelte che, benché talora

possano apparire discutibili, nel contempo rivelano la “magica operosità”(171) dell’originale e il ruolo cruciale delle traduzioni nell’alimentare il dibattito attorno all’opera joyciana.

L’esempio delle prime parole dell’incipit, “stately, plump” è illuminante: se Terrinoni coglie il rimando shakespeariano e dà conto della scelta compiuta nella sua traduzione (“statuario, il pingue”), l’allusività scompare nella versione di Celati, che peraltro, come Marroni non manca di osservare, lascia perplessi anche sotto altri punti di vista. Il traduttore di Einaudi, nel complesso, sembra evitare di confrontarsi con “il rompicapo ermeneutico” (164) creato da Joyce, preferendo piuttosto un confronto con l’antecedente mondadoriano di De Angelis. Ad ogni modo, tutte le traduzioni contribuiscono, in un’ottica dialogica, alla vitalità dell’originale che si esprime proprio nel dialogo con le molteplici riscritture. In tale prospettiva, il confronto tra le diverse versioni del famoso monologo di Molly Bloom proposto dall’autrice è estremamente significativo. “Penelope” costituisce un episodio chiave del libro, che in Italia è apparso anche in una pubblicazione a sé stante, nel 1978 nella collana Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, a cura di Giulio De Angelis. Si tratta di “una vera e propria sfida”, scrive Marroni, “per qualsiasi joycista” (164), nella quale il traduttore mette in gioco la sua inventiva e un insieme di competenze filologico-letterarie, come ben spiega Enrico Terrinoni nell’apparato critico del suo *Ulisse*, illustrando puntualmente le scelte operate nella resa del monologo, nel tentativo di “rincorrere la velocità non scritta del pensiero”(169).

Molte volte nel corso del libro Marroni fa riferimento alle “Note del Traduttore”: esse chiariscono il *modus operandi* del traduttore, mostrandone il ruolo di mediatore e la dignità di scrittore che ri-crea il testo, senza temere la sfida della complessità. In particolare, affrontando la complessità del testo poetico, di fronte al quale ogni traduzione, come già notava George Eliot, pare inadeguata, il traduttore è chiamato a superare l’idea di sacralità dell’originale o, nei termini di Mario Praz, “la pretesa di mettersi alla pari con la cetra dell’autore imitato” (18). Nel confronto con la poesia, e più in generale con i classici della letteratura, si misura lo spessore culturale del traduttore, da intendersi non soltanto come conoscenze filologico-linguistiche, ma anche un “intreccio di passione e vocazione, di piacere e impegno totalizzante” (69). Tutto ciò si scontra con le leggi del mercato editoriale, in cui il ruolo del traduttore non è sempre debitamente riconosciuto e in cui il lettore è considerato anzitutto un potenziale acquirente. Di qui, la tendenza a privilegiare la scorrevolezza e la linearità del testo o, detto diversamente, l’addomesticamento dell’originale ai fini di una maggiore fruibilità commerciale. A tale forzata *domestication*, che in alcuni casi diventa manipolazione del testo di partenza, si oppongono le scelte di tanti traduttori che si dedicano con grande competenza al proprio lavoro, mettendo al primo posto la fedeltà all’originale senza facili semplificazioni e senza timore di correre rischi, poiché inevita-

bilmente “Tradurre è un azzardo”, come scrive in una *Nota* Dario Calimani, traduttore di W.B. Yeats.

Pur confermando che il traduttore, di fatto, non ha bisogno di porsi questioni epistemologiche per svolgere correttamente il proprio compito – e spesso per esigenze contrattuali non ne avrebbe neppure il tempo –, Marroni molto opportunamente ricorda che la connessione tra teoria e prassi nella traduzione risulta inevitabile e si dimostra un'esigenza sentita dagli stessi traduttori. Se è vero che alcuni sembrano del tutto disinteressati alla teoria, è anche vero che tanti adottano “un approccio più consapevole e impegnato, anche sul versante della ricerca linguistico-filologica e culturologica” (30). In risposta alla provocatoria soluzione di Stefano Manferlotti, ovvero l'invito a fare a meno delle traduzioni per apprezzare l'autentico valore dei classici, l'autrice ribadisce invece che un mondo senza traduttori sarebbe impossibile, giacché essi paradossalmente sono nati prima dei testi da tradurre e restano figure cardine nel grande palcoscenico della cultura.

Dopo la complessità, un altro paradigma ricorrente riferito alla traduzione letteraria è il paradosso. Tra i gradi di “paradossalità” Marroni colloca anche l'auto-traduzione, ricordando tra gli altri l'esempio di Samuel Beckett che traduce *En attendant Godot* e *Fin de Partie* dal francese, rendendosi conto dell'impossibilità di rendere parola per parola il suo stesso testo, soprattutto per questioni di ordine culturale (35). Il paradosso si evidenzia in maniera particolare nello status del traduttore autore e non-autore, nei termini posti con chiarezza da Tim Parks nel suo articolo “I traduttori sono autori?” (*Il Sole 24 Ore*, 17 dicembre 2017); vale a dire, il traduttore possiede o no una creatività autoriale? La risposta del critico emerge dal confronto tra tre diverse versioni italiane di *Memorie dal Sottosuolo* di Dostoevskij, che mostrano, ciascuna con le sue sfumature, lo stile dell'autore. Conclude perciò Parks che più traduzioni si hanno e meglio conosciamo Dostoevskij.

Sulla stessa linea si pone lo studio comparativo proposto nel secondo capitolo, incentrato sulle traduzioni di *Mansfield Park*. L'autrice si sofferma su una serie di segmenti testuali tratti dal romanzo austeniano, considerando quattro versioni italiane – oltre ad una recente versione online – analizzate secondo il binomio *overtranslation* vs. *undertranslation*. Analogamente a quanto visto per *Ulysses*, le traduzioni di Jane Austen testimoniano le potenzialità inesauribili dell'originale, ricordando che è impossibile approdare ad una traduzione definitiva di un grande classico e che l'enigma del tradurre sta proprio “nella differenza che mai si lascia colmare” (49).

Pur non adottando una prospettiva esplicitamente di *gender*, Marroni dà ampio risalto alle donne, soffermandosi sulle figure di due intellettuali dell'Ottocento nella loro veste di traduttrici, Sarah Austin e George Eliot, per concludere con il personaggio di Molly Bloom, “che tutte le donne sussume” (182). La scelta di un'ottica femminile non è certamente casuale, come la stessa studiosa conferma al termine della monografia: “il contributo delle

donne è stato insostituibile, non solo perché come traduttrici hanno configurato un punto di vista altro [...], ma anche perché il loro portato trasgressivo conteneva in sé un valore progressivo: un valore di cambiamento. Le donne traduttrici hanno aperto nuovi orizzonti” (*ibidem*).

D’altro canto, proprio il cambiamento e l’apertura di nuovi orizzonti sono gli aspetti caratterizzanti del dialogo traduttologico e l’imperfezione è l’orizzonte in cui opera il traduttore. Nell’insidioso viaggio della traduzione letteraria, mai definitivamente concluso, il volume di Marroni suggerisce nuovi spunti di riflessione e ricerca, offrendo un contributo utile e interessante non solo per gli specialisti del settore.

Maria Luigia Di Nisio

