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*This issue is dedicated to the  
loving memory of Rosangela Barone  
(1939-2023).*





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## Rosangela, Anam Cara

*Giovanna Tallone, Melita Cataldi*

Independent scholar (<[giovanna.tallone@alice.it](mailto:giovanna.tallone@alice.it)>),  
Università di Torino (<[melita.cataldi@unito.it](mailto:melita.cataldi@unito.it)>)

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Rosangela Barone in una foto di Melita Cataldi

“Anam cara” è l’espressione che nel mondo celtico indica l’anima amica. E Rosangela Barone è stata per tante persone una vera anima amica in senso lato, per studiosi e studenti, per chi l’ha incontrata nel proprio percorso professionale e personale, per chi ha avuto modo di conoscere il suo entusiasmo, la sua instancabile dedizione allo studio e alla cultura, la sua generosità intellettuale, il suo sorriso. Con la sua scomparsa il mondo degli studi irlandesi ha perso una grande figura che è sempre riuscita a creare ponti tra persone, paesi e culture.

La sua ultima apparizione pubblica è probabilmente stata nel dicembre 2022, quando al liceo Majorana-Laterza di Putignano ha presentato nell’ambito del progetto Erasmusplus la nuova edizione della sua versione italiana di *Tagann Godot, Arriva Godot*, di Alan Titley, “tragicommedia in due atti”, da lei curata e tradotta dal gaelico irlandese, rinnovando e aggiornando una versione precedente del 1999. Far entrare quest’opera in una scuola è significativo di tutto ciò che è stata Rosangela Barone. Se diversi docenti del Liceo erano stati suoi studenti,

gli attuali studenti hanno avuto modo di avvicinarsi a una grande personalità, il cui punto di forza è sempre stata la ricerca, non fine a sé stessa, ma la ricerca di quanto nell'opera letteraria o nell'opera d'arte sia funzione dell'anima, dell'umano. Per Rosangela Barone la ricerca non era privata e personale, ma era fatta per essere condivisa.

Attenta ai grandi come ai piccoli, aveva lo stesso tratto carismatico, aperto e cordiale con rappresentanti diplomatici così come con il giovane studente in cui le capitava di imbattersi. Il lavoro incessante, quasi frenetico e febbrile, svolto nel corso dei lunghi anni trascorsi a Dublino come Direttrice dell'Istituto Italiano di Cultura ha risvolti poliedrici. Ha diffuso la lingua e la cultura italiana, organizzando eventi che spaziavano dall'ambito linguistico e letterario a quello musicale e alle arti visive, accogliendo nella sua "casa" dell'Istituto in Fitzwilliam Square irlandesi interessati all'Italia e italiani residenti in Irlanda o che si trovavano per caso a passare per Dublino. Per tutti aveva una parola affabile, un minuto (o molti minuti) da dedicare, con semplicità e l'impagabile sorriso. E in modo unico e irripetibile riusciva a conciliare integrità morale e integrità nel lavoro con un grande senso dell'umorismo.

La sua cultura era sterminata, i suoi interessi variegati e versatili, era un'autentica "esplosiva" di mondi e culture, mantenendo tuttavia un tocco leggero ed un basso profilo, senza far pesare quell'esplosione di attività accademiche e culturali che la vedevano protagonista.

Il suo libro sui racconti di Thomas Hardy risale al 1980, per essere poi seguito da una vastità di pubblicazioni, la maggior parte di carattere irlandese. La sua attenzione si è rivolta a James Clarence Mangan, a Eva Gore Booth con *The Oak Tree and the Olive Tree. The True Dream of Eva Gore Booth* (1991), a Sean O'Faolain, ai drammaturghi Tom Murphy, Brian Friel e naturalmente Samuel Beckett. A Brian Friel ha dedicato un volumetto sulla sua opera teatrale del 1990, *Marconi: La 'Grande Magia' in Dancing at Lughnasa di Brian Friel*, e la sua passione per il teatro che ha coinvolto i suoi studenti in vari "theatre workshops" si è estesa alla figura di Lady Augusta Gregory, pubblicando *Il teatro povero di Lady Gregory* (2011) e *La mela d'oro. Fiaba teatrale per i ragazzi di Kiltartan* (2005).

Nella sua ricerca di qualcosa di nuovo e nascosto, estende la sua attenzione per i "piccoli" ad una grande "piccola", Dora Murphy, di cui traduce in italiano la raccolta *The Watched' and Other Stories* con il titolo *Sotto gli occhi di uno sbirro*. Quando il volume esce nel 1998, l'Autrice è quasi centenaria – nata nel 1902, sopravvive a Frank O'Connor, Sean O'Faolain e Liam O'Flaherty; la sua produzione è limitata a una decina di racconti che Rosangela Barone decide di togliere dall'angolo nascosto in cui si trova e di portare all'attenzione del pubblico italiano con la sua traduzione e dettagliata introduzione.

Il profondo amore per la poesia irlandese la spinge a confrontarsi con l'opera di grandi, a cominciare da Seamus Heaney, a cui la lega una forte amicizia. La sua traduzione del sonetto "Gaeltacht" con il titolo "L'area di lingua gaelica" è il suo regalo a Heaney per il suo settantaduesimo compleanno, il cui testo è riproposto nel numero del 2021 di *Studi irlandesi. A Journal of Irish Studies*. In modo analogo, si occupa di Brendan Kennelly nel volume collettaneo *Brendan Kennelly: The Essential*, di cui traduce – tra le altre – la poesia "Bread", imperniata su un episodio di vita personale e quotidiana.

Ma è forse per l'amore per la lingua irlandese che emerge la straordinarietà del quotidiano di Rosangela Barone. Appassionatasi a questa lingua minoritaria, consapevole del rischio della scomparsa di una lingua che porterebbe alla scomparsa di una cultura, dedica il suo tempo ad uno studio costante e incessante nel corso degli anni trascorsi a Dublino e oltre, decidendo di cimentarsi con la traduzione in italiano. La raccolta di poeti che scrivono in irlandese da lei curata nel 1994, *Bollirà la rugiada*, è accompagnata nel corso degli anni da altre traduzioni in numerose raccolte in cui compare come autrice o co-curatrice. Dedica il suo lavoro a Caitlín

Maud, Pearse Hutchinson, Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin, Pádraig Ó Snodaigh, di cui traduce anche il racconto *Len*. In *Dán is Scór/Venti e una poesia*, del 1998, spazia da versi di anonimi del VII, VIII e IX secolo a composizioni di poeti contemporanei, da Seán Ó Riordáin, a Máirtín Ó Direáin, Máire Mhac an tSaoi, Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill.

Una sfida è la traduzione di *Aifreann na Marbh, Messa dei Defunti* (2004), di Eoghan Ó Tuarisc, l'autore che come lei scopre la ricchezza della lingua irlandese e ad essa decide di dedicare la sua opera. Attratta dal lavoro presentato dallo studioso irlandese Micheal MacCraith al convegno ACIS/CAIS di Galway nel 1992, Rosangela Barone si tuffa letteralmente nella scoperta di Eoghan Ó Tuarisc, di cui recensisce la raccolta *Lux Aeterna* (che contiene *Aifreann na Marbh*) per *Poetry Ireland Review*. Il titolo che sceglie per la recensione, *Lá gréine na blaisféime*, "blasfemo giorno di sole", rimanda alla *Messa dei Defunti* ispirata a Ó Tuarisc dalla bomba di Hiroshima.

La sua dedizione e il suo lavoro sulla lingua irlandese e sulla traduzione la porteranno ad essere insignita della laurea honoris causa in Studi Celtici presso l'Università di Galway, unica italiana nella storia a ricevere questo titolo.

Amante della parola scritta, preferiva comunicare sulla carta piuttosto che usare i mezzi di comunicazione e messaggistica oggi più in uso. La sua grafia minuta era caratteristica, avrebbe potuto scrivere una lettera nello spazio di un francobollo.

Rosangela Barone è stata una figura unica e speciale per l'universo degli studi irlandesi e significativa per la rivista *Studi irlandesi. A Journal of Irish Studies*. Vorremmo ricordarla con gli ultimi versi di *Aifreann na Marbh*, che si conclude senza un punto fermo, quasi a segnalare la continuità della sua presenza:

Tagann suaimhneas anama  
San Fhocal ag broinneadh ó chroína dorchachta  
Agus filleann an fhilíocht ar an bhfoinse

Viene il riposo dell'anima  
nella Parola che sgorga dal cuore di tenebra  
e la poesia ritorna alla fonte





A Global Ireland:  
New Audiences and New Alliances

edited by  
Rania Mohamed Rafik Abdel Fattah Khalil





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## A Global Ireland: New Audiences and New Alliances

edited by  
Rania Mohamed Rafik Abdel Fattah Khalil

### Introduction

*Rania Mohamed Rafik Abdel Fattah Khalil*  
The British University in Egypt (<[rania.khalil@bue.edu.eg](mailto:rania.khalil@bue.edu.eg)>)

Strengthening presence through the promotion of Irish heritage, literature, the arts, and culture beyond Europe is a challenging endeavour. Ireland has recently taken an initiative to do just that. The impact of the Global Ireland 2025 initiative can be felt in the efforts invested to strengthen Irish presence in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as in other parts of the world. As an academic from Egypt specialising in Irish literature, these efforts have supported my work and have allowed me to explore new pathways to promote Irish studies in ways that move beyond the traditional. Establishing the Research Centre for Irish Studies (RCIS) at The British University in Egypt is proof that Ireland is expanding beyond the borders of Europe. Decentring the Irish world has increased the visibility of Ireland in the region and has raised awareness about the importance of Irish studies as a discipline. New audiences from near and far are today attracted to the interdisciplinarity of Irish studies. The expansion prompts new generations to investigate the constituents of the field and to ask the inevitable question: what is there more to learn about Ireland beyond Joyce and Yeats?

By diversifying its efforts externally, Ireland has been able to better position itself to reaffirm its identity and promote Irishness in a new light. This monograph of which I am a guest editor, is further proof that Ireland and interest in Irish studies have finally been freed from the petrification by which they were bound in the past. Irish studies, is now a multifaceted academic field that is conceptualised internationally in a variety of ways as the contributors to this monograph amply testify. Decentring Irish studies and globalising the discipline keep it in an open flux of deconstruction, which in turn engages new audiences in debates around previously encountered authors commonly known as

part of the British literary canon. New and recent critical trends within the field have emerged as a result of decentring the Irish world and Irish studies in geographical spheres that transcend the national context bringing the local, regional and the global into critical propinquity.



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## Yeats as a Folklorist: *The Celtic Twilight* and Irish Folklore

Vito Carrassi

Independent Scholar (<[vito1976@interfree.it](mailto:vito1976@interfree.it)>)

### *Abstract:*

W.B. Yeats was one of the greatest Irish poets and dramatist, but he also had a key role in Irish folklore. What is more, most of his works are significant and original examples of a fruitful “encounter” between folklore and literature. The young Yeats was directly concerned with the collection and the publication of folklore. Initially he worked as an editor (*Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* [1888], *Irish Fairy Tales* [1892]), drawing his material from authors who had collected the oral Irish tradition throughout the nineteenth century; yet his approach was very critical, and was meant to fashion his personal idea of Ireland’s folklore. With *The Celtic Twilight* (1893), Yeats became a noticeable folklorist, who addressed his material according to views and goals that were quite distant from the objective and detached methods of the ethnographic research of his times. Hence, are we legitimized to regard Yeats as a folklorist, despite his imaginative and “creative” use of folklore? How can his methodology be evaluated?

*Keywords:* Fieldwork, Folklore, Oral Tradition, Storytelling, W.B. Yeats

According to *Greenwood Encyclopedia* “ ‘Folklore’ refers to the academic study of folklore, also known as folkloristics, as well as to certain types of expressive culture” (Lau 2008, 359). Hence, folklore is meant both as a specific form of culture and as the discipline devoted to its study<sup>1</sup>. Coined by William Thoms in 1846, this term literally denotes “ ‘the lore of the people’ ”, and it includes “ ‘the manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs, etc., of the olden times’ ” (Lau 2008, 359; see also Ó Giolláin 2000, 46-48). However, Lau clarifies that “to date, there has been no consensus as to how ‘folklore’ should be defined” (2008, 359)<sup>2</sup>. On the other

<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive history of the concept and methodology of folklore see Dundes 1999.

<sup>2</sup> For a critical and postmodernist discussion about folklore – an approach perhaps more fitting for understanding Yeats as a folklorist – see, for instance,

hand, if one traces back the roots of folklore as an academic discipline in the Romantic era, and especially in J.G. Herder's theories about *das Volk* (2020), a key role in defining its nature and function necessarily pertains to its social and subjective component – the “folk” (Dundes 1980) –, namely, the lower classes of society. These are seen as the main bearers of the “lore”, which is intended as a traditional, alternative, usually underestimated and overlooked culture – at least until the Romantic era – compared to the modern, learned, official culture of the elites and ruling classes. Accordingly, folklore can be seen as a specific cultural heritage, that establishes a sort of subaltern and dialectical pole<sup>3</sup> within the broader cultural heritage making up a nation or a national identity under construction<sup>4</sup>. Since the Romantic period, this cultural heritage has been seen, as something both so precious – notably from a nationalist perspective (cf. Ó Giolláin 2000, 63-93; Anttonen 2005, 79-94) – and precarious – as it was handed down by oral tradition – to require learned people entrusted with discovering, collecting and adequately enhancing it. These people would be called folklorists, that is, students of folklore, although a number of them were artists, writers, intellectuals, even politicians who worked *also* as folklorists, especially in the nineteenth century. In other words, folklore was – and in part it still is – often practiced and used as a complementary and ideologically oriented subject matter (Anttonen 2005, 95-113).

Based upon these theoretical premises, what kind of relationship, if any, can be recognized between folklore as a (scientific) discipline and a writer like W.B. Yeats? Is there anything connecting him to the study of folklore, or more precisely, the study of the oral traditions of his country? In a sense, W.B. Yeats was not a folklorist, or better, his work as a researcher, collector and editor of Irish folklore was not exactly what we would expect from a folklorist. Björn Sundmark stresses how some prominent folklorists, such as Andrew Lang and Alfred Nutt, criticized Yeats and his *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* for their lack of scientificity and objectivity and for preferring a subjective aestheticism (2006, 102). In Kevin Danaher's opinion, “it is hard to find anything Irish in Mr. Yeats, or anything of the ordinary people with whom, indeed, he had sympathy, but whom he never understood” (Dundes 1999, 50). According to Neil Grobman:

[...] his own activities in the field [of folklore] had artistic creation, not scientific scholarship or authenticity, as their main goal. [...] From a modern point of view [...] the greatest weakness in Yeats' collecting was the relative absence of ethnographic detail. Yeats rarely identified the names of informants<sup>5</sup> or localities from which he had gathered material, and rarely gave us a feeling for the lives of his informants, the kinds of situations in which stories are told, or the different ways individuals used traditional material. (1974, 117-118)

Clemente, Mugnaini 2001, in particular R. Schenda's contribution (73-88), R. Bauman (99-109), H. Bausinger (145-158), K. Köstlin (167-186). See also Anttonen 2005; Bausinger 2008.

<sup>3</sup> As famously stated by Antonio Gramsci, folklore should be studied as a “ ‘concept of the world and life’ largely implied in defined layers of the society, in contraposition [...] to the ‘official’ world concepts (or, in a larger sense, of the cultured parts of historically defined societies) which have happened through the history” (1950, 215; unless otherwise stated all translations are mine).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Ó Giolláin: “ ‘Folk’ was a projection of an idealized peasant society onto the nation. [...] The opposition of tradition to modernity led to the Romantic idea of the ‘folk’, contrasted to cosmopolitan groups and with the modern urban proletariat in national society” (2000, 58-59).

<sup>5</sup> As regards this lack of data about informants, Björn Sundmark argues: “Yeats has been criticised by earlier folklorists, Richard Dorson, for example, for not always identifying his informants, but the reason is that as a believer himself, or at any rate as someone with great respect for fairy belief (and their believers), Yeats considered it harmful to reveal the true names of his informants” (2006, 104).

And yet, in a different sense, Yeats was indeed a folklorist, or better, his work in the field of folklore had a key, invaluable impact on the history of Irish folklore, as well as on the rise and the dissemination of folklore in Irish society, culture, and above all literature – as exemplified by his contribution to the Irish Literary Revival (O'Connor 1999; Mathews 2003). Diarmuid Ó Giolláin includes Yeats among the “Irish Pioneers” of folklore, together with T.C. Croker, D. Hyde, Lady Gregory and J.M. Synge (2000, 104-106). Grobman himself notes that “W.B. Yeats’ interest in folklore played an important part in the development of folklore studies in Ireland. As a man of great personal energy and charisma, he was certainly capable of stimulating and supporting others to carry out systematic folklore research” (1974, 117).

Surely, Yeats did not tackle with the issue of Irish folklore through an objective, scientific perspective. His views and purposes were definitely at odds with those of a (theoretically) faithful and neutral ethnographic account<sup>6</sup>. First of all, he was a poet, an artist, an occultist, and a cultural activist; as such, he addressed his own field of research. On the other hand, and as argued by John W. Foster: “The scientific method was more offensive to Yeats than literary appropriation, perhaps because that method suggested to him a skepticism, at best neutrality, towards supernaturalism. Belief and poetry were to Yeats inseparable [...]” (1987, 208).

It could be argued that Yeats was a folklorist *de facto*, more than a folklorist *de iure*. In other words, his approach to Irish folklore was quite different from that of a *disinterested* and *orthodox* scholar of folklore, due to cultural, literary, and political reasons. However, this divergence from a positivist and objective paradigm makes his ideas and practices so interesting from an epistemological and methodological point of view. I would argue that it allows us to critically and productively review our assumptions about what folklore is and how a folklorist should deal with it and its bearers. Through his empathetic proximity – actual or ideal – to the world of peasants and their traditions, along with his more or less subjective and creative editing and use of Irish folklore, Yeats makes us reflect on the relationships a folklorist should have with his/her informants and their living context, as well as on the distance from which he/she should observe the folk traditions. These are usually collected to be *merely* recorded and preserved within learned books or institutional archives, where they are turned into fixed and unalterable items, which are then classified according to the paradigms of their “external discoverers” (Honko 2003 [1991], 34), thus ceasing to exist as performable and variable events framed in a living context<sup>7</sup>. As argued in an earlier work, from a “connected” or “re-connected” thing, folklore is made an “isolated” one (Carrassi 2017, 7).

However, what if a folklorist would look upon his material as an event to perform anew, rather than as an item to classify and to archive? What if he/she would consider that material not just as something *definitive* to be collected and taken away from its context in its *authentic* and *untouched* form, but rather as something *provisional* to be collected and, nonetheless, liable to be *subjectively* appropriated and potentially modified, perhaps through a *creative* blending of his/her own beliefs, ideas, stories with those found on the field? In other words, what kind of approach would be more suitable and useful to achieve a full and truthful understanding

<sup>6</sup> According to Nitai Saha: “Yeats despised traditional ethnographic practice and is thus better classified as a mystic rather than as a folklorist” (2014, 102). On the other hand, Yeats regarded folklore as a precious source of mysticism, of supernatural figures, events and beliefs, therefore he contended that “the folklorist should not be alone in interpreting peasant supernatural beliefs, but that the occultist was as well qualified to do so”; in his opinion, “the occult was ‘an enlargement of the folklore of the villages’ ” (Ó Giolláin 2000, 104).

<sup>7</sup> As pointed out by Mary H. Thuente: “[Yeats] railed against scientific folk-lore which treated what he considered living things as specimens not to be felt or allowed to penetrate the present” (1981, 71).



of the historical nature and cultural function of folklore, not simply of its incidental forms and verbatim expressions? These are burning issues for folklore scholars, and for a folklorist *sui generis* as the young Yeats was. As noted by Mary H. Thuente:

Yeats's own work as a folklorist illustrates [...] conflict in Irish folklore between *scholarly accuracy and poetic imagination*. His *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* [...] reflects his search for an *imaginative yet authentic depiction* of Irish folklore which avoided the extremes of a ponderous scientific air on the one hand, and a bogus stage-Irish charm on the other. (1977, 71, my emphasis)

“Scholarly accuracy” vs. “poetic imagination”, “authentic vs. imaginative”: between these opposite poles Yeats was one of the first intellectuals who looked for a sort of liminal (maybe utopian) middle-ground, where two different perspectives on folklore (scholarly and poetic) and two different ways of collecting, archiving and using it (authenticity<sup>8</sup> and (re)creativity) may coexist (Dundes 1999, 47).

As an editor of two major folk narrative anthologies early in his career – *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (1888) and *Irish Fairy Tales* (1892) – Yeats provided a critical overview of the main Irish collectors and collections of nineteenth century, while trying to find his own way and to sketch his own idea of folklore<sup>9</sup>. Having “decided to make himself an ‘Irish’ writer” (Thuente 1977, 64), he turned to Irish folklore, thus discovering “a rich, eclectic literary tradition which he could and did use for his own purposes” (78). In his view, folklore was already literature, though “the literature of a class [...] who have steeped everything in the heart: to whom everything is a symbol”, as he writes in the introduction to his first anthology. Accordingly, it became essential to take the beliefs and narratives collected among the Irish peasants seriously and carefully, for they provided much more than “light entertainment or [...] antiquarian curiosity” (76), as can be grasped from many of the pre-Yeatsian collections. The young Yeats, instead, looked at Irish folklore as a really valuable and promising *other world* – especially if compared to the modern, “realist” and “naturalist” world of the end of the nineteenth century<sup>10</sup>. This different world deserves to be kept alive and meaningful, also through its creative reworking, all the more if similarities and correspondences emerge, or seem to emerge, between the folklorist and his field of research.

In this respect, we need to turn to the first work of Yeats as a firsthand collector, *The Celtic Twilight*, whose first edition was published in 1893, with the subtitle *Men and Women, Dhoulis and Fairies* (a second, expanded and revised edition was published in 1902). Indeed, this is a quintessentially hybrid work, a *sui generis* blending of firsthand fieldwork (legends, folktales, anecdotes, life stories) and autobiographical memories, talks, spiritual experiences, commentaries, essays, poems<sup>11</sup>. A wide variety of textual materials (43 chapters) was organized accord-

<sup>8</sup> Can authenticity and folklore properly co-exist? “If we take it that folklore is deeply characterised by processes of diachronic mutation and synchronic multiplicity, then nobody and nothing is able, and allowed, to state what is authentic and what is not: all cultural items, phenomena, practices are equally legitimated by the sheer fact of existing” (Carrassi 2018, 174). For a comprehensive and critical analysis of this ambivalent and controversial concept see Bendix 1997.

<sup>9</sup> For a specific and in-depth analysis of these two works let me refer to a specific article published in this same journal: Carrassi 2014.

<sup>10</sup> “Let us listen humbly to the old people telling their stories, and perhaps God will send the primitive excellent imagination into the midst of us again. Why should we be either ‘naturalists’ or ‘realists?’” (Yeats 1893, 189).

<sup>11</sup> As brilliantly summarized by J.W. Foster, *The Celtic Twilight* “gives us what Yeats has heard (folk testimonies and traditions), what he has seen (firsthand experiences and visions), and what he thinks (commentary and speculation)” (1987, 236).

ing to deeply personal and subjective criteria, where one can hardly discern a unity (Kinahan 1983), but which vividly suggests the author's intolerance of all sorts of boundaries, outlines, taxonomies, for fear that they could embalm and wither Irish traditions and their bearers. As mentioned previously, Yeats strives to keep folklore a living and meaningful stuff.

Not surprisingly, therefore, "[he] was the first major talent of the Irish revival to contemplate fiction's respectful emulation and appropriation of folklore, to let art vie with science and popularization in recognition of the productions of the peasantry" (Foster 1987, 236). In his search for a third way<sup>12</sup>, which would be different both from a strictly scientific approach as well as from a simple-minded and irresponsible divulgation, Yeats was able to give folklore its right and legitimate value. In a letter of 1890 sent to the editor of the journal *The Academy*, Yeats seemed to reject, or more precisely, to lessen the importance and the usefulness of a meticulous, "honest" scholarly work; but he also suggested a concrete and contemporary role model embodying his ideal of folklorist, which would show the actual viability of a different kind of science:

I deeply regret when I find that some folk-lorist is merely scientific, and lacks the needful subtle imaginative sympathy to tell his stories well. [...] The man of science is too often a person who has exchanged his soul for a formula; and when he captures a folk-tale, nothing remains with him for all his trouble but a wretched lifeless thing [...]. *I object to the 'honest folk-lorist', not because his versions are accurate, but because they are inaccurate, or rather incomplete.* [...] To me, the ideal folklorist is Mr. Douglas Hyde. A tale told by him is quite as accurate as any 'scientific' person's rendering; but in dialect and so forth he is careful to give us the most quaint, or poetical, or humorous version he has heard. (Qtd. in Dundes 1999, 48, my emphasis)

Ultimately, Yeats believed that folklorists are just as fallible as any other scholars and researchers<sup>13</sup>. This is because their work is incomplete, as they are unable to reveal the deep soul, the inner truth of a folk narrative, as well as its imaginative, spiritual and living power. In other words, Yeats claimed that a folklorist should not be merely an observer, or taxonomist of the phenomena discovered on the field, but rather, someone who is able to recognize the hidden and deeper meanings thereby becoming part of the field itself. This also involves attuning his/her own mind to that of his/her informants to interpret these meanings. Yeats was somehow anticipating the so-called "interpretive turn" in postmodern anthropology (Bachmann-Medick 2016, 39-72) as well as the related paradigm of "thick description" (Geertz 1973).

In the introductory chapter to *The Celtic Twilight*, entitled "This book", Yeats explains the ideas and goals of his work as folklorist, elucidating his personal attempt to embody a different kind of folklorist – then to suggest, from his point of view, a less fallible approach to folklore. More precisely, he defines himself as an "artist" wishing "to create a little world out of the beautiful, pleasant, and significant things of this *marred and clumsy world*, and to show *in a vision something of the face of Ireland to any of my own people* who would look where I bid them" (Yeats 1902, 1, my emphasis, hereafter *CT*). It is made immediately clear that Ireland, or better Irish folklore, which is made up of "beautiful, pleasant and significant things", is the

<sup>12</sup>About the encounter between orality and literature made possible by the medium of folklore collections, John D. Niles argues for a "Third' realm of literature – that is, the category that is neither oral nor written in nature, but that exists in a half-understood, betwixt-and-between zone that is bordered on one side by oral performance *per se* and on the other by elite literature" (2013, 234).

<sup>13</sup>I borrow the concept of fallibility of folklorists from a conference I attended in 2017 at the university of Tartu, entitled "Folklorists are fallible".

core of the book, and that its audience are the Irish people (“my own people”) who need to be led to discover an unknown world. In addition, Yeats aims at creating another world out of that world, a little and distinctive world which is offered not as a general, common collection of folk traditions, but rather, which stands out as a personal, significant “vision”, where folklore is seen through the more or less distorting eyes of a visionary.

In the following lines Yeats clarifies his aims and his methods:

I have therefore *written down accurately and candidly much that I have heard and seen*, and, except by way of commentary, *nothing that I have merely imagined*. I have, however, been at no pains to *separate my own beliefs from those of the peasantry*<sup>14</sup>, but have rather let my men and women, dhoul and faeries, go their way *unoffended or defended by any argument of mine*. The things a man has heard and seen are threads of life, and if he pull them carefully from the confused distaff of memory, any who will *can weave them into whatever garments of belief please them best*. (*Ibidem*, my emphasis)

Here, we are introduced to three major features of the book:

- 1) Yeats's work on Irish folklore resembles that of an accurate and faithful collector, who has recorded first hand experiences neutrally, and not through his individual imagination;
- 2) this work is still different from what a scholar (safely) distant from his informants, and who has been able to separate his learned, rational thinking from the traditional, superstitious beliefs of the peasantry would do. As an artist more than a scholar, as an occultist more than a folklorist, Yeats recognizes his closeness to that magic and mysterious world which has been disclosed, before him, by the “lore” of the “folk” he met on the field. Accordingly, not only the men and women, but also supernatural beings evoked by their stories are given full freedom of expressing themselves, with no intellectual commentary;
- 3) once stored in our own memories, all the things we have seen, heard, known, lived – hence all the beliefs, experiences and stories a folklorist has collected during his fieldwork – become, consciously or unconsciously, available to be re-fashioned, re-created, re-lived according to our own values, needs, aims, so as we may “weave” something more or less different from the original ones, yet fitting with the new and changing contexts where we happen to operate.

These are the key principles Yeats conformed to, or claims to have conformed to, in his work as a folklorist. Right or wrong, suitable or unsuitable, reliable or unreliable as they could seem, what really counts is how they are applied throughout the book. To this end, I have selected just a few excerpts from *The Celtic Twilight* which, in my opinion, can help us to exemplify and understand the *modus operandi* of Yeats on the field and in collecting and transcribing his ethnographic records.

In the chapter “A Teller of Tales” we read:

Many of the tales in this book were told me by one Paddy Flynn, a little bright-eyed old man, who lived in a leaky and one-roomed cabin in the village of Ballisodare, which is, he was wont to say, ‘the most gentle’ – whereby he meant faery – ‘place in the whole of County Sligo’. [...] He was indeed always cheerful, though I thought I could see in his eyes [...] a melancholy which was well-nigh a portion of his joy; *the visionary melancholy of purely instinctive natures and of all animals*. (*CT*, 4, my emphasis)

This is the first chapter that Yeats devotes to describing and contestualizing one of his informants, just like a scholarly folklorist, though his style is more sketchy and poetic, while distancing

<sup>14</sup> On this point cf. Sundmark: “[t]his anticipates the kind of self-reflexive and autobiographical ethnographic writing that has emerged in the field of ethnography and social anthropology since the 1980s” (2006, 106).

himself from an ethnographic approach. Yeats is not a scholarly folklorist. For him, it is fundamental to view the storyteller as a visionary, the bearer of a higher knowledge, thereby to suggest a profound affinity between the informant and the peculiar type of folklorist he ultimately is.

In the second chapter, “Belief and Unbelief”, Yeats writes:

One woman told me last Christmas that she did not believe either in hell or in ghosts. [...] ‘but there are faeries’, she added, ‘and little leprechauns, and water-horses, and fallen angels’. [...] No matter what one doubts one never doubts the faeries, for, as the man with the mohawk Indian on his arm said to me, ‘they stand to reason’. (CT, 8)

Through the views expressed on the field by his informants, Yeats aims at establishing the folk paradigm upon which his “little world” will take shape. This leaves no doubt, therefore, about the consistency and even the rationality of the existence of fairies, as well as the legitimacy of believing in them – unlike, significantly, the beliefs related to the religious sphere – simply because this is what the folklorist has picked from the people met on the field. Fairies and fairylore are thus depicted not as issues to be objectively address and question, but as crucial beliefs of an imaginative, visionary world-view, which must be accepted in itself, though it may seem distant from the folklorists learned paradigms<sup>15</sup>.

Yeats, however, is a different kind of folklorist. His beliefs are not so distant from those of his informants. His faith in the imaginative and visionary world-view expressed by the Irish folklore is further confirmed and deepened in the following lines, taken from the chapter “Enchanted Woods”. Here, Yeats highlights the radical distance between ourselves, the modern and enlightened men, from the simple and wise people, with their ancient and different world-views:

I say to myself, when I am well out of that thicket of argument, that they are surely there, the divine people, for only we who have neither simplicity nor wisdom have denied them, and the simple of all times and the wise men of ancient times have seen them and spoken to them. (CT, 108)

In “Dust Hath Closed Helen’s Eye”, again, we find a remark with an ethnographic flavour. Although conscious of the limitations and deficiencies of his memory, Yeats stresses the importance of collecting oral narratives on the field. More importantly, he stresses the key role of an accurate transcription through which we can get a faithful and effective preservation of the oral tradition:

When I was in a northern town awhile ago I had a long talk with a man who had lived in a neighbouring country district when he was a boy. [...] *I wish I had written out his words at the time, for they were more picturesque than my memory of them.* (CT, 48-49, my emphasis)

The accuracy in transcribing the oral narratives is an issue further emphasized when it concerns a second-hand fieldwork. In “The Friends of the People of Faery”, Yeats gets an account from a friend, who asks the informant to repeat her oral performance, just to provide a faithful and reliable transcription of a story previously heard. Later on in the book, this is turned into a written record:

A friend has sent me from Ulster an account of one who was on terms of true friendship with the people of faery. It has been taken down accurately, for my friend, who had heard the old woman’s story some time before I heard of it, got her to tell it over again, and wrote it out at once. (CT, 198)

<sup>15</sup> As argued by Kathleen Raine in her introduction to *The Celtic Twilight*, “there is, in these gleanings and reflections of the young poet a quality of simplicity, of innocence. There is in them nothing of the amused detachment of the collector of ‘folklore’, still less of the unamused detachment of the anthropologist” (Yeats 1981, 19).

Interestingly, on the field, one may find evidence of a sort of “literary awareness” by the folklore bearers. They seem to recognize, in their oral traditions, an aesthetical value that only a poet such as Yeats could turn into a literary work, so as to highlight the artistic potential implied in folklore. In other words, Yeats is legitimizing his own work as a request coming from below: “[w]hen the old man had finished the story, he said, ‘Tell that to Mr. Yeats, he will make a poem about it, perhaps’ ” (*CT*, 60). Paradoxically, Yeats himself declines such an explicit request, recognizing that both his poetry and his mind are not always able to conceive a work that expresses the beauty and the significance of an oral narrative:

Alas! I have never made the poem, perhaps because my own heart, which has loved Helen and all the lovely and fickle women of the world, would be too sore. There are things it is well not to ponder over too much, things that bare words are the best suited for. (*Ibidem*)

In the chapter “The Old Town”, like elsewhere in the book, Yeats describes what he actually does and has to do as a field researcher, including his long walks across the countryside and the villages in search of people with stories to tell. Nevertheless, his focus quickly shifts toward the consequences of the collected stories on his mind and imagination. He therefore emphasizes a subjective involvement in his field of research while rejecting the objective distance of a scholarly folklorist. His field is not merely observed but also personally lived, something that speaks directly to him as a man:

I fell, one night some fifteen years ago, into what seemed the power of faery.

I had gone with a young man and his sister [...] *to pick stories out of an old countryman*; and we were coming home talking over what he had told us. It was dark and our imaginations were excited by his stories of apparitions, and this may have brought us, unknown to us, to the *threshold, between sleeping and waking*, where Sphinxes and Chimaeras sit open-eyed and where there are always murmurings and whisperings. (*CT*, 137, my emphasis)

On the other hand, it is not always necessary to leave home to be able to find what Yeats as a folklorist expects from his fieldwork. For instance, in the chapter “Drumcliff and Rosses”, he writes that these lands “were, are, and ever shall be, please Heaven! *places of unearthly resort*” (*CT*, 148, my emphasis). That is to say, in Yeats’ view, that these are the most promising and productive contexts for a researcher in the field of folklore, or better, in the “unearthly” and visionary side of the Irish folklore, namely the only genre of folklore Yeats really takes into account: needless to say, he deliberately and programmatically acts as a selective folklorist<sup>16</sup>. In fact, having “lived near by them and in them” (*ibidem*), and because his “forebears and relations have lived near Rosses and Drumcliff” (*CT*, 158), he acknowledges having “gathered thus many a crumb of faery lore” (*CT*, 148). Later on in the chapter, he provides further details about his fieldwork, describing, for instance, a concrete and direct experience as a listener in a storytelling session. He focuses clearly on one of the countless and endlessly repeated stories of the “good people”, but also on the role played by the storytellers and the oral transmission in preserving and keeping alive the narrative tradition:

One night I sat eating Mrs. H — ’s soda-bread, her husband told me a longish story, much the best of all I heard in Rosses. Many a poor man from Finn M’Cool to our own days has had some such adventure to tell of, for those creatures, the ‘good people’, love to repeat themselves. At any rate the story-tellers do. (*CT*, 152)

<sup>16</sup> Admittedly, all the scholars working on the field, including the folklorists, whether consciously or not, act as selective collectors, according to the principles, paradigms, goals, values and so on guiding their researches.

Perhaps in the last chapter, “By the Roadside” – an emblematic title, I would say, for a researcher working on the field – Yeats better summarizes his ideas about folklore, oral traditions, popular world-view and, consequently, the deep reasons pushing him to have a profound interest in them. They are certainly more the ideas of an artist than those of a folklorist, as shown when he refers to “folk art” as “the oldest of the aristocracies of thought”. Nevertheless, he is an artist who, for better or worse, has left one of the most intense and significant testimonies of concern and involvement in folklore. The following is a remarkable reenactment and evaluation, though idealized and romanticized<sup>17</sup>, of folklore as a complex historical and cultural phenomenon:

There is no song or story handed down among the cottages that has not words and thoughts to carry one as far, for though one can know but a little of their ascent, one knows that they ascend like medieval genealogies through unbroken dignities to the beginning of the world. Folk art is, indeed, the oldest of the aristocracies of thought, and because it refuses what is passing and trivial, the merely clever and pretty, as certainly as the vulgar and insincere, and because it has gathered into itself the simplest and unforgettable thoughts of the generations, it is the soil where all great art is rooted. (*CT*, 232-233)

In order to try to formulate a conclusive interpretation of Yeats as a folklorist, I find the following opinion by Björn Sundmark quite illuminating:

I would say that Yeats’s methods and editorial practices appear groundbreakingly modern today. Thus, by contextualizing his material to the point of including himself (as in *The Celtic Twilight*) he anticipates anthropological practices of fieldwork and observation-participation that are common today. He ‘[writes] the self into the ethnographic process’ as Amanda Coffey calls it. And by paying close attention to the storytelling moment itself, Yeats creates an acute sense of place, history and identity. (2006, 107)

Through his subjective and participant methodology, his all-encompassing contextualization, as well as his biased yet dynamic approach to the field of research and to the informants, Yeats distanced himself from the role-model of a classic folklorist of his age. However, though this distance, he reveals and anticipates a new kind of scholar, the kind of scholar we recognize today – since the so-called “reflexive or literary turn” (Bachmann-Medick 2016, 103-130) – as more suitable for the specificity and the inherent limitations of the social sciences. In so doing, he emphasizes the actual processes – usually concealed by Romantic and positivist folklorists – implied in the collecting of folklore on the field. Nowadays, we know that a really objective distance from the field is impossible, because the researcher affects his/her field of research, as well as the context, and the people met on the field affect the researcher. Between the folklorist and the informants there is an exchange and a sharing of ideas, spaces, and experiences, which all contribute to a piece of folklore. This applies to all types of folklore, whether scholarly or literary, learned or popular, verbatim or creatively transcribed. The result is always unique and complex, subject to ever shifting historical, social, cultural, ethical, and political conditions. In my view, in *The Celtic Twilight* – a work that a hybrid kind of writer/folklorist has produced within a hybrid set of contexts and situations – Yeats makes us aware of the intrinsic fallibility of any of the methods employed to investigate the human and cultural phenomena, but even more of the vital, perhaps questionable, productivity of this same fallibility.

<sup>17</sup> “For Herder, the *Volksgeist*, or ‘spirit of the people’, was best captured in the oral traditions of the peasant classes, whose cultural traditions were not mediated by education, industrialization, or the general trends toward modernity” (Lau 2008, 359).

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## Resuscitating the Self through Verse: Alternative Histories in the Poetry of Eavan Boland

*Somaya Abdul Wahhab Al-Samahy*  
Alexandria University (<[somaya.wahhab@alexu.edu.eg](mailto:somaya.wahhab@alexu.edu.eg)>)

### *Abstract:*

Since the dawn of civilisation human life has witnessed multifarious modes of resistance. As an arena for cultivating human experience, literature provides enriching representations of resisting acts. As a matter of fact, the emergence of postcolonial dialectics in the second half of the twentieth century has rendered resistance a prevalent literary theme. Owing to the turbulences that had always cast their shadow upon this magnificent country, Ireland has maintained a unique literary tradition replete with images of resistance. Certainly, poetry, that has been a cornerstone to this tradition, has its ample share of these images. The Irish Canon had contributed a number of master poets such as W.B. Yeats, Seamus Heaney, and George William Russell, all of whom have used their poetic output as a vehicle for resistance against British hegemony. Yet, this rich poetic tradition did not secure a position for women poets. Irish women poets were not officially welcomed into the poetic arena until the second half of the nineteenth century. Their emergence, however, was shaped by their perception by their male contemporaries. Such a strict patriarchal society as the Irish would not have acknowledged their existence easily. Irish women poets then had led a double resistance. This dilemma is amply depicted in Eavan Boland's poetry. Born in 1944, Boland chronicles various aspects of post-independent Irish life. Her poetry tends to tackle women's lives and domestic affairs during times of unrest and turmoil as well as her attempts to establish herself as a woman poet. The proposed paper tends to investigate the techniques and imagery employed by Boland as a means of resisting both political hegemony and patriarchal domination.

*Keywords:* Eavan Boland, Ireland, Irish Literature, Irish Women's Poetry, Resistance

### *1. Alternative Histories in the Poetry of Eavan Boland.*

The emergence of postcolonial dialectics in the second half of the twentieth century has rendered resistance a prevalent notion within literature. Patricia B. Arinto argues that critics like Franz Fanon and Barbra Harlow consider literature of resistance

one of “struggle and revolution against Western imperialist discourse” (1992, 59). According to Olivia Harrison, this emerging literary corpus has been assiduously tackled by Harlow in her crucial study *Resistance Literature* (1987). Harlow has borrowed the term from the Palestinian author Ghassan Kanfani and has applied it mainly to the literature produced by the Third World (Harrison 2009, 2). Arinto further assigns the role of resistance literature more precisely. She states that it “seeks to reinscribe the history of the Third World which has been distorted, misrepresented or altogether ignored in Western discourse” (1992, 60). Relative to this context are some themes that pervade resistance literature. This paper is dedicated to exploring one of them in particular, namely the question of identity. In point of fact, investigating the question of identity within a work of literature would entail two techniques. The first one is reviving indigenous cultures. Authors from once subjugated territories have been keen on demonstrating the grandeur of their history, hence defying the pretexts that have long been propagated by the imperial discourse about the inferiority of the colonized. The other one is looking at gender as an integral aspect of identity cringe: “This involves the analysis of the dynamics between imperialism and capitalism on one hand, and patriarchy on the other, as well as the examination of the role of women in the cultural and political struggle for liberation” (61).

Certainly, poetry that has been a cornerstone to this tradition has its ample share of resistance images. Paulo de Medeiros indicates that “the term resistance literature should be applied to all forms of poetry that voice opposition to oppression” (2013, 81). De Medeiros further consolidates the role of poetry as a tool for political resistance.

Poetry was always engaged in political resistance, whether one invokes the Greek classics or thinks about the latest performance act, which is not to say that all poetry is political. But the dissenting voice of Antigone, calling sovereign power to account is one that has been repeated through ages (82). The Irish canon had contributed a number of master poets such as W.B. Yeats, Seamus Heaney and George William Russell, all of whom have arguably influenced shaping the poetic consciousness of their own times. It would be credible even to claim that their influence has continued to the present. Their poetic output has frequently been used as a vehicle for resistance against British hegemony.

Establishing a national identity is a recurrent theme in Irish poetry. Owing to its historical status as a colony and of its peoples as dispossessed of their land, writers in Ireland, particularly poets, are engaged in assiduous quest for asserting their national identity. One way to construct this national identity was to portray Ireland as a woman:

Since the nationalist movement that led to the formation of the Irish Free State in 1922 and the concurrent Celtic Literary Revival, in which writers like Yeats, O’Casey [...] shaped a nationalist consciousness based upon a mythology that was drawn only partially from actual historical documents, the image of Nation as Woman and the use of Woman as a symbol for sovereignty and motherland, has become more and more prevalent in Irish culture. (Troeger 1998, 1)

This binary image, that was formed primarily by men, posed an obstacle to women writers and women poets in particular. It reduces women to mere symbols of abstract ideas.

This idea reveals a salient feature of Irish poetry; namely, that this rich poetic tradition did not secure a position for women poets. In point of fact, Irish women poets were not officially welcomed into the poetic arena until the second half of the twentieth century. Yet, to claim that Irish women poets were not existent prior to this date would be a mere fallacy. The late nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century had actually witnessed the emergence of a number of women poets who displayed a genuine talent. However, a strict patriarchal society such as Ireland would have never acknowledged their existence easily. This is

extremely obvious in the attitudes of major Irish poets like Yeats and Kavanagh. In *Women Creating Women: Contemporary Irish Women Poets*, Patricia Boyle Haberstroh argues that Kavanagh sees poetry as a male dominated profession. He believes that women are not good enough for the writing profession, because they lack the necessary skills required in a writer (1996, 5-6). Yeats, on the other hand has shown some support for some of his contemporary women poets such as Kathleen Tynan and Dorothy Wellesley. His support; however, was patronizing to some extent. Haberstroh goes on to argue that the role played by Yeats' wife in creating his poetry was underrepresented. Moreover, Yeats' marginalizing attitude towards his fellow women poets is reflected in his poetry. He immortalized them in his poems according to his own perception of them regardless of their artistic talent. His poetry also depicts women within a traditional framework emphasizing that they cannot be obedient wives and mothers. It seems, then, that in their attempt to portray an image of their own homeland, Irish women poets are not only seeking the establishment of national identity, but they are also trying to eliminate their long-held marginalization and assert themselves as women, poets and Irish citizens.

This dilemma of identity is amply depicted in Eavan Boland's (1944-2020) poetry. Boland is an iconic figure within Irish poetry. The critic Peter Hühn describes her as

one of Ireland's foremost poets, in the South as well as in the North. Since the beginning of her career in the late 1960s, the Irish poetic scene has changed considerably in several respects. The male-oriented literary tradition and the Irish Revival have decreased in influence and, following Boland, a number of other women poets have come to the fore, such as Eithne Strong, Medbh McGuckian, Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, Paula Meehan, and Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin [...] widening the range of themes, attitudes, and perspectives. When Boland began to write, the Irish poetic tradition offered her no models, neither for her themes nor for her stance as a woman poet. So she had to establish her role and develop her topics on her own in a long process of reflection and practice. (2020, 454)

She was born in Dublin in 1944 and graduated from Trinity College in 1966. From then onwards, she held several teaching posts in different universities across the world. In 1970, Boland joined the Irish Women's Liberation Movement, a step that influenced the development of her career significantly. Boland married the novelist Kevin Casey in 1969. Together they lived in the suburbs of Dublin and had two daughters. Her experiences as a wife and mother have shaped her poetic career to a great extent:

Boland found herself living the life of a suburban housewife, a life that was very different from her student years at Trinity. As her prose memoirs of the period attest, she began to feel that there was no place in poetry, and especially in Irish poetry, to accommodate the domestic experience of a wife and mother living in suburbia. (Quinn 2008, 163)

Boland's oeuvre includes both prose and poetry. Her poetry collections include *Domestic Violence* (2007), *Against Love Poetry* (2001), *The Lost Land* (1998), *An Origin Like Water: Collected Poems 1967-1987* (1996), *In a Time of Violence* (1994), *Outside History: Selected Poems 1980-1990* (1990), *The Journey and Other Poems* (1986), *Night Feed* (1982), and *In Her Own Image* (1980). She is also the author of several prose books, the most acclaimed of which is *Object Lessons: The Life of the Woman and the Poet in Our Time* (1995). One major collection that reflects Boland's concern with the question of identity is *The Lost Land* (1998). In this collection

she continues to explore the issues and emotions of those who are victims of exile and colonialism. These are especially the burdens of 'Colony,' a major poem that makes up the first half of the book. Colonization, Boland says, is not just an act of governments, but an act of individuals – any exercise of

power and dominance at the expense of the independence of others. It even applies to the relationships of parents and children, husbands and wives. These echoes weave their way more noticeably through the shorter poems in the collection. Along with the losses of place that Boland records – ‘place’ having political, cultural, and psychic significance – she expresses here the loss of motherhood – another ‘place’ of position that vanishes with time. Boland’s constantly growing artistry, her ability to fasten on the telling concrete detail, and her hard-won personal and public authority make this collection outstanding. (Canfield Reisman 2012, 45)

Although she was born and lived in the post-independent Ireland, Boland’s poetry offers a vivid representation of the question of resistance. Resistance in Boland’s poetry manifests itself in three ways. First, Boland seeks to assert her country’s possession of a history as grand and ancient as that of the coloniser’s. One technique she employs to achieve her goal is through classical allusions. Out of concern for her usurped history, Boland juxtaposes her own local history against the classical one. In doing so, she is perhaps attempting to state that her own heritage is grand and stands on equal footing with the classical history, the cornerstone of Western civilisation as a whole. As Jay Parini puts it: “the literal site of [Boland’s] poems is often Ireland itself, with its heroic gesture, high rhetoric” (Parini, 2007). Examples of poems in which Boland recreates historical sceneries are numerous. “Atlantis – A Lost Sonnet” (2007), falls within this category. Divided into four stanzas and a couplet, the poem relates the abstract idea of loss to historical circumstances of her country. The title of the poem is itself allegorical of the classical myth of the drowned city. The poem is about loss. Everything in the poem suggests loss, even the poem itself is lost; it is “a lost sonnet”. The speaker is trying to create a tangible image of everything the people living there have lost hopes, dreams and memories. Therefore, they depict the whole idea of loss in the creation of the so-called Atlantis. To emphasize their lack of hope, they portray loss, which is symbolized in Atlantis, as a lost thing that drowns in the ocean. Thus, even loss could be lost too. Although the poem is very morbid, yet the fact that everything is only lost and does not totally disappear implies that one day things could be found again. It is arguable that in reviving this classical myth of loss, Boland is echoing the loss of her own homeland. She wraps the legendary city with an ordinary air. In addition to the grand “arches, pillars, and colonnades”, Boland speaks of “white pepper and white pudding”, items that are found in simple and ordinary households. By writing such a poem, Boland is perhaps attempting to equate her own local history with the long heard of classical and grand one. She is trying to assert that both nations stand on equal footing, without any claiming superiority over the other.

Boland gives her possible answer to the old myth. She suggests that the story of Atlantis was produced to teach the audience a moral. Even though the poem conveys the feelings of nostalgia that the poet experienced, yet it indicates that there is still a spark of hope left:

Maybe

what really happened is

this: the old fable-makers searched hard for a word  
to convey that what is gone is gone forever and  
never found it. And so, in the best traditions of

where we come from, they gave their sorrow a name  
and drowned it. (Boland 2007, n.p.)

New countries with better future could be rebuilt by learning from the past. Boland explains the possibilities of what might have happened to a city disappearing. The speaker states that she misses the “old city”, which suggests that this poem is about the changes of time and places. The poet indicates that Atlantis’s whole purpose of existence is to comprehend the inevitable change that takes place with time.

Secondly, throughout her poetic oeuvre, Boland has repeatedly recreated historical incidents in a more humane context. An example of these poems is “Quarantine” (2001). Instead of juxtaposing local Irish history against classical one, Boland this time re-narrates an incident from Irish history. “Quarantine” highlights the suffering of the poor during the Great Famine<sup>1</sup>. The poem begins by depicting the wretched couple trying to find Shelter. The reason of their misery is given only in the second stanza: “she was sick with famine fever”. The historical link is not established until almost towards the end of the poem “Their death together in the winter of 1847”. However, earlier in the poem it is stated that starvation was not the sole cause of their death: “In the morning they were both found dead. / Of cold. Of hunger. Of the toxins of a whole history”.

They were murdered by history with its political and social associations: “Also what they suffered. How they lived.” Both nature, symbolized by the “freezing stars”, and historical circumstances are conspiring against them. The very brief phrases in which the causes of their death are stated: “Of cold”, “Of hunger” and “Of the toxins of a whole history” suggest the abruptness of the act. In “Quarantine”, Boland is revealing the social and humane consequences of a calamity such as the great famine upon Irish society apart from what has been chronicled in historical treatises.

“The War Horse” (1975) is another poem by Boland that falls within the same category. Written during the troubled times of the 1970s in Ireland, “The War Horse” poses a crucial question regarding one’s dedication to battle for their homeland. Boland provides some insight to the poem in *Object Lessons: The Life of the Woman and the Poet in Our Time*:

I married in my mid-twenties and went to live in a suburban house at the foothills of the Dublin mountains. The first winter in the suburb was harsh. The weather was cold; the road was half-finished. Each morning the fields on the Dublin hills appeared as great slates of frost. At night the street lamps were too few. And the road itself ran out in a gloom of icy mud and builder’s huts. It was early ‘70s, a time of violence in Northern Ireland. Our front room was a cold rectangle with white walls, hardly any furniture, and a small television chanting deaths and statistics at teatime. One evening, at the time of the news, I came into the front room with a cup of coffee in my hand. I heard something at the front door. I set down the coffee and went to open it. A large dappled head – a surreal dismemberment in the dusk – swayed low on the doorstep. The reattached itself to a clumsy horse and clattered away. There was an explanation. It was almost certainly a traveller’s horse with some memory of our road as a travelling-site and our garden as fields where it had grazed only recently. The memory withstood the surprises of its return, but not for long. It came back four or five times. Each time, as it was started into retreat, its huge hooves did damage. Crocus bulbs were uprooted. Hedge seedlings were dragged up. Grass seeds were churned out of place. Some months later I began to write a poem. I called it “The War Horse”. Its argument was gathered around the oppositions of force and formality. Of an intrusion of nature – the horse – menacing the decorous reductions of nature that were the gardens. And of the failure of language to describe such violence and resist it. I wrote the poem slowly, adding each couplet

<sup>1</sup>As is widely known, The Great Irish Famine (1845-1852), was a period of mass starvation, disease and emigration in Ireland. It is sometimes referred to as the Irish Potato Famine because about two-fifths of the population was solely dependent on this cheap crop. The famine was caused by potato blight. The famine led to the fall of the population between 20% and 25%.

with care. I was twenty-seven years of age. At first, when it was finished, I looked at it with pleasure and wonder. It encompassed a real event. It entered a place in my life and moved beyond it. I was young enough in the craft to want nothing more. (Boland 1995, 56)

The context of the poem is partly revealed through its title. Whereas, a war horse is historically renowned as a strong stallion ridden by warriors and perhaps accelerating their victory, in Boland's poem the war horse had lost his way out of the battlefield into her suburban modern garden. Written during the turmoil that pervaded Ireland in the 1970s, the poem might give a false impression of being morbid and gruesome. However, this thought is immediately dismissed with the opening lines: "This dry night, nothing unusual / About the clip, clop, casual / Iron of his shoes as he stamps death / Like a mint on the innocent coinage of earth".

The speaker does not find the scene trotting on the road within the city bizarre or shocking. Yet, she considers it a harbinger of chaos and violence. Though the beast does not seem frightened or escaping hurriedly. Still, wherever his feet *casually* thud the ground, he brings about mess and destruction. As an onlooker from her window, the speaker goes on to vividly describe the scene:

[...] watch the ambling feather  
Of hock and fetlock, loosed from its daily tether

In the tinker camp on the Enniskerry Road,  
Pass, his breath hissing, his snuffling head

Down. He is gone. No great harm is done. (Boland 1985, 17)

Punctuation plays a vital role in helping the reader to visualise the horse's movements. The lack of full stops in the previous stanza indicates its non-stop running. Meanwhile, the following stanza employs commas and full stops reflecting how the horse has come to halt suddenly and eventually relieving the speaker. As the horse is completely out of sight, the speaker is the left to discern its impact on the surroundings:

Only a leaf of our laurel hedge is torn –

Of distant interest like a maimed limb,  
Only a rose which now will never climb

The stone of our house, expendable, a mere  
Line of defence against him, a volunteer

You might say, only a crocus its bulbous head  
Blown from growth, one of the screamless dead. (*Ibidem*)

As the poem develops, Boland triggers several questions pertinent to the notion of patriotism. Should one be involved heart and soul in lethal combats to be labelled a patriot? Does the lack of "fierce commitment" condemn one as traitor or at least indifferent? Her skeptic attitude towards the threat of war perhaps echoes the Irish people's dread of war and the violence and casualties it entails. As the horse renters, she becomes more anxious. This time it "stumbles on like a rumour of war". The link between the horse and war is explicitly established. Unlike her neighbours who watch from behind their curtains, she opens her window. She gazes at the horse as it "stumbles" over the road until it gone again. The fact that she decides to open the

window, follow the beast's behavior and its consequence marks a pivotal change in her attitude. She is no longer the passive onlooker who fears the threat. She has become, at least, emotionally involved with her worry and concern about the horse's raid. Through this concern, she is able to relate to her Irish ancestors:

Then to breathe relief lean on the sill  
And for a second only my blood is still

With atavism. That rose he smashed frays  
Ribboned across our hedge, recalling days

Of burned countryside, illicit braid:  
A cause ruined before, a world betrayed. (18)

She believes that she is experiencing a critical situation as her ancestors once had when their homeland was ablaze. Since history repeats itself, both Boland and her neighbors are unwilling to stop the horse the same way their ancestors felt they did not have to participate in the war to defend Ireland against its foes. Eventually, Ireland is left to be long drained and exploited; a situation that would not be easily resolved.

In addition to the national level, Boland has attempted throughout her career to resist the relegation she suffered from at the beginning owing to her womanhood. In an article entitled "Retrieving Home: An attempt to Reconstruct Identity in the Poetry of Eavan Boland", Shadan Hamodi Zain Aldeen argues that "Boland is identified in her country by her role as a mother for Irish children not for herself as an Irish woman because as it is said before, she is rejected by her country as one of its citizens" (2022, 412).

She chose to resist patriarchal hegemony that characterized the Irish society in a relatively mild way. She attempts to reconcile both her feminine and poetic entities without melting one of them into the other. In order to achieve this reconciliation, Boland attempts to pursue her search for identity through a domestic context. The domestic context is perhaps a means by which she celebrates her gender. According to Reisman:

Hearth and history provide a context for the poetry of Eavan Boland. She is inspired by both the domestic and the cultural. Her subjects are the alienating suburban places that encourage people to forget their cultural roots, her children with their typically Irish names, demystified horses in Dublin streets that can still evoke the old glories from time to time, and the old Irish stories themselves, which at times may be vivid and evocative and at others may be nostalgic in nature [...] Boland perceives women as far less sanitized and submissive. (Canfield Reisman 2012, 35)

Boland's output in this category has been prolific, yet this paper shall examine only two of them "Love" (1994) and "The Pomegranate" (1994). Both poems tackle filial bonds an issue that is of paramount importance to Boland. In her poem "Love", Boland reflects on her marital life and her relationship with her husband. She intertwines her own personal experience with the myth of Aeneas returning to the underworld. By combining the two topics, she makes the theme universally appealing. The poem begins with Boland talking about her husband and herself. She recalls time when their love was exciting, and passionate. She portrays him standing on a bridge at night where "It is dark". The use of the present tense gives the readers a sense of this memory being so vivid in her mind that she describes how passing cars headlights shone behind him. The cinematic imagery allows the readers to visualize the scene. To her, he seemed "a hero in a text". The time when their child was



“touched by death [...] and spared” was a time when their love was at its strongest. She compares her husband crossing the bridge, to the myth of Aeneas crossing the river Styx to hell: “[t]he hero crossed on his way to hell”. She moves on to describe their present relationship. The “we” changes to “I”: “I am your wife”. She questions, “will love come to us again?”. The rhetorical question is just like the myth. Aeneas’s comrades try to speak out to him, but their voices fail. Their words are like “shadows and you cannot hear me”. Just as Aeneas’s comrades cannot communicate with him, Boland cannot communicate with a memory. The poem ends on the melancholic note that one cannot relive time. “The Pomegranate”, on the other hand, represents the complex web of feelings involved in the relationship between mothers and daughters. According to Greek mythology, Persephone was the daughter of Ceres, God of the harvest. Hades kidnapped Persephone and held her hostage in the underworld while Ceres turned the world above to winter during her grief. The young maiden was eventually returned to her mother, but while below she had eaten the food of the underworld – the seeds of a pomegranates – and therefore must spend half the year below (one month for each eaten seed) with her underworld husband, and only half the year above ground with her mother. This then explains the cycle of seasons coinciding with Ceres’ cycle of grief for her daughter. Boland uses the myth of Ceres and Persephone to represent the tangle of her feelings for herself and her own daughter. In her essay “Daughters in Poetry”, she refers to it as “One of the true human legends” (2005). The beauty of the legend, in which Boland writes the poem, is that [she] can enter it anywhere. First, she is the child lost in unfamiliar surroundings, “a city of fogs and strange consonants”, most likely an allusion to London, where she moved from Ireland with her parents at a young age. She wanders “the underworld” underneath “stars blighted”.

Yet right on the heels of this image comes another. “Summer twilight” replaces “crackling dusk”, and instead of the child she is suddenly the mother coming outside to call her daughter in to bed. It seems she has some foreknowledge of what is to come, however, and even though in this first instance she retrieves her daughter “I was ready / to make any bargain to keep her”, she knows of the loss that is yet to come:

But I was Ceres then and I knew  
winter was in store for every leaf  
on every tree on that road.  
Was inescapable for each one we passed.  
And for me. (Boland 2013, n.p.)

Boland’s poem reveals the cyclic nature not only of the relationship between mothers and daughters, but of life itself. We are born young, we experience life and we die. Our parents and elders take care of us, love us, watch us grow, they die and we in turn become parents and elders of our own young ones, and so on.

In the next lines, Boland watches her daughter, now a teenager, while she sleeps, and spies a fruit amongst the bedroom’s clutter. “The pomegranate! How did I forget it?” She wishes she could keep her daughter safe, keep her from harm, from knowledge of the terrible things in the world. “I could warn her”, the mother muses, “There is still a chance”. Yet she knows, and Boland knows, and we the readers know too that this is impossible. It is part of the cycle; it cannot be changed. It is, in fact, one of the oldest stories, that of a young woman and a fruit, Eve and the apple from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

There is grief, and sadness, in the poem, but beauty too. The pomegranate is fantastically described as “the French sound for apple and / the noise of stone”; “unshed tears” are “ready to be

diamonds”, and even now she rests beneath “veiled stars”. The mother fears heartbreak, but she is wise. “If I defer the grief I diminish the gift”. The beauty is in the cycle, how summer cedes to winter, for winter will blossom into spring. In the end, through bittersweet emotions, the speaker accepts her and her daughters’ role in the life cycle, “The legend will be hers as well as mine”.

In conclusion, Boland has undoubtedly enriched the oeuvre of resistance through her quest for identity. Her poetry tends to depict landscape and the cultural icons of her homeland, emphasising its independence of the British Isles. In addition to paying homage to her own womanhood, her poetry is replete with domestic images that hail the Irish women at large. Such images can also be considered a projection of Mother Ireland.

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## Gerontology in Bryony Lavery's *A Wedding Story* (2000) and Sebastian Barry's *Hinterland* (2002)

*Rania Mohamed Rafik Abdel Fattah Khalil*  
The British University in Egypt (<[rania.khalil@bue.edu.eg](mailto:rania.khalil@bue.edu.eg)>)

### *Abstract:*

Old age is perceived as a narrative of decline, recently, an alternative perspective was introduced known as positive aging or Gerotranscendence. This paper examines ageing in Bryony Lavery's *A Wedding Story* (2000) and Sebastian Barry's *Hinterland* (2002) through the theory of gerontology. Gerontology in British and Irish modern theatre, according to Giovanna Tallone (2020) and Heather Ingman (2018), is a new category in literary studies and theory. The paper aims to examine the challenges of retaining agency in old age in comparison to the notion of aging as a process of inner harmony further proving that despite the process of ageing being an individualised experience, the commonalities of growing old are universal as depicted in Lavery's and Barry's works.

*Keywords:* *A Wedding Story*, Gerotranscendence, *Hinterland*, Literary Gerontology, Theatre

### *1. Old Age a Social and Cultural Construct, or Biological?*

Old age has been part of the history of theatre since its inception. What is relatively recent is the attention paid in Theatre Studies to the study of Ageism, and for good reason. A report published in 2009 by the United Nation alarmingly declares an unprecedented global aging crisis where by 2045, the number of young adults will be exceeded by the number of old persons (United Nations 2010). This change in the social sphere will ultimately rock the foundations of societies in all countries across the world. Robert N. Butler dubs this crisis the "longevity revolution" (2008). It has become a universal topic for discussion in the humanities and the social sciences.

According to Giovanna Tallone (2020) and Heather Ingman (2018), gerontology is a new category in literary studies and literary theory. Literary gerontology and interdisciplinary

studies of old age open the inquiry for researchers to examine what it means to be old. What does ageing mean to the person getting old? And what does it mean to others? Old age is not a phenomenon, but an interrelated labyrinth of stereotyping, social constructions, and realities. Ageing populations are compelled to adjust to the increasing probability of illness and the impending probability of death. Society, further, imposes these conditions, terms, to which the ageing population must come to terms with such as the dependence on others, the loss of a mate, acceptance of declining health, the relinquishment of social relationships, and the acceptance of the individual's perception of the self in contrast to reality or how they appear to others. There is also a need to understand that the experience of ageing is culturally diverse.

This research, in its attempt to take a broad-brush picturesque view of the key issues that concern age studies, makes a reference to Plato's *The Republic*. *The Republic* opens with an inquiry into philosophy, truth, politics, and old age. Socrates and his comrades visit Polemarchus in the Piraeus where they meet Cephalus, Polemarchus' elderly father. The old man greets his son with the stereotypical question as to why he does not come to visit frequently; a typical complaint that is often heard from the aged (2002, 17). Many of the points raised by Plato in *The Republic*, continue to shape the research agenda of the exploration of old age and the meanings we seek to examine today.

The intellectual framework of literary gerontology on which this paper rests, builds on these perspectives taking into consideration the recent discussions related to the intersection between the narratives of decline in theatre and the different perceptions and experiences of ageing. Literary critics (Basting 1998; Lipscomb, Lebi 2010, Mangan 2013; Sandberg 2013; Lipscomb 2016; Bernard, Amigoni, Basten *et al.* 2018) have come to emphasise the role theatre can play in enriching interdisciplinary studies on old age. Valerie Barnes Lipscomb (2012) highlights the emancipatory role of theatre in terms of self-expression in our anti-ageist communities which can lead to a constructive discourse on ageing and social empowerment. Lipscomb in her introduction to the book *Performing Age in Modern Drama*, opens the discussion on ageism with the statement "act your age" (2016, 1) and explains that it rests on the supposition that age is performative.

The paper scrutinises two dramatic texts concurrently: British dramatist Bryony Lavery's *A Wedding Story* (2000) and Irish playwright Sebastian Barry's *Hinterland* (2002). Lavery's play, depicts aging as a process where there is difficulty in retaining agency and humanity. The play focuses on the experience of the ageing female character and the prevalent decline of her body and mind. Sebastian Barry's *Hinterland* illustrates old age as a representation of the societal changes pre and post the Celtic Tiger in Ireland. The paper attempts to address the theatrical manifestations of stereotyping old age and raising awareness that it is a social construct. In parallel it explores the representations of old age as *other* and the alternative notion of aging known as Gerotranscendence: positive ageing, a process of inner harmony.

While the humanities and age studies have examined the stereotyping in old age, still little has been done, although this has started to change. The contribution of artistic representations in deepening the understanding of the aging process and the elderly, is slowly being recognised and it is what Julia Twigg and Wendy Martin have termed as "the cultural turn" (2015, 353). Dramatic texts and theatre productions concerned with the human struggle of aging and the experiences of older persons within a variety of societal frameworks provide rich data around the ageing experience and perspectives which advance research in the humanities and old age studies (Kivnick, Prucho 2011; de Medeiros 2014; Marshall 2015a, 2015b; Oró-Piqueras 2016; Weil, Lefkowitz 2019).

No current scholarly publication compares the representation of ageing in Bryony Lavery's *A Wedding Story* to the representation of ageing in Sebastian Barry's *Hinterland*. Few publica-

tions inspect the representation of aging in British theatre to the depiction of old age on the Irish theatre stage. The two dramatic texts understudy have gained little attention from theatre studies academics and literary gerontology critics. Jennifer Thomas (2017) holistically examines Lavery's aging female protagonists in a number of the playwright's works, the paper does not focus on ageing, but on the role of older females as agents of change. *Hinterland*, Barry's play, is among the array of dramatic texts referred to in Austin Hill's (2013) dissertation reflecting on cultural change and the impact of the Celtic Tiger as depicted on the Irish theatre stage. Publications on Sebastian Barry's works have mainly addressed his genius as a novelist and poet. He has written nine plays but is best known for *The Steward of Christendom* (1995) and *Our Lady of Sligo* (1998).

The limited scholarly work on literary gerontology and theatre studies, given its short trajectory as a field and the current global ageing crisis, gives this research great significance. It is however necessary to acknowledge that there are contemporary British plays that address continuity into old age like Tom Stoppard's *The Invention of Love* (1997) as well as the dramatic work of Irish playwrights Hugh Leonard's *Da* (1973) and Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990). However, these works focus more on the performance of age where the character on the stage plays a different age highlighting a fragmented perception of the aging self. The plays depict a notion of the self and hence are more defined as memory plays. Academic work connecting ageing and theatre studies came to bear fruit through the work of scholars such as Núria Casado-Gual (2021); Bridie Moore (2014, 2018); Sheila McCormick (2017); Katarzyna Bronk (2017); Miriam Bernard and Lucy Munro (2015); Elinor Fuchs (2014, 2016); Margaret Cruikshank (2013 [2003]); Valerie Barnes Lipscomb (2012, 2016); Margaret Morganroth Gullette (2004); and Anne Davis Basting (1995, 1998). However, Giovanna Tallone (2020), and Heather Ingman (2018) among other critics, continue to underscore the absence of the reflection on old age from the mimetic space. Miriam Bernard equally contends that research about theatre and old age and its transformative potential "remains woefully under-researched" (Bernard, Munro 2015, 64).

This research builds on the previous stellar publications, although few, and presents a textual analysis of the selected dramatic texts as a sample to illumine what entails social/cultural constructions of aging in British and Irish societies through theatre. This paper aims to add to the understudied interdisciplinary area of ageism and theatre.

## 2. *Literary Gerontology: Ageism*

Critical literary theory on gerontology is based on contributions from political economy, gender, ageing, and the humanities. Robert Butler coined the term ageism making it analogous to other forms of oppression. A broad definition of the theory of ageism is one age group holding prejudice against another (1969, 243). Extending the discussion around this definition, Bill Bytheway explains that ageism allows for any age group to be "oppressed by [...] dominant expectations about age [...] that dictate how we behave and relate to each other" (2005, 338). Jeff Greenberg, Jeff Schimel and Andy Martens further explain that ageism refers to the negative attitude towards the elderly (2002, 27).

Erin Gentry Lamb in "Not your Grandmother's Ageism: Ageism Across the Life Course" (2021) brings to light another aspect of ageism which is not explored in this paper, but that needs to be referred to within the discussion of ageism. Lamb explains that ageism does not only include older individuals. E.B. Palmore, Laurence Branch, Diane Harris build on this point explaining that experiences of ageism include youth and middle-aged populations

(2005, 138). This stems from the idea that ageism is a parallel to sexism and racism, a form of discrimination or negative attitudes. It is the exclusion of certain people or labelling them as unfit for social responsibilities. As evident, a number of authors have attempted to define the theory of Ageism, but one of the most straight forward definitions is provided by Andrea von Hülsen-Esch (2022 [2021]) and Erin Gentry Lamb (2021): ageism is systemic discrimination projected against people because they have aged. This discrimination can manifest itself in hostile behaviour towards them, abuse or neglect. It also includes relegating them to a lower status in society. This is the perspective that this research paper adopts and aims to highlight in the examination of the dramatic texts *A Wedding Story* and *Hinterland*. The theory of ageing depicts the elderly as “alien other” based on the social constructions of our public spaces (Thomas 2017, 262). Gerontology as a literary theory allows room for the exploration of the social perceptions depicted in the selected dramatic works of what it means to be old as well as to understand the cultural constructs of age, and the tensions between our physiological aging process and chronological aging. It also looks into what constitutes social rejection as well as the newly adopted notion of gerotranscendence.

Gerotranscendence is a counter theory; it emphasises the process of turning inward in old age. It also assumes that the disengagement of the elderly from society on the physical and psychological level is associated with inner satisfaction and harmony as opposed to an experience of discord. Gerotranscendence bases its argument on the hypothesis that despite the fact that all communities tend to push the aging person to the peripherals of society, and the inevitable reduction of social responsibilities of the elderly, the aging individual, despite the reduced psychological activity and social involvement does not experience the negative overtones of an inactive life. Building on the existing theory of aging, the theory of gerotranscendence, creates a paradigm shift that prompts a necessary new understanding of ageing particularly that few gerontologists have approached the exploration of this new theoretical perspective (Tornstam 2005, 34-36). Both of the literary theories referred to equally allow room for the examination of the depiction of old age on the theatre stage prompting an engagement in integrative discussions on aging.

### 2.1 Literary Gerontology

Theatre has been considered by Margaret Morganroth Gullette (2004) a valuable vehicle to address age as a social construct, and previously Anne Davis Basting (1995; 1998) supported the role theatre played in questioning the rigid views of the experience of getting old. Similarly, Lipscomb (2012) heralds the theatre’s interdisciplinary approach to ageing and mutability of expression. Looking at Shakespeare’s plays, we find that they often depict the aging and in some cases are associated with madness in *King Lear*, foolishness such as Polonius in *Hamlet*; anger in *Romeo and Juliet* and in *The Tempest*, it depicts a different version of old age: Prospero’s wisdom. The theatrical depictions of old age vary and often times can be inaccurate and painfully unjust. Aging, contrary to common understanding, is primarily a social and cultural construct rather than solely a biological one.

### 2.2 What It Means to be Old: Depictions on the Theatre Stage

Age, according to Aagje Swinnen and Cynthia Port, is defined as “as a state of *being* but through acts of *doing*” the repetition of behaviour related to the chronological stages of aging across the span of one’s life (2012, 12). It is also the physiological changes of the body. Ageism

includes the biological understanding of age, its conflicting definitions within societies, and the social constructions on age imposed in our communities. It is worthy to note that today's elderly rejects the traditional constraints constructed by society in relation to old age. Lynne Segal explains "As we age, changing year on year, we also retain, in one manifestation or another, traces of all the selves we have been, creating a type of temporal vertigo and rendering us psychically, in one sense, all ages and no age" (2013, 4).

Ageing tends to make us fear being the *Other*. Kathleen Woodward in her book *Aging and Its Discontents* sheds light on the theory of the mirror stage of old age explaining that it is "the alienation of the aging body from its mirror image" (1991, 62). Woodward argues that there is a unified consensus among the elderly that they feel the same way they did at their early thirties or late forties despite the change in their mirror image (*ibidem*). Societies tend to stereotype the elderly and consequently this instils a fear in us of becoming old. This discomfort of the widespread notions of ageism resides in many of us and is thought to be reason enough as to why aging has been marginalised within modern theatre studies. The selected plays Bryony Lavery's *A Wedding Story* and Sebastian Barry's *Hinterland* invite audiences to question the perception of age in relation to physicality, the representation of the self, social perception, and in the case of Barry's *Hinterland*, the representation of the state of the nation. Theatre's natural element of expression allows for the meaning of aging to be exchanged and explored. The two plays at hand offer a complex representation of this notion.

Bryony Lavery in *A Wedding Story*, utilizes an aging female character to explore the tension created by the social construct stereotyping her as an aged sick woman. Age studies literary theorist Margaret Cruikshank in *Learning to Be Old: Gender, Culture, and Aging* explains that "An old woman is an alien creature, costly and crabby, and her life stage is seen as disconnected from youth and midlife rather than as an outgrowth of them" (2013 [2003], 5-6). Lavery's elderly female protagonist Evelyn suffers from Alzheimer. She is introduced to the audience as a medical doctor; yet the humility of old age makes a laughing stock out of her amidst her family. As a woman of science, Evelyn, married with two adult children, is intelligent but the undiagnosed disease of Alzheimer paints her less intelligent than the dominant characters on the stage. Jennifer Thomas in her chapter "Transformation and Re-education through Ageing" emphasizes that "the sick and aged body of the protagonist is a site of re-education and counter-narratives to hegemonic and normative belief systems" (2017, 263). Evelyn is presented on stage without being given a "chronometric age" (*ibidem*). Her character is polarised by her daughter Sally who represents new meaning to family life. Pitiful scenes are created by the playwright where Evelyn is unable to recognise Peter, her own husband and asks him politely "who are you" (Lavery 2000, Act I, 14). Margaret Cruikshank further elaborates on this perspective explaining that a "person with Alzheimer's becomes a manifestation of disorder rather than an individual who is ill" (2013 [2003], 39). Alan Bennett an English playwright, in his work *An Englishman Abroad*, briefly and to a great extent accurately, sums up Evelyn's stage of degeneration into old age and disease: "age wipes the slate clean" (1989, 35). Considering this perspective, the effects of old age, and the symptoms of Alzheimer help shed light on Lavery's aging and ill female protagonist, Evelyn. The scenes with Evelyn's decline, as the play's narrative progresses, become more aggressive and remove all empathy for the character. As the play progresses, Evelyn is relegated to an alien status. The non-linear episodic moments of decline create an alienation effect. This Brechtian theatre technique is paired with life course theory by Elinor Fuchs (2016, 153; 2014, 72); a theoretical framework of old age that focuses on the "abhorrent reality of declining into the infirmities and disrepair of old age" (2014, 70). It can be said that this Epic theatre approach invites audiences to examine the constructs of decline on the stage. Paired with the previous analysis of Evelyn's



representation of old age, Fuchs' critical theory in gerontology and Cruikshank's notion of the aged woman as the alien other, prompt an investigation of the public space and the challenges posed for elderly females.

Johnny Silvester is a retired Prime Minister in Ireland during the Celtic Tiger period. The seventy-year-old politician in Sebastian Barry's *Hinterland* occupies the internal space of his home where he interacts with a dissatisfied wife and a lame adult son; the instability of his family life takes up much of his day. In his old age, the home is not a space for respite and relaxation but a fort from which he battles the savagery of the outside community as he attempts to thwart accusations of corruption and scandals over his extra-marital affair. The character does not suffer in his old age from an inactive life. The character is depicted on the stage as a man of an offensive and exploitative personality. Unlike Evelyn who occupies the home space to shield herself from the humiliation of being a public mockery, Johnny Silvester, is at the centre of his community. Johnny has the attention of all of Ireland with its media: radio, television and the newspapers. Audiences learn of his status through his quotes and description of himself as "the father of the nation" (Barry 2002, 59). Tension permeates his life. There is tension between him and his wife, between him and his son, his mistress, and the whole of Ireland. The character of the elderly man is situated between the version of the story he wishes to tell and the story Ireland tells. Act I of the play, discloses the services Johnny did for the country:

I made this country, whether they like it or not. They all voted for me when they thought it was to their advantage. [...] They will not give me my due now. I am to be ritually disemboweled in my own country, by my own countrymen. This is my fate now! (16)

Johnny's old age at first does not seem to be the focus of the play, but Barry's aged character has been relegated to the peripherals of social life. He is confined to his home. All the outside activity comes to him inside his home, the TV crew preparing for the interview are in the living room, the press is outside in the front yard, and the UCD PhD student, Aisling, who wants to collect historical facts about Derry awaits in the study. Johnny, as the only aged character in the play, is symbolically given the role of the historian: "I'm looking forward to it. [...] It will delight me to expatiate on these old matters" (20). Recounting history to the young UCD student is a representation of the binary relationship between the elderly and the young. Despite the girl's preliminary enthusiasm about meeting Johnny, she leaves disappointed having realised that he is not as sharp as she had expected him to be. He is run down by old age and disease. Although Johnny does not project this image about himself, it is the perception of those around him; their conversations enunciate this image. Johnny's narrative to Aisling about Derry is disjointed and he fails to remember quotes from Yeats, Seamus Heaney and Kavanagh. His story about Derry is fragmented and all he remembers is that he "had about three hundred cousins" (53). Johnny does not perceive himself to be aged. The retired politician is a manifestation of Woodward's theory of the ageing body and the "mirror image" (1991, 62). Her argument around the elderly's unaltered perception of themselves despite their advancement in age is reflected in the terse exchange between Johnny and the young Aisling who stands as a personification of Ireland: "You're subtle. You're kind, but you are like a dagger. Look, I made this country. ... The father of the nation. Do you understand? I have the whole country against me now. Do you know what that's like?" (Barry 2002, 59). While there are political undertones to Johnny's words, they could easily be interpreted as a protest against the hostile behaviour he is experiencing from society not just for the allegations against him, but because he is an old man that is no longer useful to society and is fair game. He has been pushed to a lower status in the community despite the accumulated wealth in his possession and his

political contribution to the nation. Gerontology theorists point out that ageing is a cultural construct, and the experience of ageing varies depending on the economic status and health of the individual. The individual experience of ageing depicted in Barry's *Hinterland* is in fact a common experience regardless of culture, social status, and economic prosperity. Johnny's economic status is repeatedly emphasised in the play; he owns a private jet. It is obvious that while he is able to afford a comfortable life as a result of poor financial dealings during his government years that there is no direct alignment that these factors have a positive impact on him in his old age. On the contrary, his wealth is the underlying cause of his troubles. There is a need here to pay attention to the structural conditions which force him to be confined to a limited internal space. Johnny's mobility is limited by the playwright to the parameters of his home, and in particular to the smaller space of his study throughout the play. Furthermore, the comfort he should experience as an aged man in his home, is absent. The old man, in a number of episodes in the play, experiences verbal abuse from his wife. The verbal abuse quickly evolves to physical; Daisy, his wife, slaps her elderly husband on his face. The humiliated old man does not reciprocate the violence administered against him. Andrea von Hülsen-Esch (2022 [2021]) explains that often times, those who have aged, face discrimination from society and family members. This behaviour which von Hülsen-Esch terms as *ageism* is apparent in the hostile behaviour, neglect or abuse administered against the elderly individual.

In parallel to the depiction of Johnny's character as a humiliated old man in his own household, Johnny is associated with the Irish government and the implication that he destabilised the nation in its leap to economic prosperity during the Celtic Tiger years. The political turmoil is mirrored in the destabilisation of his authority in his own home. Two extreme versions are presented of Johnny to the audience, leaving them to examine their underlying assumptions about old age and the complicated experiences of ageing. The consequences of his actions loom over his twilight years. In Act II, Johnny hides Connie, his mistress, in the state papers cupboard.

*He is putting her into the State Papers cupboard, pulling papers out and stacking them hurriedly on his desk.*

Connie: (indignant) In here? This is not a bedroom farce, Johnny.

Johnny: Well, this is not a bedroom, it is a State Papers cupboard.

*He closes over the doors. Composes himself.*

They mightn't come in here anyway, please God. (*He listens.*) (Barry 2002, 75)

This puritanic act is misinterpreted by his wife:

Daisy: He would hardly have put you in a cupboard if it was quite innocent. (77)

Hiding his mistress in the cupboard can be interpreted according to what Helen Small (2007) shares in *The Long Life*. Small believes that old age brings respite from the madness and furiousness of passions. Reference is made eleven times to the cupboard throughout the play, a significant reminder of Johnny's wish to bury his soiled history. The memories are painful and evidently will haunt him as he advances into old age. Dominant cultural narratives change when Johnny fails to play the part set out for him by society. Christopher Austin Hill comments that Sebastian Barry attempts to give Johnny the traditional role of the "*seanchaí*" (2013, 51), but the character fails to play the role. He is dismissed by both the author and the audiences as the philosopher he considers himself to be. B.S. Phillips clarifies that aged individuals must adjust to the parts that society imposes on them and must come to terms with the expectations (1957, 12). Johnny is forced to relinquish the image he has of himself as well as his social relations for two reasons: his age and his political scandals.

Similarly, Bryony Lavery gives audiences a glimpse of her aging female protagonist's past professional life and the pressures of social obligations. Evelyn's struggle is portrayed internally within the confines of her own family home and inwardly in her psyche. Evelyn has no memories. Plagued by Alzheimer, she has no recollection of past or present. Her scientific background as a doctor is presented in a short scene at the dinner table with her guests. The space she occupies on stage is unbound by time, a vacuum where she is simultaneously non-present and yet still present. Her battle with Alzheimer is a lost one. Peter, Evelyn's husband, is depicted as the loving spouse who attempts in every way to treat his wife with care, sometimes even treats her as a child. Evelyn's deteriorating stage character, allows audiences to witness and experience if just briefly the degenerative symptoms of old age and disease. Jennifer Thomas points out "that Peter must continually work to gain access to the innermost part of Evelyn's psyche in order to maintain some semblance of marriage and normalcy in their lives" (2017, 280). The first four scenes of the play portray Peter and Evelyn letting go of their relationship and the legacy of their marriage. In scene five, Evelyn is presented as an outsider within her own family. The role of storyteller is depicted here as well, this time it is relegated to Sally, the young female character. Lavery composes a scene between Sally and Evelyn, the young and the old, where words are ping-ponged back and forth between them with underlying fondness and much hidden resentment. Sally recounts episodes of memories about a lost stable marriage relationship between her father and mother. The failing relationships between husband and wife, and mother and daughter create tension on the stage. In the introduction to her play text, Lavery writes: "None of the characters speak in sentences or observe punctuation or breathe at the right time. Because often They are in torment" (2000, 6).

The binary relationship between the elderly and the young is present in *A Wedding Story* in the mother-daughter relationship and in *Hinterland* between Johnny and Aisling as well as between Johnny and his son. Both playwrights do not dwell much on the contrasting age representations but focus more on the contrast between the past and the present as well as the *impact* of the past on the present. Both playwrights highlight this contrast by emphasising the tension between the young and the old without underscoring the father-son or mother-daughter relationships or allowing them to evolve. The relationships between the ageing characters and their offspring are superficial and serve as a platform to contrast the striking gap between a younger character and an ageing character.

### 3. Gerotranscendence: Inner Harmony in Old Age

Within the framework of gerotranscendence which promotes the notion of turning inwards to experience ageing as a harmonious process, it can be argued that both Evelyn and Johnny have turned inward, but both fail to experience their old age as a journey of harmony. Both of the ageing characters within their different cultural contexts and play settings, experience alienation and are treated as *Other*. This paper argues that the examination of the ageing protagonists in both *A Wedding Story* and *Hinterland*, prove that it is a mixed combination of progress and decline. It further argues that while there is some truth to the claim that ageing is a social and cultural construct, the analysis of the dramatic texts, though do not represent the span of cultures across the world, prove that ageing is biological as much as it is an imposition of expectations on those advancing in age. This theory may have taken its point of departure from the theory of ageing, and it may have some supported data by empirical research; yet, the study of the two dramatic texts in relation to ageing in two different contexts does not lead to the conclusion that the process of ageing is one of harmony. The study also reveals that physical

and psychological disengagement from social life and duties is not a result of an intrinsic drive to spiral into social disengagement but it is an “involuntary reduction” (Tornstam 2005, 33). The attention paid to the theory of gerotranscendence and discussion of the theory, allows this paper to serve as a critical reflection of the fundamentals on which this counter-theory is based. The dramatic texts examined, further emphasise that the ageing process is not culture bound as the notion of gerotranscendence claims it to be. Moreover, the claim that the ageing individual’s disengagement does not lead to a sense of dissatisfaction or psychological complications is not fully justified. Johnny and Evelyn neither one is happy with the state they are in. Neither one is fully inactive but at the same time they are also almost absent. They are there but not there. This research has disputed the hypothesis of the gerotranscendence theory and contends the notions on which it is based. The playwrights depict elderly characters who suffer “involuntary reduction” (*ibidem*). However, the fact that the theory of gerotranscendence does not apply here to the elderly protagonists of these two plays does not negate its presence in other dramatic representations or fictional works.

#### 4. *Theatre and Old Age*

Barry and Lavery use the theatre stage to create a space filled with tension where the characters play a role in re-educating the audiences about their biases towards ageing. Associations with old age and illness are unravelled in two different contexts making the process of growing old both universal and unique to the ageing individual. In the opening of Act I, in *A Wedding Story* the stage directions read “We are in a fog. [...] Our characters appear and disappear in the partnership between light and fog” (Lavery 2000, 7). Fog interweaves throughout the play denoting Evelyn’s mental unclarity as she oscillates between good days and bad days because of Alzheimer. The fog and light interplay theatrically to represent the polarity between youth and old age. It also serves to indirectly insinuate the presence and absence of the ageing female protagonist in Lavery’s play. Jennifer Thomas comments on the relationship between Peter and Evelyn explaining that the ageing process and disease force the couple to find new ways to connect. Evelyn is involuntarily dysfunctional and lacks this self-awareness. Johnny, old and ill, like Evelyn, also moves from being in the spotlight of the whole Irish nation to a place of non-recognition. His political contribution goes unacknowledged at the end of his twilight years. Johnny’s illness is stated in the opening of the play and remains a point of concern for him, but the outcome of the medical reports is never disclosed to the audience or Johnny himself. The play ends with the depiction of an old, humiliated man with an erased history, condemned and invisible to everyone. Illness becomes an impetus for Johnny to make amends with his wife and son, but the connection is lost. Daisy is the “perpetrator of violence” against her husband instead of playing the role of wife and caretaker (2017, 285).

Both Johnny and Evelyn are represented on the stage as visible ageing characters and gradually towards the end of both dramatic works, the protagonists are invisible subjects within their family structures and more broadly, in society. This truth presented on the theatre stage by Lavery and Barry is a reality too harsh to be easily accepted by audiences outside of the theatrical framework of the real and the imagined. The theatre stage is a suitable vehicle for the examination of the ageing process from a universal standpoint despite the argument that it is a personal experience. Theatre allows audiences to consider the “doubleness of being” (Thomas 2017, 286). To examine the duality of presence and absence and visually explore it within a communal setting in the physical parameters of theatre space eases the individual fear often experienced when considering the decline into old age. Thomas explains that the theatre

stage helps “by unravelling the biases, assumptions and associations previously learned and/or understood, space is created for what was once excluded and denied and is now included and represented both onstage and in life” (*ibidem*). According to Oró-Piqueras theatre aids in understanding the variations of ageing from a number of perspectives that may escape the critical eye of other disciplines (2016, 193).

### 5. Conclusion

The theatrical meanings of old age presented by both Barry and Lavery are both implicit and explicit. Critically examined, both narratives present transformational pivotal points in the lives and relationships of the protagonists Johnny and Evelyn. The traditional marriage narrative is tested in both play texts and despite the different contexts, the ageing characters fail to maintain their relationship with their spouses. Both Evelyn’s and Johnny’s marriages disintegrate. True, it is for varying reasons, but the element of old age and sense of uselessness of the ageing individual is evident in both plays. The two plays are about the journey of the aged individual from recognition to non-recognition. It can be safely stated that the non-recognition is also on the part of the ageing protagonist where they fail to identify as the individual they once were. This statement is in alignment with Woodward’s (1991) theory of the mirror stage where the ageing individual feels and sees himself/herself as they were in their prime years. It further supports Lynne Segal’s (2013) notion of the ageing individual retaining a trace of all their previous selves. The short lines, the spaces within or between the lines, are there on purpose to indicate the subtext and to help the performer to find the physical and emotional journey within a speech.

This paper presented the complexity of the portrayal of old age from different perspectives, in reference to gender, culture, and social context in two dramatic texts. It attempted to emphasise the importance that must be paid to the process of ageing as an essential human evolvment within a framework of theatrical creativity. The paper further attempted to examine the social perceptions of age in contrast to the perception of the ageing self in light of two literary critical theories; the theory of ageism and the counter theory of gerontology. The paper argues that the process of ageing is universal and transcends culture, social and economic factors; but at the same time, supports the notion that the journey of ageing can still be a unique experience to each individual. The dramatic texts examined, further emphasise that the ageing process is not culture bound as both theories aim to promote. This paper aimed to depict the complexity of artistic representation of old age on the theatre stage and hence underscore the little attention paid to the topic; although it must be noted that the intersection between humanities and age studies in exploring old age representations in theatre and drama has started to garner more attention from researchers. Fuchs labels this as creating “a theoretical bridge between theatre studies and the field of ageing studies” (2016, 143). Further research on old age and its representation in theatre would ultimately bring awareness to the stereotypes into which the elderly are entrapped and bridge the gap between the humanities and the study area of gerontology.

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## “Do not destroy me before my time”: Iphigenia’s Versions and Appropriations in Contemporary Irish Theatre\*

María del Mar González Chacón  
University of Oviedo (<[gonzalezmar@uniovi.es](mailto:gonzalezmar@uniovi.es)>)

### Abstract:

*Iphigenia in Aulis* has been adapted by Irish contemporary playwrights such as Marina Carr, Edna O’Brien or Andy Hinds. This article offers an introductory analysis of the reasons behind the Irish interest towards the Greek tragedy, followed by a comparative study of the three versions mentioned. The identification of the overarching themes will unveil the spaces for transformation: while Carr focuses on the depiction of a modern and corrupt Agamemnon and the rewriting of strong women, O’Brien adds extra plots and characters to highlight feminist voices, and Hinds eliminates, adds and relocates lines from the original play, to write a more performable version. Conclusions reveal the rewriting of the concept of sacrificial women, and present the three plays as relevant contributions to the reception of Euripides in Ireland.

**Keywords:** Andy Hinds, Edna O’Brien, Irish Sacrificial Women, Iphigenia, Marina Carr

### 1. Irish Playwrights and Greek Tragedies: Creating (Women’s) Spaces for Transformation

What the myths have in common is their antiquity. What the myths have in common is their novelty. What the plays have in common is their attachment to issues from then. What the plays have in common is their attachment to the now.  
(Walton 2002, 8)

Contemporary Irish playwrights rewrite classical Greek tragedies through the creation of spaces for transformation, where new meanings are evoked, as the myths travel in time, and where

\*I would like to express my gratitude to Jennifer Thomas, for sharing the manuscript of Andy Hinds’ play.



the plays maintain their attachment to the now<sup>1</sup>. Modern Irish settings offer a new location to Greek texts in a society where theatre still plays an essential role, since it is considered “as the natural place to juggle ideas” (*ibidem*). Within this scope, Euripides has been one of the most revisited tragedians: his depiction of women and social injustices, and his focus on the less privileged, match the recent social concerns in Ireland, and his heroines have been often rewritten to represent these anxieties. This can be exemplified through the references to *Alcestis*, which can be found as early as in J.M. Synge’s *Shadow of the Glen* (1903); the *Bacchae* Women were rewritten in 1905 by George Bernard Shaw in his *Major Barbara*, and in *The Bacchae: After Euripides* (1991) by Derek Mahon, *Wonderful Tennessee* (1993) by Brian Friel, *Bacchai* (2002) by Colin Teevan, or *The Bacchae of Baghdad* (2006) by Conall Morrison. Echoes of Helen can be appreciated in W. B. Yeats’ *Deirdre* (1906) and, more recently, in Frank McGuinness’ *Helen* (2009); Brendan Kennelly adapted *Medea* in 1988, and so did Marina Carr in *By the Bog of Cats ...* (1998); in the new millennium Kenneth McLeish and Robin Robertson, in 2000 and 2010 respectively, also addressed the myth; *The Trojan Women* were revived in the plays of Brendan Kennelly (1993) or Aidan Carl Mathews in *Trojans* (1994); Electra can be identified with the main characters of *The Mai* by Marina Carr (1994), and Frank McGuinness offered his vision of the same myth in 1997. McGuinness and Carr also rewrote *Hecuba* in 2004 and 2015, respectively. Carr has recently adapted Phaedra in *Phaedra Backwards* (2011).

As regards the main intentions behind this interest, authors such as Declan Kiberd, Marianne McDonald, Edith Hall or Brian Arkins have addressed this question. Kiberd identifies the *fili* as the first Irish artists to evoke Greek culture; the bards, who created their poems in the Gaelic Ireland, from 1200 to 1600, included in their works references to Greek and Roman texts. After the system of the English plantations had tried to acculturate Ireland, and “the world evoked in Gaelic poetry offered the one remaining social institution through which an underground consciousness might reveal itself” (Kiberd 2002, xiii), references to ancient Greece became for the Irish people a weapon to fight the colonisers, and a symbol of a rebellious attitude to be adopted since the classics “still provided a discourse in which the contexts between the various forces contending for power in Ireland could be represented” (ix).

Marianne McDonald shares this position, and relates the beginning of this Irish acquaintance with the classics to the Irish hedge schools of the seventeenth century: created after the plantations to preserve Irish culture, Greek and Latin were taught in these spaces as an attempt to escape Irish acculturation and the influence of English literature, but also to dissent or “to feed their own subversive protests” (2002, 37), and to reformulate the effects of the colonisation, or “the imposed culture on their own terms” (38); thus, the Greeks are used for political expression, and adapted to the contexts of reproduction. For instance, the initial translations from the first half of the twentieth century gave way to the election of tragedies such as *Trojan Women* or *Medea*, to be rewritten as representations of the importance of freedom and (women’s) human rights, in moments when these were debatable in the Irish society. Within this context, Euripides –who had represented men and women confronting themselves, helpless when facing the powerful gods and goddesses, and also passionate women as major characters, with a psychological depth that strengthened their role in his tragedies– was one of the most revisited playwrights in the twentieth century. His “celebrating the victim, and his appreciation of suffering and its effects on human beings” (42), represented in his tragedies, matched the reality of an Irish society, that continued struggling for independence and immersed in the debate of their own identity.

<sup>1</sup> This interest has been addressed in McDonald, Walton 2002; Dillon, Wilmer 2005; Arkins 2010, and, most recently, Hill 2019.

Edith Hall has confirmed this revival of Euripides since the 1990s, and highlights the recovery of some characters for this purpose; this is the case of Iphigenia, closely related to the societal debates that existed in the context of reproduction, specifically to the “conviction that mendacious political rhetoric has in recent years become more effective, and that the rise of spin-doctoring has been made possible only by the epistemological and metaphysical vacuum situated at the centre of the Western collective psyche” (2005, 3), which allows to understand the rewriting of characters such as Agamemnon. In addition, Hall identifies the character of the king with the power that the Church had in Irish society, and the negative effect this had on women: “[t]he *patria potestas* which the established Catholic Church has for centuries exerted over its congregation in Ireland – especially through its continuing opposition to contraception, abortion and divorce – could with little difficulty be symbolised by the paternal power Agamemnon exerts over his family” (14; italics in the original).

Hall concludes that this power over his family had its most relevant consequences in the case of her daughter. Concurrently, the situation of the agency of women in the classical text demands a reassessment in the modern stage since “*both* Iphigenia and Clytemnestra suffer passively, without assuming moral agency or putting up any appreciable resistance” (19; italics in the original), and, thus, the spaces for transformation for women emerge in the hands of contemporary playwrights.

Brian Arkins, on his side, identifies similarities in the use of myth by the classical tragedies and contemporary Irish playwrights: in both cases there is a distancing technique used to comment on utterly dramatic events; additionally, the spaces of transformation, which here names as the myth’s flexibility, allow the current dramatist to include innovations. Arkins also analyses the paradoxical presence of women, and their importance in the tragedies as powerful female roles, despite their position within the society in classical Greece: women were confined to their homes, subject to arranged marriages when they were girls, and leading “extremely restricted lives” (2010, 9). This matches the situation of women in Ireland, defined by the 1937 Constitution as State guardians who must not intend to become individuals, but fight for the common good instead; therefore, life within the homes is preferred:

1º In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.

2º The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home. (Foley, Lalor 1995, 122-123)

Thus, an identification is established between the Euripidean heroines and Irish women: Hecuba, Medea and also Iphigenia, as depicted in classical tragedies, were strong, but also sacrificial and suffering, which echo the traditional cultural iconography of Irish women as defenders and representatives of their land, community and family. These stereotypical roles are related to the construction of iconic figures used to represent the country during different moments of the history of Ireland. The Celtic mythological goddesses of Cailleach Bhéirre, Medb, Deirdre or Gráinne, can be considered the first examples of characters who became symbols of the Irish land; these images were reproduced in the eighteenth century, through the *spéirbhean* or sky-woman, who in the aisling poems, metaphored Ireland during the period of the British oppression. Ireland continued being constructed as a woman in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: the English colonizers depicted it as Hibernia, a weak woman in need of the British masculine protection. This was answered back by Irish Nationalism through the character of Dark Rosaleen, who embodied Catholic beliefs, and demanded the freedom of her country;

within the same fashion, Cathleen Ní Houlihan, represented as an Old Woman in Yeats' play (1902), grieved for the loss of Ireland, and called her countrymen to fight and die for her, and to accept the sacrifice in order to gain fame for ever:

*Old Woman.* It is a hard service they take that help me. Many that are red-cheeked now will be pale-cheeked; many that have been free to walk the hills and the bogs and the rushes will be sent to walk hard streets in far countries; many a good plan will be broken; many that have gathered money will not stay to spend it; many a child will be born and there will be no father at its christening to give it a name. They that have red cheeks will have pale cheeks for my sake, and for all that, they will think they are well paid.

*She goes out; her voice is heard outside singing.*

They shall be remembered for ever,

They shall be alive for ever,

They shall be speaking for ever,

The people shall hear them for ever. (Yeats 2008 [1902], 219)

This iconic figure of Mother Ireland, as the embodiment of a mother ashamed of her children, who had failed to defend her, has continued existing in the country. In the 1990s, contemporary representations were identified in the Irish society; it can be illustrated through the Derry Mother, a woman who embraced martyrdom – and, hence, sacrifice. The concept was defined by sociologists of the time as a woman who was expected to be strong, but silent and decent at the same time, for whom the notions of decorum and reputation were essential, and who played an essential role within the institution of family. For the Derry Mother “martyrdom was a worthy goal in itself” (McLaughlin 1993, 560). Consequently, all these figures evoked: “un patrón de sacrificio – de la madre que ofrece el martirio de sus hijos por el bien de la nación y de los hijos que mueren por la “Madre Irlanda” [...] que atrapa a las mujeres irlandesas en unos determinados roles reduccionistas y opresores” (Rosende Pérez 2008, 264)<sup>2</sup>.

Iphigenia, the myth of the sacrificial woman, has been revisited in the new millennium by Irish playwrights: Colin Teevan's *Iph* (1999) performed at the Lyric Theatre in Belfast; in 2001 Katie Mitchell directed *Iphigenia at Aulis* at the Abbey Theatre; in the same year Carr's *Ariel* premiered, also at the Abbey, and, two years after that, Edna O'Brien's version was first represented at the Sheffield Crucible. Hinds' *Iphigenia in Aulis* was first produced by Classic Stage Ireland in 2011. The plays studied in this article, by Carr, O'Brien and Hinds, can be categorised as versions, adaptations or appropriations, according to the latest theorisations about these concepts. Hence, following Brian Arkins' definition of a version, where “the Irish playwright preserves the invariant core of the Athenian tragedy [...] but feels free to add to, subtract from, manipulate the original” (2010, 25), Hinds' play could be ascribed to this type. Secondly, considering the concept of linguistic acculturation by Heing Kosok, that states that Irish writers have local audiences in mind and, thus, they adapt their versions because the English translations had not taken this into account, Carr's play comes to mind; for Kosok, the playwrights employ to achieve this “Irish speech patterns and Irish expressions, sometimes even Gaelic words in order to place them in an Irish cultural context” (Kosok 2004, 43), and this can be related to Carr's *Ariel* and her use of the Irish accent. Finally, the concepts of adaptation and appropriation, as addressed by Julie Sanders, specify that, while adaptation can constitute “[an

<sup>2</sup> A sacrificial model – of a mother that offers the martyrdom of her children for the good of the nation, and the children who die for the Mother Ireland, that imprisons Irish women in specific reductionist and oppressive roles. (Unless otherwise stated all translations are mine).

attempt to make texts ‘relevant’ or easily comprehensible to new audiences and readerships via the processes of proximation and updating” (Sanders 2006, 19), which would match Hinds’ play, appropriation involves “a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain” (26), which is closer to Carr and O’Brien’s works – in fact, O’Brien subtitled her play *A Loose Adaptation*, while Carr’s work has been considered a “more radical reworking” (Hill 2019, 141).

Apart from this classification of the three plays, it is also relevant, for the purpose of this article, to briefly consider some aspects related to the evolution of the concept of sacrifice, tragedy and myth. In this sense, the notion of willing sacrifice, has been redefined by Raymond Williams as connected to a new form of tragedy, that makes that “the ceremony of sacrifice is drowned, not in blood but in pity” (2006 [1966], 190), and this implies that the notion is rewritten to leave aside its connection to a ritual, and involves an emotional commitment to the man –or woman– who dies. It is my assumption that the adaptations examined here rework the concept of myth, and, more specifically the mytheme of the sacrificial women: considering Iphigenia’s story as the paradigm of the sacrifice myth, and examining this trope in the context of the Irish society, where the myth is revived, myth can be approached as “tending to create or recreate certain narratives which human beings take to be crucial” (Coupe 1997, 4). Thus, it will be possible to highlight the relevance of the recreations in the representation of new models of women in Ireland. Additionally, if we agree that “the work of myth is to explain, to reconcile, to guide action or to legitimate” (Cupitt 1982, 29), we will understand the relevance of these literary works for the (Irish) society: myth can open new horizons if taken as “a disclosure of unprecedented worlds, an opening on to other possible worlds which transcend the established limits of our actual world” (Ricoeur 1991, 490); in other words, it also “carries with it a promise of another mode of existence entirely [...] It is not only foundational [...] but also liberating” (Coupe 1997, 8-9), in this case, for Irish women, who are rewritten to be represented as dissenting voices and who refuse to conform with their mythological past. Myth is being used in this theatre to be reconciled with the society where it exists, as Losada suggested, since: “El mito no es un constructo mental ajeno a las vicisitudes socioculturales: lleva marcada en su piel y sus entrañas la huella de cada individuo y sociedad. El mito es un esclavo ilusionado con la [Libertad]”<sup>3</sup> (2015, 9).

## 2. *Iphigenia in Classical Greece: A Citizen by Courtesy*

Do not kill me before my time.  
The light of day is sweet: don't drive me  
Into the darkness of the underworld.  
(Euripides 2012 [c. 409 BC], 81)

In order to understand how the myth of Iphigenia is transformed in the new context of reproduction, it is essential to consider the original story, as well as its context of creation. Women in Greek society were seen as “the mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters of Athenian citizen men [...] ‘citizens’ only by courtesy” (Cartledge 2001 [1997], 27). Without presence in the public sphere, except for the public activity of religion “in which Athenian women might achieve parity or even superiority” (28), their religious role was linked to the spheres of death, burial and

<sup>3</sup> The myth is not a mental construct unconnected to sociocultural vicissitudes: it has engraved in its skin and guts the trace of each individual and society. The myth is a slave excited to achieve Freedom.

mourning. Furthermore, they were eligible for the posts of priesthood: their presence in these rites was associated to Maenadic or Dionysiac cults where they entered a state of frenzied ecstasy when worshipping the god. Consequently, they “were regarded as more susceptible to invasive passions than men, especially eros and daemonic possession; women were thus both plausible instigators of tragic events, and effective generators of emotional responses” (Hall 2001 [1997], 106).

Women’s absence from public spaces in Greece was linked to the preservation of a man’s reputation, since “political enemies might attack him by targeting his dependants, especially his wife, for litigation or ridicule. The convention that respectable women were not even to be named in public stems from the same ideal” (105). This had as a consequence that they remained under the legal control of men, being regarded as weak and frail, without authority; additionally, they were not expected to be alone outdoors—this could damage their reputation, as did being with men alone. Thus, they showed apologetic attitudes when speaking or acting in public, and considered their involvement in religious activities and their own death for their community as honourable. This paralysis contributed to the creation in the Greek tragedies of female characters who were women in waiting, Penelopes or “static household-bound women awaiting and reacting to the comings and goings of men” (107). Female transgressive actions in this context usually happened in the absence of their fathers or husbands, i.e. in the absence of a male authority that controlled them, precisely to exclude any male responsibility. To add to the picture, female solidarity did not exist, since “friendship between individual women is consistently portrayed as a dangerous phenomenon” (108). The tragedies then depicted “the disastrous effects on households and the larger community of divinely inspired madness, anger, sexual desire, or jealousy” (109), and, paradoxically, all performers were men performing women characters who engendered “social and political dislocation, disharmony or destruction” (Cartledge 2001 [1997], 30). It was then paramount to control these citizens by courtesy.

Within this context, classical Iphigenia conformed to the expected role, and the character was built as a paradigm of submission and obedience. Euripides’ *Iphigeneia at Aulis* (409 BC) has as some of the main themes the concepts of sacrifice, related to women’s agency, and reputation, linked to men’s ambitions. The play has as the major characters the king of Argos, Agamemnon, his wife Clytemnestra, and their daughter, Iphigenia; the prince of Phthia, Achilles, and the king of Sparta and brother of Agamemnon, Menelaus, also play important roles. Agamemnon opens the play recalling the story of Helen: a stereotypical powerless woman who passed from the authority of her father to that of her husband. Her affair with Paris is not presented as an abduction, but as an attraction that both felt and made them run away together. Even though some freedom is suggested here for women in society, the fact that they were given to their husbands through a legal contract, that included a dowry, impedes their independence. This lack of individuality is also affected by divine intervention: the gods announce that their will must be fulfilled through the prophecy of Calchas, and Agamemnon’s daughter shall be sacrificed, so that the army might sail successfully to Troy. The sacrifice is presented as an unavoidable act and, although Agamemnon tries to resist at first, he will finally be convinced by his brother about the necessity of his loss to achieve common good, or, in other words, to sacrifice the woman for benefit of the whole community.

Opposed to this, masculine characters in the classical play have political concerns, that set them apart from the domestic sphere, and manifest their ambitious personalities; they consider reputation as their means to achieve glory, since honouring the ancestry could bring them “undying fame” (Euripides 2012 [c. 409 BC], 41). This is, for instance, represented in Menelaus and Agamemnon: when the former finds out about his brother’s intention to stop the sacrifice of Iphigenia, he threatens to tell all the Greeks, and appeals to the importance of the moral and

social obligation towards those who helped him achieve power. Although Agamemnon makes some complaints about the disadvantages of having to preserve reputation for the public service position—“Nobles have nothing but misfortunes. Our life is ruled by pride, we are the slaves of the mob” (33)—the fact is that this rhetoric will be later transformed to justify his actions, and he links reputation to obligation, to conclude that “This is what I have to do” (83), i.e., excluding any personal responsibility. In addition, Agamemnon contributes to Iphigenia’s immobilisation when he links her sacrifice to her daughter’s duty towards Greece; to achieve this, he personifies the country, and uses the symbol to explain his doubts: “[i]t’s Greece that I pity. She embarked on a noble mission, but now those barbarian nobodies are left off the hook, to laugh at her” (27). However, this reveals that he is moved by reputation, but also by fear of being killed by the angry mob.

Considering that murder, or any physical violence, could not be shown on the Greek stage—these episodes were hidden— Iphigenia’s death and transformation in the classical text are presented as a ritual, rather than as a slaughter. Her initial reaction to her death evolves, and her appeal to her father is first logically based on her youth and the tragedy of death: “Do not kill me before my time. The light of day is sweet: don’t drive me into the darkness of the underworld” (81). For her “a miserable life is better than a noble death” (83). Nevertheless, the concept of the honourability of a woman’s sacrifice for her country grows through the play as a strong argument for her acceptance; Agamemnon uses it repeatedly: “it is Greece, for whom [...] I must sacrifice you. We are powerless against this. Greece must be free” (85); and the idea is reinforced later through divine intervention: “Artemis has taken me as a sacrifice to win glory for Greek girls” (87). Her final transformation into a sacrificial woman is based on her conviction that “I have resolved to die. I want to do it with dignity, in no way ignobly” (91). She decides to become a martyr for Greece, and the admiration that her action will cause becomes a reward for her as “fame as the liberator of Greece will be revered” (*ibidem*). She refuses to fight the gods’ will, and concludes: “I dedicate my body to Greece” (93). Thus, sacrifice becomes self-sacrifice, a ritual and a symbol of nobility for women. In addition, the concept of death, as a ritual passage into a new existence, is present in the play when the plot is resolved through a supernatural intervention: Iphigenia is miraculously turned into a deer, and her ascension to the gods serves to evoke her patriotism, but also to kill her.

### 3. *Iphigenia in Contemporary Ireland: A Rebel Citizen*

Come and get me, will ya? Ud’s awful here, ud’s awful. There’s a huge pike after me, he lives in the belfry, two rows a teeth on him and teeth on hees tongue, bendin back to hees throah. He won’t rest till he has me. Come and get me, will ya?  
(Carr 2002, 56)

Carr, O’Brien and Hinds’ plays premiered at the beginning of the twenty-first century, when women in Ireland had gained presence in the public domain (Kirby 2010). Notwithstanding, referendums about their rights still showed there were debatable issues concerning their agency,<sup>4</sup> and, despite the fact that globalization brought financial independence to many

<sup>4</sup> The 25th Amendment to the Constitution of Ireland, dated 6 March 2002, about the subject of abortion, was proposed to exclude the risk of suicide to the mother as one of the reasons to terminate a pregnancy – it had already been proposed in 1992, rejected then by 65.4% – and this was defeated only by 50.4%.

women, it also caused “the commodification of women’s bodies, as well as inequality regarding the impact of economic growth” (Hill 2019, 137). Religion, on the other hand, was questioned as an institution with a relevant role within the society, and the publication of several reports, in 2009 and 2013, denouncing child and women’s abuse in contexts related to religious-run institutions—like the Murphy and Ryan reports, and the McAleese Report, associated to the Magdalene laundries—contributed to the erosion of the church authority, and the denounce of the situation of women. Within this context, rewriting the myth of a woman who had willingly accepted her sacrifice for the common good, reveals meanings related to the new situation of women in Ireland and, mostly, to their demands.

These three plays should be considered as relevant contributions to the reception of Euripides in Ireland; while Carr’s theatre receives much critical attention, *Ariel* is one of the plays which demands further analysis in relation to the presence of myths. O’Brien’s version has been studied, but not closely compared with its original source, which allows to reveal the spaces for transformation the playwright built; Hinds’ *Iphigenia* has not been considered as it deserves, and the careful selection of the playwright when it comes to decide which parts to extend, reduce or relocate, should be addressed to find new meanings for the myth in contemporary society. In all the three cases, Iphigenia is not any longer a citizen by courtesy, but a rebel woman who refuses to accept the myth and asks her father to bring her back to life.

### 3.1. *Ariel* (2002) by Marina Carr

Judy Friel, at the Abbey, asked me to write the program note for *Iphigenia at Aulis* earlier this year, and that forced me to revisit it. So it was a case of just going back to it and being hungry to write at the same time.

(Carr 2001, 55)

One of the aspects that defines Irish theatre at the beginning of the twenty-first century is “the search for a binding mythology with which to express and unify conceptions of Irish identity for the contemporary stage” (Fitzpatrick 2007, 170). Within this context, Fintan O’Toole, in *Critical Moments: Fintan O’Toole on Modern Irish Theatre* (2003), argues that new frameworks have to be used to analyse the adaptations of Greek tragedies, in order to consider how these are affected by the concepts of a society which is “in disarray” (188): globalization and the integration of Ireland within Europe contributed to the loss of commonalities, which brought changes in the representation in Irish theatre, and micro-narratives are used to rewrite the meta-narrative. In Carr’s play the sacrifice of the Irish Iphigenia, Ariel, acquires a new significance “becoming a demonic act in pursuit of foul ambition, reversing the normative meaning of the act” (175), and creating a new myth which symbolises the dissenting voices of women in Ireland.

In *Ariel* Carr imagines another of her disarrayed, decadent and upsetting sagas, the Fitzgeralds, who live in a house surrounded by “Grake columns” (2002, 32). In the first act Fermoy Fitzgerald and his wife Frances celebrate their daughter’s sixteenth birthday. Very early in the drama we learn about Fermoy’s political ambitions, as well as his desire for power. His self-assurance is based on an exchange with God, which serves to introduce the theme of sacrifice: for the heartless and unscrupulous Irish Agamemnon, power “[u]d’s mine for the takin, I know ud is, all ud nades on my part is a sacrifice” (18). Though we do not know about Fermoy’s intentions to kill Ariel until the second act, Carr has already built the Greek altar, and the concept of sacrifice appears related to a corrupt politician’s ambitions, rather than to a fair king. Fermoy

also develops the theme of reputation, used in the classical version to explain Agamemnon's duties and justify his daughter's death, and reconstructed by Carr as a lame excuse for the unstoppable ambition of political candidates, who diminish the dignity of their voters, part of their community, defining them as:

All chirpin the wan tune like there's no other – aqual wages, crèches in the workplace, no ceilin on the women, the pace process, a leg up for the poor, the handicapped, the refugees, the tinkers, the tachers, the candlestick makers. In Sparta they were left on the side a the hill and that's where I'll lave em when I've the reins. (17-18)

Fermoy also departs from his Greek counterpart in the depiction of their countries: rather than praising Ireland, as Agamemnon did with Greece, he laments the fact that Ireland has lost prestige, since it has been occupied, not by great conquerors such as Napoleon, but by the British, who “have left us [...] the till” (42). In addition, Fermoy becomes a dictator who thinks of himself as in charge of rewriting history: “we nade to re-imagine ourselves from scratch” (*ibidem*). From this position, he boasts of his one-to-one relationship with God, depicted as a vengeful and cruel character demanding “blood and more blood, blood till we're dry as husks” (19). The relationship between gods and men in the Irish tragedy has changed, as can be seen from the conversations Fermoy has with his brother Boniface, where He is depicted as an absent entity: “Facts are he hasn't been seen for over two thousand year, for all we know he's left the solar system [...]. Times I wonder was he ever here” (15). Through this, Carr is isolating Fermoy as the only one to be blamed for the murder of his daughter, and eliminating the classical image of him as the gods' puppet.

The use of rhetoric in the classical tragedy is still present in *Ariel*, but it has been transformed: Carr's characters use the Midlands accent and, while Agamemnon's rhetoric was very much constructed around the expression of his doubts about the killing of Iphigenia, or his insights about his duties as a loyal servant to his country fellows, Fermoy, very early in the play, states his decision, which is far from being hesitant but based on his own benefit: “If I refuse this sacrifice, I'm facin the grave meself and, worse, facin him after refusing me destiny and, worse agin, after refusin him the wan thing he asks as payment for this enchanted life” (19). Additionally, moderation and worries about the advantages of a public life are not part of the speechmaking displayed by the Irish politician, who declares his intention to become powerful and his refusal to “spind any more a me life on the margins” (*ibidem*). His objective is achieved in act two, when ten years have passed, and we learn that he has held three ministries and has been involved in some scandals that corroborate his lack of morality. Rhetoric is used at this point to express his grandiloquence, to try to disguise his real intentions, and to show his need to serve the political party, which “cannot be sacrificed to wan individual, whaever our privahe estimations of thah individual may be” (40). Rhetoric has been transformed into spin doctoring, displayed by Fermoy in the press conferences, where the use of Ariel's death to arise the feeling of pity in the voters is presented as a dirty strategy to achieve power – a metaphor of the situation of the contextual Ireland, where the Celtic Tiger had given way to recession and economic crisis, very closely related to the corruption of some (Hill 2019). This ambition brings again the lack of female solidarity, which can be seen in the character of Elaine, Ariel's sister and Fermoy's accomplice in Ariel's death:

FERMOY Elaine, what do ya think?

ELAINE Three things. Ya can't admih ya love power. Thah has to go. God. Pape's fierce touchy abouh God. We may pare thah back. And three, Ariel. Ariel's your trump card. Play ud. Ya nade to go wud the emotion of ud more. Thah's whah pape wants, details of your personal life. Don't be afraid to give ud to them. Don't be afraid to give em Ariel. (Carr 2002, 45)



The character of Ariel is absent until act two. Carr explains first the background that framed her death. For this, it is essential to describe what type of person his father was: after he has become Taoiseach (Prime Minister of Ireland), Boniface, a monk who is Fermoy's older brother, reveals that the politician killed Ariel ten years ago, and the sacrifice was not a ritual but a blood sacrifice: "ya tould me, Fermoy, thah nigh ya were goin an abouh blood sacrifice" (2002, 50). Thus, the play dismantles the classical version, and this is highlighted through Ariel's depiction as a character whose existence in contemporary Ireland seems impossible; a woman who had willingly accepted her fatal destiny, is rewritten by Carr as a ghostly girl –echoing the airy spirit freed by Prospero from the tree he had been imprisoned by a witch, Sycorax, in *The Tempest*–, having wings and, most significantly, asking her father to bring her back to life, disrupting the traditional ending where she had died peacefully. Her supplication to her father is consequently reworked as the plea of an innocent girl who begs to be rescued from a dark place, to unmask the myth, and demands her right not to be killed before her time:

Come and get me, will ya? Ud's awful here, ud's awful. There's a huge pike after me, he lives in the belfry, two rows a teeth on him and teeth on hees tongue, bendin back to hees throah. He won't rest till he has me. Come and get me, will ya? (56)

Carr adds more spaces of transformation when she leaves aside the original plot of Iphigenia and turns to Aeschylus' *Oresteia* and Sophocles' *Electra* to depict the struggle between Frances/Clytemnestra and Elaine/Electra, in her attempt to create strong women. Frances will kill Fermoy in this version, and Elaine will stab Frances to avenge her father –adding another twist, since in the classical counterpart it was Orestes/Stephen the one who killed her mother. Frances differs from Clytemnestra in so far as she does not conform to her husband: despite the fact that she is bounded by the weight of the past, and is then part of a generation of women tied to a fatal destiny – her mother's body was found at Cuura Lake, her daughter Elaine hates her– and although she is aware that, as a wife, she depends on her husband's success: "I'm the wan'll suffer if he doesn't geh in. I'm the wan'll be blemt" (26). However, she refuses to conform with her role of a caring mother, becomes firmer and avenges Ariel's death by killing Fermoy. Furthermore, she regains freedom when she fights for her life, and, as Ariel did before her, refuses to die willingly, to end up prophesizing: "I'll rise agin in spihe a your efforts to wipe the ground wud me" (65), to rewrite the myth again, and to contribute to the eradication of the role of the sacrificial woman.

### 3.2. *Iphigenia (2003) by Edna O'Brien*

Iphigenia was incomplete and finished by another hand. The other hand is what gives the play as we know it a false and substanceless ending. At the very last moment the sacrifice is aborted, Iphigenia whisked away and a deer put lying on the ground, the altar sprinkled with the necessary blood. It seems unthinkable that an artist of Euripides' unflinching integrity, with a depth and mercilessness of sensibility, would soften his powerful story for public palliation.

(O'Brien 2003, 63)

Edna O'Brien's *Iphigenia* was first premiered at the Crucible Theatre, Sheffield, in 2003. For the Irish playwright the story's main theme was "why men go to war. Why they have gone to war down the centuries. Is it for right? Is it for morality to be better or is it for human beings or is it partly to do with their inner sense of conquest?" (qtd. in Stock 2014, 66). Furthermore, she rejects the classical ending, which she reads as trying to please the expectations of the Greek

audience. Thus, she will introduce innovations in her play that include new characters, plot variations, and the rewriting of Iphigenia, to avoid her depiction as a frail and naïve woman, who does not protest for being killed and is rewarded with her miraculous and celestial transformation.

O’Brien adds novelistic features through the presence of extra narrators – Agamemnon’s concubine, the Old Witch and Iphigenia’s nurse –, who contribute to the plot variations, such as the suggestion that “Agamemnon was sexually attracted to Iphigenia” (Hall 2005, 15), in order to explain his abhorrent crime. These references also serve to match the context of reproduction of the myth: an Ireland, where child abuse by the Catholic Church and marital violence against women, especially in rural areas, were societal debates that could inspire these theme choices. Furthermore, O’Brien increases the number of characters, through the inclusion of five young girls, and the sixth girl, to highlight feminist voices and question, again, the concept of sacrificial women and their acceptance of this role.

The play starts with the character of the Witch announcing that Zeus has stopped the winds because Agamemnon has refused to fulfil his vow to Artemis, the sacrifice of her daughter. The five young girls and the sixth girl replace the classical chorus, and offer a fresh and lightened feminine perspective of the events, that exclude the classical praises to feminine chastity and include, instead, their blatant comments about their sexual desire, as can be seen, for instance, in their description of the arrival of the ships to their shores “to glut our women’s eyes” (O’Brien 2003, 70). By cutting some of the chorus sections O’Brien gives more prominence to women’s voices which reject the sacrifice, or, in the playwright’s words, the slaughter:

I have two women. One is the voice of the appetite for war. The appetite for sacrifice. The appetite for blood. And her opposite is the one who prays that the Goddess—in this case, it could be the God, but it’s a Goddess—would avert this slaughter. (67)

The sixth girl becomes a major character, despite being a servant and, thus, not of exalted rank: she is Agamemnon’s lover, and this role allows her to speak out; in her interchanges with the king, she rewrites (hi)stories of other women, reworking the theme of female solidarity. This is the case of Helen, for whom she feels admiration: she has become now a model for women who “can learn marvellous things from captivating women” (72); to add to the picture, she is not ashamed of her affair with Agamemnon, or her own ambition for power, and openly states that “every woman desires a king” (*ibidem*), disrupting traditional classical roles related to chastity.

Iphigenia’s sacrifice is presented as an unavoidable act in this version: Agamemnon announces it, and acknowledges the evilness and premeditation of his plan: “And so I plot and weave and slither against her that I love so dearly” (90). When Clytemnestra and her husband meet, O’Brien inserts the “I will” scene, to depict sacrifice as the result of a man’s actions, as it happened in Carr, without any other divine intervention that might have previously served to justify; the scene confirms Agamemnon’s guiltiness, and highlights, at the same time, Clytemnestra’s strength and power over her husband:

CLYTEMNESTRA Isn’t one death enough to contemplate in one day, your own daughter’s at that. Who will draw the sword across her child’s neck?

*Echo of* “Who will draw the sword across her child’s neck” *twice*.

AGAMEMNON I will.

CLYTEMNESTRA Who will slit it?

*Echo of* “Who will slit it” *once*.

AGAMEMNON I will.

CLYTEMNESTRA Who will hold the cup for the ... torrent of blood?

AGAMEMNON I will. [...]

CLYTEMNESTRA I will not let this happen. (97-98)

Goddesses are prayed to in order to stop Iphigenia's slaughter, and their role redefined through the weakening of their arguments: Artemis, for instance, talks through the figure of the Witch, adding the effect of magic powers as elements which played an important role to convince Iphigenia about the importance of being remembered as an honourable martyr; the words of the goddess serve also to highlight Iphigenia's lack of agency through the repetition of "For it is time", which makes reference to the girl as an essential part in the divine plan:

When you have fulfilled your destiny  
 You shall be raised among the blessed  
 And our dear land will honor you for ever  
 For it is time  
 For it is time. (103)

Notwithstanding, none of these reasons will convince the princess and, when his father states that the sacrifice is "for Greece. She must be free. If it is in our power, yours and mine, to make her so, we must" (104), Iphigenia alters the original plot, and answers back, claiming the recognition of her loneliness in the fight for her country: "It falls to me alone ... without you" (*ibidem*). The reworking of Iphigenia is concluded in her supplication to her father, where the classical "do not kill me before my time" (Euripides 2012 [c. 409 BC], 81) becomes "do not destroy me before my time ... I love the light ... do not despatch me down to the netherworld ... hell is dark and creepy and I have no friends there ..." (O'Brien 2003, 104), coinciding with Carr's depiction of the princess as an innocent girl who does not understand death, or the role of women in those rituals, and rejects the obligation to serve their communities. After this, the moment of the sacrifice is reconfigured by describing it as a scene where violence, blood and death are shown on stage: Iphigenia screams while she is lifted, significantly, by the men. When she is killed by her father, the blood drips and other women appear on the scene in the form of female shrieks which are heard. The sacrifice has turned from a ritual into a slaughter, the female death is staged, avoiding the beauty of the sacrifice in classical times, and presenting women's deaths as the result of the "patriarchal drive to contain woman through the imposition of passivity and silence, and, concurrently, to maintain the status quo" (Hill 2019, 136):

*Iphigenia is raised up and carried offstage toward the altar.*  
*Agamemnon follows. [...]*  
*Death shrieks — all female.*  
*The blood begins to drip.*  
*That sound held for a moment. (O'Brien 2003, 108)*

The final scene reinforces this by presenting Clytemnestra covered by blood, while the Young Girls rise their feminist voices "vivified [...] speaking the prophecy of the fate to come" (109), and announce Clytemnestra's revenge on men, a symbol of strong women who refuse to accept their (mythological) endings:

He falls on the silver-sided bath, his brain awhirl, in death convulsion, his eyes staring in disbelief at you, at you his queen.  
 Will add her hand to the hand of Aegisthus and drive the blade clean home into your king's breast, exacting the full price... (110)

### 3.3. Iphigenia in Aulis (2011) by Andy Hinds

Whether the ending we have has been appended to Euripides’ intended ending, or is replacing an ending by Euripides now lost as a pay-off to the end of the play, it neither convinces nor satisfies.  
(Hinds 2017, 15)

In 2017 *Iphigenia in Aulis*, by Andy Hinds, was published, although the play had been first produced in 2011 by Classic Stage Ireland. Hinds worked on the original text from two perspectives; first, he translated the text, from a medieval manuscript. Secondly, he wrote a more performable, stage version of the play, marked by his decisions about which sections of the prevailing Euripidean text were to be kept, eliminated, or relocated, in order to gain consistency; by analysing these variations, the spaces for transformation and the myth flexibility can be identified, as well as the intentions behind this.

To make it more performable and attractive to the modern audience, Hinds is more explanatory. This can be seen, for instance, in the parodos, or first entry of the chorus in the Euripidean version: when the young married women describe the famous heroes, who made the Greek army assembled at Aulis, Odysseus, originally described as “Laertes’ son, / Who has come from his island crags” (Euripides 2012 [c. 409 BC], 17), becomes in Hinds’ play, in a more illustrative fashion, “Laertes’ son, Odysseus/ From the craggy hills of Ithaca” (2017, 116); similarly, “The Fleet of the Myrmidons from Phthia” (Euripides 2012 [c. 409 BC], 19), are in this Irish version “Were Myrmidons / The force of Achilles brought from Phthia” (Hinds 2017, 117); and Odysseus is introduced as “Seed of Sisyphus” (129), to remind the audience of his family tree. Hinds also reorders the information at some points, so that the story line is easier to follow; this happens, for instance, when the chorus, in the first choral ode, addresses, in Euripides, the importance of moderation, of nature and nurture, and, then, the story of Paris, before Clytemnestra and her party arrive. Hinds changes the order of the events, and situates Paris’ background first, adding ten lines, to remind the plots of the distant classical myths.

On the other side, some lines are eliminated: Hinds chooses those parts of the Euripidean play that are considered later additions, i.e., not original. For instance, the first scene between Agamemnon and Menelaus has lost the part where Menelaus criticizes Agamemnon remembering his past. The effect is that the action is faster; moreover, the cut lines do not affect the understanding of the play. In the same scene, Agamemnon responds, and Hinds removes his first lines where he explains to Menelaus that honour is precisely what has made him change his mind about Iphigenia: rhetoric is not present and, consequently, the focus changed to Agamemnon’s refusal to kill his daughter. This is reformulated from “I will not kill my own child” (Euripides 2012 [c. 409 BC], 29) to the more tragic “I will not kill my flesh and blood” (Hinds 2017, 122). Hinds also reduces the lines in the first encounter between Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, and excludes the part where, in Euripides, Agamemnon had lamented the loss of his daughter, as well as the first lines of Clytemnestra, where she had shown agreement with her husband as regards this feeling. Subsequently, the tragedy increases its dramatic effect, since there is no space left for the lamentation of the parents.

Furthermore, Hinds adds and rewrites some of the lines for the main characters: Clytemnestra’s words for Agamemnon become harsher: she does not use the adjective “weak”, as she did in the classical version, to refer to him, but the sentence “He is a coward!” (148). This depiction of the queen as a stronger woman coincides with Carr and O’Brien’s interest in

making women speak the unspeakable. Besides, Hinds problematizes the citizens' obligation towards their country: when Agamemnon answers to her daughter, saying that it is impossible for him not to commit the sacrifice in the name of Greece, Hinds adds the line "We must bow to her" (156), to emphasize the excess of the obedience demanded by their community. This behaviour from the king affects the rewriting of other characters: Achilles and Clytemnestra's meeting is marked by his explicit words towards the king, which question the recognition of the sacrifice as a noble act: "Do not imagine / I will greet this with forbearance; / I too am full of anger with your husband" (145).

Hinds relocates some lines belonging to main characters, and these are given to the chorus; for instance, very significantly, some parts that originally belonged to Iphigenia, such as the moment when she decides willingly to face her sacrifice, excluding the self-sacrifice as a possibility. As a result, Iphigenia's first song is shortened, starts by asserting the betrayal of her father, and does not sing about the fate of Paris, to compare this with her own destiny. Hinds does this during the whole song, and alternates the chorus and Iphigenia's lines so that, as he states in a stage direction "It is as though the chorus are giving voice to her thoughts" (157): the playwright provides more voices to voice Iphigenia, and, at the same time, less lines to justify her servility to Greece.

Finally, Hinds alters the ending: even though he was aware of being acting against the rule for tragedies, that the most relevant events happened behind the scenes, he also chooses to show Iphigenia's pain in the form of her speech where, while she willingly walks to her death, refuses to be touched by any Greek man:

And so, you see, no Greek  
Need lay his hands on me;  
Unflinching on the altar,  
I shall bare my neck myself  
Before the blade. (164)

Her death is portrayed as a murder: It is Achilles who cuts her throat on stage, while all are still and silent, before they hear a breeze in the distance that announces that the war is about to start after the sacrifice, since the ships will finally be able to lay siege to Troy, to war. Hinds seems to define the ultimate meaning of Iphigenia's death, related in this case to human's need to siege and conquer.

#### 4. Conclusions: "Do not destroy me before my time"

Iphigenia, a classical paradigm of sacrifice, complying with men's authority, is rewritten in contemporary Irish theatre and refuses to be killed before her time; in the versions and appropriations of Marina Carr, Edna O'Brien and Andy Hinds, she questions obedience to her father and her country, and refuses to die peacefully. Consequently, her character is redeemed by the Irish playwrights, rescued from victimhood, and able to achieve individuality and abandon the classical role. Carr's Ariel supplicates to be rescued from a dark space where the light of the promised eternal glory cannot be found; O'Brien's Iphigenia discovers that the fight for her country falls to her alone, and rejects the burden; Hinds eliminates the part where, in the original play, Iphigenia had decided to die, rejecting the idea of self-sacrifice. Thus, the Irish Iphigenias are not any longer paradigms of female submission, and this extends to other female characters, such as Clytemnestra, previously demonized for challenging male power, and now reacting to oppression through rage and the aspiration to power, as can be seen, for instance, in *Ariel*.

This study has revealed the spaces for transformation created by the contemporary writers in the form of the creation, or elimination, of some scenes, characters or plots. There are more women characters in the modern-day plays, and their parts gain importance; they are not representative of chaos, but the ones in charge of restoring order; they speak the unspeakable, while corruption is attributed to men – Agamemnon is signalled in the three versions as the main instigator of his daughter’s death –, and they have ceased to be the instigators of tragic events; they are no longer weak, frail or apologetic, do not consider their deaths as honourable, and do not resolve to die to liberate their oppressed countries. These variations mirror the situation of women in the context of reproduction: An Ireland where these issues still demand a reappraisal, since modern Iphigenias still have to cry out “Do not destroy me before my time” (O’Brien 2003, 104).

The three plays studied here reveal how contemporary Irish playwrights revive classical myths through the creation of spaces for transformation which represent the changes in the Irish society, and, thus, the resulting versions and appropriations can keep the attachment to its moment. This use of mythology unveils the situation of women as one of the main concerns that continues being debatable and considered as a social injustice in Ireland. The myth is, in this sense, a symbol of rebellion, a provider of a dissenting discourse, and an attempt to escape stereotypes and to represent subversion. By unmasking the myth of Iphigenia, Carr, O’Brien and Hinds, also unmask the myth of Irish women as defenders and representatives of their country, a role perpetuated through Irish history through the creation of a myth or narrative which was considered crucial; the explanatory quality of myth legitimates now new behaviours which transcend the limits imposed previously and, thus, the myth connects to the new sociocultural context. The creation of these new Iphigenias, who refuse to represent their countries and to die for it, contributes to the destruction of the stereotypical roles of female iconic figures used in Ireland for centuries, and the concept of sacrifice, closely related to these symbols, is deconstructed to suggest that it cannot any longer be considered as a ritual, but as an abhorrent act that does not symbolise contemporary women.

This analysis has contributed to palliate the lack of critical attention over Carr, Hinds and O’Brien’s versions and adaptations of the myth of Iphigenia. It has proved the relevant role played by contemporary playwrights in the creation of spaces for transformation that emerge during the process of rewriting the Greeks, and it has also revealed the meanings behind those transformations, which are closely related to the situation of women in Ireland. The three plays must be considered as relevant contributions within the canon of Irish versions of Euripides’ plays, and they confirm that the Irish interest towards classical Greek tragedies continues being related to an intention to depict rebellious attitudes, subversive characters, but also the victims and the suffering of human beings. These works confirm the revival of Euripides, albeit reassessed in the modern stage, through the depiction of women who, in the hands of contemporary playwrights, refuse to die before their time.

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# Global Ireland and the Digital Footprint: The Abbey Theatre Archives in the Digital Repository of Ireland

*Nahed Mohammed Ahmed Meklash*  
Matrouh University (<[nahedmeklash24@mau.edu.eg](mailto:nahedmeklash24@mau.edu.eg)>)

## *Abstract:*

While digital technologies were initially seen as harbingers of globalization, scholars increasingly acknowledge their role in the rise of nationalism. This paper argues that the policies and practices of the Digital Repository of Ireland (DRI) simultaneously resonate with national as well as global opportunities in light of the vision of Global Ireland 2025. As a trusted national digital repository for Ireland's humanities, the DRI can be a celebration of the Abbey Theater collection as a prototype of these national and global opportunities. This paper outlines the earlier attempt of the Abbey Theater Digitizing Archive Project at the National University of Ireland, Galway's library (NUIG) and its limitations, as well as the policies and Practices of open access, collaboration, and metadata management in the Digital Repository of Ireland. In doing so, the paper draws on the conceptual framework in light of Global Ireland's objectives and the publications of some of the stakeholders and directors of the DRI, such as Sharon Webb and Aileen O'Carroll. The outcomes of this paper are that the DRI globally contributes to representing the national position of Abbey Theatre by ingesting and visualizing the scenes that express the Irish struggle for freedom and identity, illuminating the importance of Irish literary discourse over time and place. Also, the use of the interdisciplinary approach uncovers how the use of digital tools highlights the opportunities that the DRI can offer to disseminate, discover, and visualize the dramatic performances of Abbey Theatre as an Irish literary heritage and as an essential part of the Irish national canon.

*Keywords:* Abbey Theater Digital Collections, Abbey Theatre Digitizing Archive Project, Global Ireland 2025, Interdisciplinary Approach, The Digital Repository of Ireland

## *1. Introduction*

Digital preservation is a complex process associated with numerous unresolved organisational, managerial, and technical issues. Indeed, managing institutional repositories is a challenging task. Numerous preservation activities to date have focu-



sed on the creation of repositories, the depositing of content, the promotion of content, the discovery and access of content, and/or the promotion of a necessary cultural shift. However, digital preservation has not been incorporated as an integral part of repositories workflow, and there is a lack of experience and consensus on the best practices to be used for digital preservation (Hockx-Yu 2006). To understand the processes needed to achieve the long-term digital preservation of objects deposited in a repository, it is helpful to break down what is understood as “effective preservation”.

Despite the challenges posed by digital preservation, cultural transformation requires its implementation. According to the Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC) mission statement, digital preservation has multiple purposes, which vary according to the reasons for preserving digital content, preserving the originality of digital content and protecting it from damage and loss is one such reason<sup>1</sup>. The current European policy framework for the digitisation of cultural heritage is supported by a collection of strategies, initiatives and programmes that aim to comprehend the relationship between cultural heritage and education, tourism, sustainability, development, and job creation<sup>2</sup>. Some critics argue that the European policy framework for the digitisation of cultural heritage is structured along a number of axes. One axis is concerned with promoting cultural heritage-driven innovations and the social and economic benefits they offer. Another objective is to assist in reversing the negative effects of COVID-19 on cultural heritage-relevant sectors, via digitisation (Münster, Utescher, Ulutas Aydogan 2021). This demonstrates a multidimensional approach to the digital preservation of cultural heritage and its associated benefits. However, this European policy applies to all European nations, and is not primarily concerned with the national potential of digitising the cultural heritage of individual countries.

According to Irish digital cultural preservation policy, users must be taken into account, so as to support a vision in which digital cultural heritage is accessible and shared in order to entertain and educate<sup>3</sup>. The Irish policy resonates with Paul Wheatley (2004) who summarises primary preservation objectives as follows:

- 1) Data is maintained in the repository without being corrupted, lost, or maliciously altered.
- 2) Data can be located, extracted, and served to the user.
- 3) Data can be interpreted and comprehended by the user.

The first objective is a fundamental requirement which every digital repository must meet. The second and third objectives require repositories to support search and retrieval functions in order to improve information accessibility.

Digital preservation research has received a great deal of attention in recent years. In this respect, standards such as the Open Archive Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAIP-MH) have made it easier for service providers to create discovery services across repositories using repeated metadata harvesting (*ibidem*). These are the objectives that digital preservation must meet. It is insufficient simply to preserve the original bit-stream that represents the data stored in a digital object. The challenge is to ensure that users can access and understand the intellectual property of content that has been ingested into the repository in the past, despite

<sup>1</sup> See *About – Digital Preservation Coalition*, <<https://www.dpconline.org/about>> (05/2023).

<sup>2</sup> See *Digital Cultural Heritage – Shaping Europe’s Digital Future*, <<https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/cultural-heritage>> (05/2023).

<sup>3</sup> See *Digital Preservation – Digital Repository Ireland*, <<https://dri.ie/digital-preservation#>> (05/2023).

hardware and software changes over time. In this respect, the DRI supports the reuse of cultural heritage data in research, education, the creative industries, and tourism. However, this content needs to be curated responsibly, and preserved and shared, not only on websites run by individual organisations, but via national and international platforms such as DRI, HeritageMaps.ie, Data.gov.ie, and Europeana<sup>4</sup>.

If we take into account the goals of the Global Ireland 2025 initiative, and the Culture Ireland Strategy 2017-2020, it could be argued that the DRI relates to Irish policies on digital cultural preservation and Irish cultural dissemination worldwide. Indeed, according to *Global Ireland: Progress Report Year 1, June 2018-June 2019*, one goal for communicating with the Irish Diaspora is to promote Irish culture and values (*Global Ireland* 2018). In this respect, Global Ireland emphasises the significance of Irish expatriates, which is a 70 million-strong Diaspora, as well as the ability of Irish culture and heritage to forge new international connections. In this way, Global Ireland 2025 encourages Irish culture to be tangible and visible to a variety of users and audiences, including the Irish Diaspora, students, scholars, and tourists. Global Ireland 2025 also works to strengthen relationships and communications with large numbers of Irish and non-Irish citizens abroad<sup>5</sup>. To achieve these goals, and to measure progress, five prominent cultural ambassadors were appointed, and a Global Ireland Stakeholders' Conference was set up, as part of a multi-year plan to double the scope and impact of Ireland's global footprint by 2025. This initiative was also designed to reflect the Irish Government's commitment to dissemination goals.

Taking into account the goals of Global Ireland 2025's promotion of the dissemination of Irish cultural heritage, the remainder of this paper is divided into three sections. Section 1 will discuss Global Ireland and the Abbey Theatre, and section 3 will discuss the digital footprint of Ireland and the Abbey Theatre. In this context, section 2 will define the Global Ireland 2025 initiative, and will provide evidence for the Abbey Theatre's role in promoting this initiative. Section 3 derives its conceptual framework from a description of the Abbey Theatre's digital archive project at the Library of the National University of Ireland in Galway (NUIG), and this section will also consider the limitations of the project. Section 4 will explore DRI opportunities for the Abbey Theatre's archived collections and will outline policies and practices used as part of the project, namely: Ireland's national policy for digital preservation and open access; the policy of federation; collaboration and partnership policy; and usability, archiving and access policy. Section 5 will discuss metadata management policy, including deposit policy and storage policy, and section 6 will present a conclusion. In this regard, the paper will consider DRI publications, including reports and guidelines drafted by the DRI's stakeholders and directors, including Sharon Webb, Aileen O'Carroll, and Dr. Natalie Harrower.

This paper will use an interdisciplinary approach and a digital humanities lens to highlight the opportunities that the DRI can provide for disseminating, discovering and visualising details of past dramatic performances stored in the Abbey Theatre's archives, as part of Irish literary heritage. These archives form a significant part of the Irish national cultural canon. Further, in order to achieve its objectives, the paper will consider the practices of the aforementioned policies, in relation to the Abbey Theatre's archived collections. The Abbey Theatre's archived collections form part of *The Inspiring Ireland* project. Further, Inspiring Ireland and the National Library of Ireland, views the Abbey Theatre as an important visual arts venue. In this context,

<sup>4</sup> See *Digital Cultural Heritage | Digital Repository Ireland*, <https://dri.ie/digital-cultural-heritage/> (05/2023).

<sup>5</sup> See *gov.ie – Global Ireland: Ireland's Global Footprint to 2025*. (n.d.), <<https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/globalireland/>> (05/2023).

sources reviewed include the Abbey Theatre's archived administrative records, the Abbey Theatre's archived prompt script collection, stored items from the Abbey Theatre's archived photographic collection, the Abbey Theatre's archived poster collection, and the Abbey Theatre's archived Anne Yeats collection. The paper will conclude by addressing the following question: What are the advantages of preserving the Abbey Theatre's archives digitally in an interactive, reputable, national, and collaborative digital repository like the DRI?

## 2. *Global Ireland 2025 and the Abbey Theatre*

Global Ireland 2025 is an Irish Government initiative which aspires to spread the power of Ireland globally. Traditionally, Dublin's focus for foreign relations has been on Washington, London, and Brussels. The Republic of Ireland now seeks to reduce this reliance using its Global Ireland 2025 initiative, which was launched in 2018. Global Ireland 2025 represents the Republic of Ireland's largest international expansion since the 1920s. It aims to double the scope and influence of the Irish state throughout the world over the next decade by strengthening and establishing new cultural, economic, and political alliances. Under this initiative, the Republic of Ireland has already established missions in Wellington (New Zealand), Vancouver (Canada), and Monrovia (Liberia). Further, new missions were established in 2019 in Bogota (Colombia), Santiago (Chile), Amman (Jordan), Cardiff (Wales), Los Angeles (United States), and Frankfurt (Germany). Other plans to strengthen Ireland's global power include promoting Irish arts, heritage, and culture to new generations and a new audience worldwide<sup>6</sup>.

The archived collections of the Abbey Theatre were earmarked to be used as part of the promotion of Global Ireland 2025. The Abbey Theatre holds high national, literary, and cultural status in Ireland for several reasons. In the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, there was a general lack of interest in Ireland for Irish literature and drama. Indeed, at this time, Ireland experienced a significant decline in the number of literary and dramatic works produced there. The reasons for this include poor economic conditions, as well as sectarian conflicts between Catholics and Protestants which led to heated political disputes. In the twentieth century, the proximity of Ireland and Britain also hindered the development of Irish literature because English culture, Modernism, and Capitalism heavily influenced Irish popular literature, drama and culture. In English and international theatres, and in the Arts in general, Irishmen were portrayed, at best, as comical drunkards and, at worst, as indolent, lustful, or dangerous figures.

The Abbey Theatre was founded in 1904 in an effort to present to the world an Ireland rich in culture, and to free Irish literature from English influence. The Abbey Theatre gained a significant foothold in the Arts compared to other theatres in Dublin, such as The Queen's, and the Gaiety Theatre. Members of the Abbey Theatre desired to demonstrate to England that Irish culture was in no way inferior by establishing a school of Celtic and Irish dramatic literature. The first two and three seasons of productions were successful, during a time when people were barely interested in picking up a book or going to see a play, because they were struggling to provide for their basic needs. Early associates of the Abbey Theatre were the Irish National Theatre Society, W.B. Yeats, Lady Gregory, Edward Martyn and John Millington Synge<sup>7</sup>, who were able to successfully attract the attention of Ireland's National Press, and newspaper outlets abroad. At this time, many literary, political, and patriotic figures looked to revive the Celtic

<sup>6</sup> See *gov.ie: Global Ireland – Ireland's Global Footprint to 2025 | Ireland – This Is Ireland*, <<https://ireland.ie/en/global-ireland-strategies/global-ireland-irelands-global-footprint-to-2025/>> (05/2023).

<sup>7</sup> See *History – Abbey Theatre*, <<https://www.abbeytheatre.ie/about/history/>> (05/2023).

culture, literature, and language through peaceful means. In this respect, a literary nationalist movement which celebrated and honoured Ireland as an independent nation emerged, and was linked not to acts of violence and bloodshed, but to art.

Prior to the establishment of the Abbey Theatre, Irish theatres staged mainly English dramas, and intentionally and unintentionally promoted the English culture. In resistance to this, the Abbey Theatrical Company made numerous tours of England and of the United States, in order to promote Irish literature and culture abroad. Inspiring Ireland has exhibited the text of a 1912 Abbey Theatre tour programme from the Abbey Theatre Archive's Master Programme Collection. In 1912, this tour landed at the Plymouth Theatre in Boston. The Abbey Theatre Tour Programme, 1912, describes the important role of the Abbey Theatre in the global revival of Irish drama<sup>8</sup>. Further, this description ties in with the objective of Global Ireland 2025 which is to spread information about Irish cultural heritage.

Through the leadership of W.B. Yeats, a circle of Celtic literary figures joined forces to eradicate the negative portrayal of the Irish in English literature, and to try to revive Irish literature and language using Romanticism, and the revival of ancient Irish legends and Irish heroes and heroines. This Circle wanted to establish an Irish national theatre that would demonstrate that Ireland was a cultured and civilised nation. This led to the founding of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin. J.M. Synge was among the playwrights who became a member of Yeats' circle. Yeats discovered a new outlet in Synge's unique dramatic style, which focused on the peasant lifestyle of the Irish people. The role of the Abbey Theatre in the promotion of literature and drama can be evaluated based on selected dramatists' works and the impact of their plays on Irish society.

### 3. *The Irish Digital Footprint and the Abbey Theatre*

Using a global communications strategy, the Global Ireland 2025 initiative aims to increase Ireland's visibility, raise its profile, and enhance its reputation by establishing a digital footprint. This initiative has encouraged the emergence of digital humanities in Ireland, in a similar way to how cultural initiatives in Japan and China have worked. According to the *Global Ireland Progress Report 2018-2019*, capital expenditure was put aside for digital infrastructure investment. As a result, Ireland has strengthened its capabilities in ICT and data analytics (Collins, Harrower, Smeaton 2017). The DRI and the digitisation of the Abbey Theatre's archived collections are outcomes of this investment in digital expertise.

In Ireland, the digital archiving of the Abbey Theatre's production collections is an example of digital foot-printing in the humanities. The NUIG undertook the digitisation of the Abbey Theatre's archives between 2012 and 2015. This was the largest theatre archive digitisation project in the world and had a significant impact on the University and its Library. Nevertheless, few studies have examined the significance of this project for Irish theatre and drama history, and for Theatre Studies in general (Bradley, Keane 2015; Cox 2016, 2017).

The scope of the digitisation project presented a number of obstacles, such as fragile content, limited time, maintaining streamlined workflows, complex digital rights management, and ensuring efficient systems. The project was completed in 2015 on time and within budget using a "more product, less process" methodology (Greene, Meissner 2005, 208). Access to the Abbey Theatre Digital Archive has had a significant academic impact on the NUIG, generating new

<sup>8</sup> See <<https://repository.dri.ie/catalog/9593x022p/>> (05/2023).

research income and international connections, and contributing to the University's improved ranking. The Digital Archive allows for new types of research, such as text and data mining, and has reshaped undergraduate curricula. It has also had a profound impact on the Library as the project's leader (cf. Cox 2016). In this respect, the archivist's role has evolved, and partnerships with the academic community have grown. This growing emphasis placed on digital publication has prompted the evolution of an organisational structure based on function rather than on subject, and one which promotes participation in digital scholarship initiatives, with archives and special collections assuming a new position of prominence (Cox 2017).

The need to complete the digitisation project within three years amplified the difficulties posed by the volume of the Abbey Theatre's archived material. An initial institutional partnership was agreed for twenty-six years, and so time was of the essence. It became clear at an early stage that digitisation on this scale, within the defined timescale, could not be achieved using existing Library resources. This necessitated the outsourcing of a substantial portion of the project. In this respect, the NUIG was fortunate to find an excellent contractor, namely an archivist firm that understood the needs of all parties; the firm employed qualified archivists to process a quantity of challenging material in an appropriate manner. The materials which posed challenges included the following: fragile documents that had been damaged in a fire in 1951; a variety of formats and sizes, including different press cuttings and stage designs; a mixture of handwritten correspondence and typescript records; and audio or video recordings presented in legacy formats and/or in a fragile condition (*ibidem*).

Employees working in the Library benefited from the Contractor's knowledge of efficient workflows, which were essential for achieving rapid throughput. It was essential for both contracted workers and library archivists to share their knowledge. The University's library workers engaged closely with the Contractor to establish the system's infrastructure. This was a crucial component for enabling large-scale digitisation and meeting complex requirements for rights management. Components included a variety of Digital Asset Management (DAM) systems which were designed by the Belfast based firm Aetopia Limited. The DAM was essential for managing digital rights, as follows: it enabled automatic redaction based on the occurrence of certain words; it facilitated the withholding of sections as opposed to entire documents; and it approved the automatic release of documents after the expiration of agreed embargo periods for certain categories, such as thirty years for board minutes. Cloud-based computing and storage infrastructures were successfully deployed throughout, and Amazon's Safe Secure Storage (S3) service was selected for this purpose.

Two aspects of the project are particularly noteworthy. Access to the digital archive was restricted to designated workstations in the NUI Galway Library's Archives Reading Room. This was specified in a partnership agreement with the Abbey Theatre. The Theatre had concerns about publishing their archives on the open web, because of rights management issues and relationship management concerns with living actors. However, most librarians favour open access (OA) and, therefore, it is frustrating that the digital archive resource is restricted in this manner. However, the reading room model is advantageous because exclusive access helps attract academic staff, students and international visitors to the University. As a compromise, minutes from 1904 to 1939 were made open access, and it is hoped that additional content will be made available in the future.

The second area of focus involved metadata. A streamlined methodology, as exemplified by the "more product, less process" approach was adopted in order to complete full digitisation in three years (Greene, Meissner 2005, 208). Integration of the Abbey's own productions database enabled the linking of a substantial amount of material, such as scripts and theatre programmes, relating to specific plays. This worked to associate the content with the relevant cast and venue, and also worked to bring together the various document types associated with

a play or production. It was not possible to link all documents to a play, of course. For this type of content, a brief descriptive record was created, and Optical Character Recognition (OCR) was implemented wherever possible to optimise full-text retrieval. The online environment enables a variety of methods for locating information, and, therefore, innovative approaches to processing archives should be available, to save time that would otherwise be spent on meticulous arrangement. The DAM provided robust search capabilities, and users have expressed satisfaction with the digital archive (Cox 2017).

According to Cox, attempts to digitise archived material in a library database, like the one at NUI Galway, poses some access and retrieval limitations. In response to these digital challenges, and as a continuation of the promotion of digital archives, it is necessary to determine how the DRI can overcome challenges in relation to the preserving, managing, and provision of access to digital objects pertaining to the Abbey Theatre. Further, what opportunities does the DRI offer to digitise a wider variety of Abbey Theatre objects?

#### 4. Opportunities for the DRI

##### 4.1 Ireland's National Policy of Digital Preservation and Open Access

The DRI defines a digital repository as, “an infrastructure that provides long-term storage management, preservation, and access to digital resources”<sup>9</sup>. This confirms that the DRI is a system used for managing and preserving digital materials over the long term, as well as for providing reliable access to such resources. To understand the DRI in detail, scholars, practitioners, and relevant stakeholders gathered in Dublin and Maynooth in 2012 for a three-day workshop entitled *Realising the Opportunities of Digital Humanities*, which was organised by the DRI, the Digital Enterprise Research Institute (DERI), the Digital Humanities Observatory (DHO), and Digital Research Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities (DARIAH-EU). In order to promote the adoption of digital humanities knowledge, techniques, and technologies, this workshop sought to identify the most pressing research questions in the field, and to strengthen academic-industry cooperation<sup>10</sup>.

Dr. Sandra Collins explained in 2013, when the DRI joined the Digital Preservation Coalition, that the DRI is working to raise awareness of the need for and benefits of digital preservation and open access, while respecting and acknowledging ownership, copyright, intellectual property rights, privacy, and confidentiality<sup>11</sup>. Dr. Collins explained that it is crucial to preserve the social and cultural heritage of Ireland in a digital format, and, thus, digital cultural preservation must assume a prominent position. The DRI states that digital preservation is the active management of digital content over time to ensure its continued accessibility, and highlights two main goals of digital preservation, namely, long-term preservation and open access. In the pursuit of these goals, the DRI conducted a national programme of stakeholder interviews to determine the digital preservation needs of, and access practices of cultural institutions, libraries, higher education institutions, funding agencies, and others (Webb, O’Carroll 2012).

<sup>9</sup> See *Digital Preservation – Digital Repository Ireland*, <<https://dri.ie/digital-preservation#>> (05/2023).

<sup>10</sup> See *Realising the Opportunities of Digital Humanities – Digital Repository Ireland*, <<https://www.dri.ie/realising-opportunities-digital-humanities>> (05/2023).

<sup>11</sup> See *Digital Repository of Ireland Joins the Digital Preservation Coalition – Digital Preservation Coalition*, <<https://www.dpconline.org/news/digital-repository-of-ireland-joins-the-digital-preservation-coalition>> (05/2023).

As part of their national programme of stakeholder interviews, the DRI undertook interviews with forty institutions, focusing on the methods and practices adopted in the humanities and social sciences to archive and maintain the data in collections. These interviews also explored the maintenance of digital data. The findings addressed multiple aspects of the digital lifecycle, including types of digital data, sharing and reuse, preservation, storage and formats, metadata and inter-operability, user tools, and structuring content (*ibidem*). The outcomes of these interviews shaped the specific requirements of building the national repository and were used to begin a process to agree national guidelines on digital preservation for the humanities and social sciences. This strategy entailed determining national practices, collaborating with the community to develop national guidelines, and informing national policy as a result. Thus, digital preservation in Ireland was recognised as having national potential.

As a national Trusted National Digital Repository (TNDR), the DRI promotes national policies and guidelines for long-term digital preservation, and enduring access to Ireland's humanities, cultural heritage, and social sciences data. It also offers digital data stewardship for a variety of member organisations, including: higher education institutions; cultural heritage institutions (the GLAM sector of galleries, libraries, archives, and museums); government agencies; county councils; and community archives. Further, the reach of the DRI was expanded using diverse collections and outreach initiatives in 2022. This was done so that the digital cultural heritage of Ireland could be explored for educational and recreational purposes.

In addition to facilitating the long-term preservation of, access to, and discovery of Ireland's social and cultural data, the DRI serves Irish cultural heritage in a specific way. Culturally, Ireland is torn between American, British, and European influences. Therefore, there was a need for a credible national project to preserve the cultural identity of Ireland. The DRI project was officially launched in 2015 as a national cultural project and looked to form partnerships and connections with other Irish humanities projects, such as Inspiring Ireland, which provides opportunities for the innovative preservation of Irish humanities heritage. The DRI works to refine and expand the conventional depiction of humanities scholarship. Further, it illuminates the national culture of Ireland through the lens of digital humanities. Therefore, Irish culture becomes more tangible, visible, and approachable. Thus, the DRI can be viewed as an attempt to redefine and modify the traditional representation of Irish humanities heritage. Conventional knowledge purports that there are boundaries between disciplines, while this repository serves as a starting point for the dissemination of the interdisciplinary humanities concept in Ireland.

The Abbey Theatre benefits from the DRI as a TNDR for several reasons. The Abbey Theatre is viewed as a national theatre, and so the digitisation of the Abbey Theatre's past production archives is seen as a crucial factor in an apparent "return" of nationalism, an ideology which re-emerged alongside several contextual factors, such as the 2008 economic crisis, the subsequent austerity measures imposed, and migration-related demographic and cultural shifts. As evidenced by an abundance of research, political parties around the world rely on digital media to spread nationalist rhetoric and to promote anti-immigration and anti-liberal views (Alvares, Dahlgren 2016; Engesser, Ernst, Esser *et al.* 2017; Fuchs 2019; Pajnik, Sauer 2017; Waisbord, Amado 2017). In many ways, the digitisation of the Abbey Theatre's dramatic performances works as a means of communication with the Irish Diaspora. For example, Chancellor's Pho-

tographic Studio captured a scene from *Kathleen Ni Houlihan* by W.B. Yeats in 1902<sup>12</sup>. This scene was transferred into the DRI, Abbey Theatre, on 16 June 2015. The scene depicted is from a play about the 1798 Rebellion, which could be perceived as empowering feelings of Irish nationalism among the Irish Diaspora.

#### 4.2 *The Policy of Federation and the DRI*

For navigating the landscape of the humanities, institutional digital repositories are a new and essential vehicle. By means of free and unrestricted online availability, digital repositories facilitate a researcher's ability to disseminate and share research outputs, thereby supporting the open access objective of scholarly communication. According to the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC), institutional digital repositories are becoming an integral part of the structure of scholarly communication (Crow 2002). These vehicles offer authors more visibility and users more information more easily. Institutional digital repositories also have the potential to benefit academic institutions, to boost their research profiles, and to attract funders, who see a greater dissemination of research outputs. The DRI in Ireland is constructed via a research consortium of six academic institutions, collaborating to deliver the DRI's policies, guidelines, and training, namely: The Royal Irish Academy (RIA, Lead Institute), the National University of Ireland, Maynooth (NUIM), Trinity College Dublin (TCD), the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG), and the National College of Art and Design (NCAD). These parties are the members of the DRI's research consortium.

This policy of federation among Irish institutions offers indirect benefits to academic partners, including to the NUIG, which was the first partnership established with the Abbey Theatre, and is one of the six academic institutions of the DRI. In addition, the potential benefits of the DRI extend to enhancing the visibility of the creators and publishers of the Abbey Theatre's archived collections. These partnerships also enhance the DRI's role in the global dissemination of research outputs. In this regard, the DRI Conference invited demonstrators such as Prof. Patrick Loneragan to present a demonstration of the Abbey Theatre's digital archiving project, as the result of a partnership between the NUIG and the Abbey Theatre. The Demo's description explains that the DRI project aims to represent a new era of international scholarship for Irish theatre, and seeks to shed light on Irish theatre, history, culture, and society. Furthermore, it looks to alter the conventional notion of Irish drama. In this context, it is generally accepted that the history of Irish drama is the history of Irish plays as written scripts. However, as a full multimedia archive, the digital archive provides researchers with access to the entire range of materials associated with theatre performance: not only scripts, but also visual materials (such as costumes, set designs, and lighting designs), sound materials (music scores and sound effects), and supporting materials (advertisements, press releases, and reviews)<sup>13</sup>.

#### 4.3 *The Policy of Collaboration and Partnership*

The DRI's policy of collaboration and partnership presents a number of opportunities for the Abbey Theatre and other collaborators. As previously outlined in detail, the DRI is constructed as a research consortium comprising of six academic partners. The DRI's partnerships

<sup>12</sup> See *A Scene from Kathleen Ni Houlihan by William Butler Yeats, 1902 – Digital Repository of Ireland*, <<https://repository.dri.ie/catalog/9593x0247>> (05/2023).

<sup>13</sup> See *Demos | Digital Repository Ireland*, <<https://www.dri.ie/demos>> (05/2023).



with these academic institutions reflect its educational and research objectives (Webb, O'Carroll 2014). In addition, the DRI's Depositor Manual states that the target communities for this repository are students and academics<sup>14</sup>.

As a result of the DRI's partnership and collaboration with the Abbey Theatre, the global knowledge gap about the Abbey Theatre's archived collections and its sources is narrowed. For instance, the Partnership works to preserve various elements of the Abbey Theatre's archives, including its archived photographic collection, its Anne Yeats collection, its archived administrative records, and its archived prompt script collection. The DRI's Anne Yeats Collection serves as an information resource about Anne Yeats, who was Head Designer for the Abbey Theatre, as well as other associates of the Theatre. Anne worked with oils when she undertook her designs for the Theatre and for publications. Anne was the daughter of W.B. Yeats and, together with her father, was immersed in Irish Revival culture. For example, the Anne Yeats Collection contains painting-formatted images of costume designs for Charles Ricketts who played Cuchulain in the 1915 production of *On Baile's Strand* by W.B. Yeats<sup>15</sup>.

The DRI's policy of collaboration and partnership contributes to the sharing of archived collections and the recognition of the contributions of Irish universities, such as the University College Cork School of Film, Music and Theatre. In 2017, the Abbey Theatre commissioned Dr. Marie Kelly to develop an online research package to coincide with the premiere of its production of Teresa Deevy's *Katie Roche* (which was directed by UCC alumna Caroline Byrne). The objective of this package was to compile scholarly articles, interviews, photographic material, and archival information on the play, as well as a variety of writings on the 2017 production, for the consumption of theatre scholars, artists, and general readers. The final research package comprises articles by Una Kealy and Kate McCarthy (Waterford IT), Chris Morash (TCD), Eibhear Walsh (UCC), Fiona Beckett (University of Leeds), and Cathy Leeney (UCC)<sup>16</sup>. There are also contributions from performance artist Amanda Coogan and interviews with director Caroline Byrne, and dramaturg Morna Regan. The pack is also accessible via the Abbey Theatre's website<sup>17</sup>.

The digital preservation of the Abbey Theatre's archived material in a collaborative national trustworthy digital repository, such as the DRI, secures the valuable position of resource material in the national consciousness, especially relating to retelling the history of Ireland, the struggles of her people for freedom, and the preservation of its arts and culture for the future. Moreover, by collaboration with the Abbey Theatre, its role as a resource in the context of the interdisciplinary approach to humanities is secured for educational and research purposes, and its history is revitalised.

#### 4.4 *The Policy of Usability, Archiving and Access*

The dissemination, discoverability, and long-term preservation of the Abbey Theatre's archived collections are influenced by the DRI's usability, archiving, and access policies for three distinct reasons. Firstly, the Graphical User Interface (GUI) of the DRI is designed to

<sup>14</sup> See *Introduction – Digital Repository of Ireland Documentation*, <<https://guides.dri.ie/depositor-guide/01-intro.html>> (05/2023).

<sup>15</sup> See <<https://repository.dri.ie/catalog/9593x025h>> (05/2023).

<sup>16</sup> See *Katie Roche Resource Pack – Digital Repository of Ireland*, <<https://repository.dri.ie/catalog/gh93wm59r>> (05/2023).

<sup>17</sup> See <<https://www.abbeytheatre.ie/whats-on/katie-roche/>> (05/2023).

meet certain requirements for usability, accessibility, and functionality. In this regard, the functionalities of the DRI's GUI can be broadly classified as browsing, discovery, and searching. Secondly, open access provides opportunities for sustainable access, discovery, browsing, and searching in the Abbey Theatre's archived collections, sub-collections, and objects. Thirdly, the DRI's use of an Open Archival Information System (OAIS), International Organization for Standardization (ISO) reference model is crucial for global accessibility and preservation.

The OAIS reference model has been widely adopted and utilised elsewhere, to guide the creation of preservation tools and repositories, and is predicated as, "an organisation of people and systems that has accepted the responsibility to preserve information and make it accessible to a Designated Community"<sup>18</sup>. In this context, the Consultative Committee for Space Data Systems (CCSDS) defines a "designated community" as, "an identified group of potential Consumers who should be able to comprehend a particular set of information. Multiple user communities may make up the designated community"<sup>19</sup>. This refers to users who possess the knowledge base necessary to comprehend information presented, independently, and as it is preserved and made accessible by the OAIS. This system aids in establishing boundaries and in determining the quantity of metadata that must be retained and managed to support the preservation process. A broader scope of the designated community implies less specific domain knowledge, and, as a result, more metadata will be required to render and comprehend long-term preserved information.

Serving the needs of a specific community requires a detailed comprehension of the users' knowledge base. This allows managers of institutional repositories to determine what information must be developed and maintained to guarantee the content's usability, in the present and in the future. In addition, this approach helps define how to present and provide access to content and may even determine its format. All of these factors have a direct bearing on preservation over time.

The CCSDS of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) first initiated the process of OAIS, and it was adopted as an ISO standard in 2003. The OAIS reference model is a conceptual framework for a generic archival system committed to both information preservation and access. It is essential to remember that the OAIS reference model works at a high level. However, it often lacks implementation-specific information and does not guarantee consistency or inter-operability between implementations. Its strength is that it offers a common vocabulary and a set of concepts for describing repository architectures and comparing implementations. Numerous organisations have utilised this reference model to inform the planning and design of diverse types of digital repositories. Frequently, the management of access to an infrastructure, repository, or application server can be centralised or distributed. Access management is dependent on the system's level of federation and access policies. Further, access management can be centrally administered or delegated back to the community. In the Institute for Quantitative Social Science (IQSS, Harvard University) and Europeana infrastructures, for instance, contributors determine what is accessible and what is not. As for the DRI, control is delegated (federated) to its organisation members (Webb, O'Carroll 2014).

The OAIS reference model includes a functional model which describes the six functional components that collectively fulfil the system's responsibility for preservation and access. It also defines the external environment in which the OAIS operates, and it provides high-level descriptions of the information objects managed in the archive via an information model. The

<sup>18</sup> See *Home – OAIS Reference Model (ISO 14721)*, <<http://www.oais.info/>> (05/2023).

<sup>19</sup> See *Search – Consultative Committee for Space Data Systems, 2002*, <<http://public.ccsds.org/publications/>> (05/2023).

OAIS model's functional components are as follows: ingestion, archival storage, data management, preservation planning, administration, access, and common services (Tiernan, Tang, Bako 2014). These items are described in more detail below.

- 1) Ingestion refers to the services and operations that accept data from producers, and which prepare it for storage and management in the archive.
- 2) Archival storage oversees the long-term storage and maintenance of the digital materials entrusted to the OAIS, ensuring that they remain complete and accessible over time.
- 3) Data management maintains descriptive metadata to facilitate the search and retrieval of archived content as well as the management of internal operations.
- 4) Planning for preservation creates a preservation strategy based on the changing user and technological environment.
- 5) Access manages the processes and services that locate, request, and receive the delivery of archival content.
- 6) Administration is in charge of daily operations and coordinating the five other OAIS services.

*The Inspiring Ireland Project – Abbey Theatre* is a federated archive<sup>20</sup>, that includes the name of a collection, its sub-collection, and fifteen objects. These items were selected from various Abbey Theatre archive collections, and the formats of these items comprise photographs, documents, ephemera, and paintings. The collection is listed under the entry “The Inspiring Ireland Project – Abbey Theatre”, which comprises 15 objects in a sub-collection called “Abbey Theatre”. All are archived under *The Inspiring Ireland Project*. *Inspiring Ireland* is a component of a systematic preservation, access, and discovery programme of digital objects in the cultural institutions of Ireland. The Project forms part of Ireland's large-scale preservation infrastructure relating to Irish cultural heritage and is a curated exhibition featuring high-quality digital images of objects, expert interpretation, and contextualisation.

The OAIS reference model defines federated archives as a group of archives that make their holdings accessible via one or more common finding aids. In this context, a global community is defined as an extended consumer community that, in the context of a federated archive, can access the holdings of multiple archives via one or more common finding aids. In this way, the DRI is most similar to the structure of a global site, because global access is achieved by exporting a standard-format associated description to a global site. The global site independently manages a set of descriptors from numerous archives and provides finding aids for determining which archive owns an interesting collection. The consumer is provided with a centralised, consolidated view of the holdings of multiple sites. To view a document's details, a user must visit the website containing the actual document. This is simplified when both sites and clients support a standard set of protocols (*Consultative Committee for Space Data Systems*, 2002).

According to Dublin Core Metadata, the prompt script for the world premiere of J.M. Synge's *Riders to the Sea* appears on the DRI<sup>21</sup> and also on *Inspiring Ireland – A Sense of Place*<sup>22</sup>. Thus, the user can access this website for additional information and to view the document.

<sup>20</sup> See *The Inspiring Ireland Project – Abbey Theatre – Digital Repository of Ireland* (n.d.), <<https://repository.dri.ie/catalog/5999n594j>> (05/2023).

<sup>21</sup> See <<https://repository.dri.ie/catalog/9593x0204>> (05/2023).

<sup>22</sup> See <[www.inspiring-ireland.ie](http://www.inspiring-ireland.ie)> (05/2023).

### 5. The Policies of Metadata Management

The DRI defines metadata as structured information that performs the following tasks<sup>23</sup>:

- 1) It describes, explains, and facilitates the discovery and delivery of digital content.
- 2) It identifies and makes it easier to retrieve the aforementioned content.
- 3) It also makes it easier to use and / or manage other resources.

For each dataset, it is essential to know who created the data, when the data were created or published, and the title or descriptive name by which the dataset is referred to. The DRI's metadata guidelines table 1 shows, Mandatory and Recommended elements, and suggested controlled vocabularies/standards for the DRI<sup>24</sup>. This guide tells us that some metadata elements, such as the title, creator, and description are mandatory, while others, such as language, contributor, and source, are recommended. This policy of metadata management has an impact on the ingestion, discoverability, visibility, and dissemination of Abbey Theatre sub-collections and objects. Furthermore, the descriptive metadata of a digital object is useful for describing the intellectual entity via properties such as description, subjects, and places<sup>25</sup>. Each important function of DRI metadata management will be described in detail below.

Title	Mandatory
Creator	Mandatory
Language	Recommended
Contributor	Recommended
Identifier	Optional
Publisher	Optional

Table 1 – “Metadata Guidelines”, Mandatory and Recommended Elements, <https://repository.dri.ie/catalog/2z119b06h>

#### 5.1 Ingestion

In terms of digital formats and metadata creation, the DRI follows best practice guidelines for data preparation. This enables inter-operability and improves the intake of digital repositories such as the DRI. In an attempt to strike a balance between best practices and the realities of existing institutional data, the DRI accepts non-standard formats for data import. Employees of the DRI work closely with new depositors to promote the incorporation of recommended formats, and to highlight poor format selections early on in the membership phase. For instance, see “Abbey Theatre tour programme, 1906”<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> See *Research Data Management – Digital Repository Ireland*, <https://dri.ie/research-data-and-dri> (05/2023).

<sup>24</sup> See <https://repository.dri.ie/catalog/2z119b06h> (05/2023).

<sup>25</sup> See *Research Data Management – Digital Repository Ireland*, <https://dri.ie/research-data-and-dri> (05/2023).

<sup>26</sup> See <https://repository.dri.ie/catalog/9593x023z> (05/2023).

## 5.2 Discoverability

The DRI uses subject, title, name, and place information as metadata for a browsing tool for digital content. This promotes the discoverability of digital assets and objects from its collections. For instance, by entering the word “theatre/theater” as the subject information, a user can find 141 objects about Irish theatres, including the Abbey Theatre. The image entitled “Abbey Theatre, Abbey Street Lower, Dublin City, County Dublin”<sup>27</sup>, shows the patrons of the Abbey Theatre prior to the start of a performance. Using “Abbey Theatre/Theater” as the title information, 62 objects can be discovered. Further, the image entitled “Abbey Theatre Posters”<sup>28</sup>, shows various posters for the Abbey Theatre from 1951; the user can discover 15 objects using “Abbey Theatre” as the name information. The image entitled “Opening Night Programme for the Abbey Theatre, 1904”<sup>29</sup>, shows the Programme for the opening night of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin on the 27 December 1904. Using “Abbey Theatre/Theater” as the location, the user is able to find 10 objects. Furthermore, the image entitled “Old Abbey Theatre Auditorium” shows the old building of the Abbey Theatre in 1904<sup>30</sup>.

The use of a thematic research collection as a digital research tool in humanities is appropriate for the discoverability function. Carole L. Palmer (2004) identifies five fundamental characteristics of thematic research collections (TRCS), namely, they must be: digital, thematically coherent, heterogeneous, structured, and open-ended. Palmer explains that the significance of thematic research collections lies in the fact that collections of all types can be open-ended, and they have the potential to grow and change based on the commitment of collectors’ resources. This is because the majority of thematic collections are not static, and scholars usually add to and improve the content. Indeed, the work on any given collection can continue for generations. Because of the inherent flexibility (and vulnerability) of “born digital” and transcribed documents, individual items within a collection can also evolve (*ibidem*). For example, the Abbey Theatre Archive Master Programme Collection details theatre programmes published for the Abbey Theatre, including their formats, subjects, and locations<sup>31</sup>. This Collection demonstrates the fallacy of constructing disciplinary boundaries. According to the name information, the Collection lists a variety of subjects and themes, including sense of identity, Irish drama, and theatre. In this way, the dissemination of such a digital collection promotes interdisciplinary humanities as an educational resource.

Creating, maintaining, managing, and publishing a digital research collection necessitates the creation of an infrastructure to ensure that ongoing processes are effective, dependable, inter-operable, and governed. It involves numerous interconnected activities. The detailed information which is required to intellectually and physically manage individual files and collections of interrelated files can be divided into four main interrelated categories: descriptive, administrative, file, and relational or structural data. The Metadata Encoding and Transmission Standards (METS) have formalised these categories, which represent the prevalent library model for recording management and control data (commonly known as metadata). Each of these four areas is concerned with a particular type of management and control data, and each is dependent on the others. This enables effective intellectual, legal, and physical control over

<sup>27</sup> See <<https://repository.dri.ie/catalog/jw82mt243/>> (05/2023).

<sup>28</sup> See <<https://repository.dri.ie/catalog/vx02dz68h/>> (05/2023).

<sup>29</sup> See <<https://repository.dri.ie/catalog/9593x026s/>> (05/2023).

<sup>30</sup> See <<https://repository.dri.ie/catalog/9593x019c/>> (05/2023).

<sup>31</sup> See <<http://www.inspiring-ireland.ie/>> (05/2023).

collections of digital materials when they are interconnected or linked. However, these types of data are predominately data-centric and are, therefore, best represented by database technology (Schreibman, Siemens, Unsworth 2004)<sup>32</sup>. For example, in the DRI, the title of one collection for Inspiring Ireland is *The Inspiring Ireland Project – Abbey Theatre*. The descriptor of this collection tells us that it is a selection of cultural heritage objects from the Abbey Theatre presented as part of *The Inspiring Ireland* project.

The Abbey Theatre Archive Master Programme Collection includes photographs, programmes, manuscripts, and sketches from the Abbey Theatre archives. These items, spanning the years from 1902 to 2010, provide valuable insights into Irish theatre and the arts, as well as the country's history and social life throughout the twentieth century, and pertains to the international influence of Irish theatre<sup>33</sup>. The Abbey Theatre Archive comprises: the Abbey Theatre Archive Administrative Records, the Abbey Theatre Anne Yeats Collection, and the Abbey Theatre Archive Prompt Script Collection, and all these items also display as part of *The Inspiring Ireland Project – Abbey Theatre*.

The search box can be used to locate collections or objects that contain specific terms in their descriptive metadata. To search for simple word combinations, one can just type them into the search box and press enter. By default, individual words in the search can be joined with AND, which means that the search will look for metadata containing all of the entered words. It is also possible to use the OR operation to search for metadata containing any of the words, for example: Abbey Theatre Archive, Abbey Theatre Archive Administrative Records OR Abbey Theatre Archive Master Programme Collection. To search for particular phrases, one can enclose the search in quotation marks, for instance, “Abbey Theatre Archive Master Programme Collection”. In addition, searching for Abbey Theatre / Theater as a title is distinct from searching for it as a subject, location, or name. For instance, a search for Abbey Theatre as a title returns 62 results, 61 images and 1 text. For example, the image entitled “Abbey Theatre (Interior)” depicts the old Abbey Theatre building<sup>34</sup>.

### 5.3 Visibility

To enhance the visibility of the Abbey Theatre's objects and assets, such as museums and heritage centres, the DRI employs the “exhibition language” (Strepetova, Arcos-Pumarola 2020, 95). This provides opportunity for visibility, which, in turn, facilitates the dissemination of the Abbey Theatre's digital project. The DRI is written in this language because literary heritage is considered an intangible cultural heritage. The relationship between an intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and museums or heritage centres has become a field of research in Museum Studies, because it transforms the concept of the museum from a repository for objects to be displayed and preserved, into a space focused on people/users. This context allows a discussion of the concept of intangible museology, which addresses the difficulties associated with presenting, interpreting, and transmitting ICH through a discourse shaped by tangible mediums in an exhibition setting.

Utilising images, posters, and photographs as forms of media can promote the DRI as a tangible medium of Irish literary objects. For instance, the Abbey Theatre has deposited 94

<sup>32</sup> The Companion is available at the following link: <<https://companions.digitalhumanities.org/DH/>> (05/2023).

<sup>33</sup> See <<http://www.inspiring-ireland.ie/>> (05/2023).

<sup>34</sup> See <<https://repository.dri.ie/catalog/gq67z8727/>> (05/2023).

objects relating to the Abbey Theatre and drama. These digital assets comprise images, photographs, theatre programmes, posters, and text as, for example, the image of the Abbey Theatre interior<sup>35</sup>. The image entitled “Licence to perform *The Playboy of the Western World* by John Millington Synge”<sup>36</sup> depicts the text of the licence to perform J.M. Synge’s *The Playboy of the Western World*. The kind of visibility offered by these digital assets to different audiences will set up the Abbey Theatre digital archive collection as a model of interdisciplinary humanities. These collections uncover the interdisciplinary nature of Irish mythology, theatre, religion, history, and visual arts. The image archived as “Poster for *Mothers* by May Cluskey, 1977”<sup>37</sup> is a poster for the production of *Mothers* by May Cluskey in 1977 at the Peacock Theatre that features Fergus Bourke of the Abbey Theatre Company.

Scenes from plays written by renowned dramatists are also displayed in the DRI to illustrate the importance of the Abbey Theatre in Irish drama. For example, there is an image that shows “a scene from Brian Friel’s *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* (1982)”<sup>38</sup>. The actors featured in this photo are Gerard McSorley, Stephen Brennan, and Marie Kean. The image archived as “a scene from *Christ Deliver Us!* by Thomas Kilroy, 2010”<sup>39</sup> depicts a scene from Thomas Kilroy’s *Christ Deliver Us!* (2010). These archived images show how digital collections can promote interdisciplinary academic programmes in the humanities on a global scale.

#### 5.4 Deposit Policy

The DRI’s deposit policy affords Irish cultural institutions, such as the Abbey Theatre, two advantages. Firstly, the digital collections deposited with the DRI should align with its mission to be the Irish nation’s most reliable digital repository for social and cultural data. The collections should comprise materials generated by Irish researchers, held by Irish institutions, or digital materials pertaining to the island of Ireland. Secondly, collections may be in any language and should be accompanied by metadata written in Irish or English, as well as contextual information where applicable.

Creating and arranging objects and assets into collections is connected to deposit policies. *The DRI Collection Policy* (April 2020) provides depositors with an overview of data types, digital assets, and the kind of collections that the DRI intends to preserve. Consequently, depositors can evaluate file formats, metadata, and the copyright status of collections. If their research involves individuals, depositors can also review the DRI’s Restricted Data Policy (DRI Restricted Data Policy (Amended 2019)).

The DRI organises objects added to the Repository into collections, and every item must be included in one of these collections. Sub-collections are an optional sub-division of collections. Regardless of the metadata standards used for the objects, collections are required. The metadata must be associated with a collection and should be identical to that associated with an object, namely: Title, Date, Creator, Description, Subject, etc. Additionally, collections can have a cover image that represents the collection. It is possible to assign specific access permissions or licenses to the objects within a collection. Additionally, the DRI maintains repositories as Metadata Aggregators, Single-Site Digital Repositories, and Multi-Site Digital Repositories.

<sup>35</sup> See <<https://repository.dri.ie/catalog/gq67z8727/>> (05/2023).

<sup>36</sup> See <<https://repository.dri.ie/catalog/9593x030c/>> (05/2023).

<sup>37</sup> See <<https://repository.dri.ie/catalog/9593x0272/>> (05/2023).

<sup>38</sup> See <<https://repository.dri.ie/catalog/9593x031n/>> (05/2023).

<sup>39</sup> See <<https://repository.dri.ie/catalog/9593x0336/>> (05/2023).

*The Inspiring Ireland* project is an illustration of a single-site digital repository. In this context, the Abbey Theatre is a sub-collection of *The Inspiring Ireland - Abbey Theatre* collection, which has a cover image. This sub-collection comprises fifteen items.

The policy of depositing diverse materials in Irish institutional repositories means that assembling collections is required. Raym Crow explains that institutional repositories are, “digital collections that capture and preserve the intellectual output of an individual or community of universities” (2002, 4). In contrast to subject-specific repositories, an institutional repository stores and makes available the educational, research, and related assets of an institution. Although the majority of currently established institutional repositories are e-prints repositories providing open access to the research outputs of a university or research institution, the content need not be limited to e-prints and could include research data, learning material, image collections, and many other diverse types of content, such as the DRI.

As already noted, the DRI is managed by a research consortium of six academic institutions working together to deliver the repository, policies, guidelines, and training. Institutional repositories are a new but key area within the humanities landscape. Through free and unrestricted online availability, digital repositories make it easier for researchers to disseminate and share research output and, thus, they support the open access goal of scholarly communication. As noted by the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC), institutional repositories are becoming a major component of the evolving structure of scholarly communication (Crow, 2002). Digital repositories enable authors to gain more visibility, and users can find information more easily. Therefore, the potential benefits of institutional repositories extend to institutions. This can enhance research profiles, and reach funders who can see the wider dissemination of research outputs. The DRI indirectly contributes to the validation of the role of the NUIG in the global dissemination of research outputs and the national significance of the Abbey Theatre. The partnership between the NUIG and the Abbey Theatre was one of the first company and a member partnership established by the DRI, alongside five other academic institutions.

In a digital repository, the purpose of descriptive information is to serve as a mental stand-in for an object. In order to be able to identify the intellectual and digitally represented objects of a research collection, descriptive information is required. Documenting and tracking the sources and evidence used to develop a research project is essential for both traditional and digital research. For example, if sources are used to create a database that describes individuals and organisations, then the sources must be documented even if they are inaccessible directly from the collection. Subject information may also be included in descriptive information, in addition to author, title, and publisher information.

When existing traditional media are digitised, both the original and its digital representation must be described. Even though some information may overlap, the two objects are distinct manifestations of the same work, because there will be both public and private collections containing traditional media. This is crucial for preserving unique materials, such as manuscripts and archival records, but also for preserving copies, such as published books, because copies are in fact unique, albeit in subtle ways. Repositories and collections, including the researcher’s private collection, contain resources that must be recorded and linked to the description of each digitised resource used.

When descriptive data is interrelated with administrative and relations data, it serves the dual purpose of documenting intellectual content and attesting to provenance, and, thus, confirms the authenticity of the sources and their digital derivatives (see Schreibman, Siemens, Unsworth 2004). For example, the Abbey Theatre Company has digitally published an opening night programme for the Abbey Theatre from 1904 in the DRI. Here, the DRI



citation is “Abbey Theatre (2015) Opening Night Programme for the Abbey Theatre, 1904, Digital Repository of Ireland [Distributor], Abbey Theatre [Depositing Institution]”. This citation differs from the standard format of, “Opening Night Programme for the Abbey Theatre, 1904” (*Digital Repository of Ireland*, n.d.)<sup>40</sup>. According to the DRI, this citation data emphasises the existence of both a distributor and depositor. It explains that this asset is the “Programme for the opening night of the Abbey Theatre, Dublin on 27th December 1904”. Other information given includes the author, title, publisher, and date of publication. This descriptive information is helpful for academic and research purposes on a global scale.

*The International Education Strategy for Ireland (2016-2020)* sets out a vision that aims to, “attract leading international student talent, and places emphasis on a high-quality learner experience, academic quality, research and mobility, and a distinctive Irish offer at the centre of our delivery of international education” (*Irish Educated Globally Connected an International Education Strategy for Ireland, 2016-2020*, 2020, 7). In this respect, the descriptive information impacts on the usability of the Abbey Theatre collections as published by the various sources, publishers, creators, and as distributed by the DRI. In the DRI, the main subjects related to this asset are: a sense of identity, Yeats, Synge, Lady Gregory, and Irish drama. This asset is important for writers or researchers of Irish drama, the Abbey Theatre, and Irish dramatists all over the world.

### 5.5 Storage Policies

The DRI uses federated storage, which is sustainable for both depositors and users of the Abbey Theatre Archives. Federated storage means that each federated member holds a copy of the repository. Therefore, if one copy “goes down” there are additional copies of the data and metadata available. Nevertheless, as a digital archive and preservation repository, the DRI is not designed as a platform for temporary data storage, or ongoing data analysis. Deposited collections can, however, be updated and added to over time. This set-up ensures that users have sustained access to content. This is a necessary feature from the user’s perspective, for a reliable service which garners trust. It also helps to build a user base that has confidence in the service provided (Webb, O’Carroll 2014).

### 6. Conclusion

The Digital Repository of Ireland demonstrates that the Irish Government is committed to realising the goals of Global Ireland 2025. However, the scope of Global Ireland 2025 is extremely ambitious, and only time will tell if it has an impact on enhancing Ireland’s global reputation. In Ireland, the digital preservation of cultural artefacts is a crucial step in the transition to the digital age. Based on the efforts made to promote digital archiving and preservation, as exemplified by the DRI, Ireland serves as a model for cyberculture. Digitisation is a modification and alternative to the traditional representation of national theatre and drama, which contributes to the long-term preservation of Irish theatre history. In addition, this cyberculture may be a means of constructing an Irish heritage unaffected by British or European cultures.

The work of the Abbey Theatre reveals a connection between history, theatre, nationalism,

<sup>40</sup> See <<https://repository.dri.ie/catalog/9593x026s>> (05/2023).

and drama in Ireland, and, in this context, the DRI can serve as a platform for interdisciplinary humanities. However, digital preservation is a complex process with many unresolved issues (such as long-term preservation), which pose problems for institutional repositories. Nonetheless, the widespread implementation of institutional repositories offers new opportunities for digital preservation. Indeed, much could be done to initiate digital preservation from the beginning, which is a process that involves authors. Integrating digital preservation into the workflow of repositories would facilitate the preservation of tasks in the future.

Digital preservation is not a problem faced exclusively by institutional repositories. Over time, pressures on information providers to ensure digital storage and continued access will intensify. In this context, the widespread implementation of institutional repositories offers new opportunities for digital preservation. Therefore, much could be done to consider digital curing from the outset, for example, involving authors in contributing to the preservation of metadata during the creation process. Further, integrating digital preservation into the repository's workflow, thereby easing subsequent preservation tasks, should also be considered. Future-proofing against technology obsolescence is one of the potential benefits of incorporating digital assets into a managed repository framework. This is an opportunity to ensure digital preservation efforts that go beyond simply rescuing digital objects, towards building the infrastructure necessary to manage them from the beginning. In this manner, digital stakeholders could work towards a future in which digital preservation is fully integrated into the information management lifecycle and is no longer a separate activity.

The DRI is an Irish national initiative designed to preserve Irish cultural heritage, but it also has global implications in respect of its connection to the Global Ireland 2025 project and the digital footprint. The DRI works to refine, develop, and define a culture's traditional representation, so as to make Ireland's past tangible. In addition, it is an attempt to redefine and modify conventional methods of preservation, serving as a starting point for spreading the Irish concept of cyberculture.

National archives are responsible for a state's records, while national libraries are responsible for preserving and cataloging documents, manuscripts, and other types of materials. Deep collaboration between academic institutions and cultural institutions affords both parties numerous advantages. In this regard, the DRI's policy of collaboration and partnership is effective for hosting collaborative digital humanities projects, such as Inspiring Ireland. Inspiring Ireland is a collaboration between the DRI and leading Irish Cultural Institutions, namely: The Abbey Theatre, Chester Beatty Library, Crawford Art Gallery Cork, the Irish Museum of Modern Art, the National Museum of Ireland, the National Archives of Ireland, the National Gallery of Ireland, and the National Library of Ireland, as well as the Irish Government's Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG). This partnership illustrates how, using a digital humanities approach, academia, technology, and cultural institutions can collaborate to produce something innovative and of societal, global, and cultural benefit. Moreover, collaborative projects in the digital humanities field, such as *The Inspiring Ireland* project, can demonstrate the significance of digital collaborative national infrastructures in sustaining a national policy of collaboration and partnership.

Digitising the archival collections of the Abbey Theatre has many benefits, including the dissemination of diverse sources and the discoverability of various creators and publishers. This contributes to diverse and innovative forms of publishing and creativity that can be tailored to the needs of a global audience. Moreover, this diversity of sources makes digital preservation policies and practices more progressive and refined. Digitisation offers an opportunity to preserve and absorb a substantial amount of Abbey Theatre heritage. In addition, the DRI enables new forms

of archiving, access, and visibility, which provide new avenues for individuals to gain access to content. No longer is it necessary to physically hold a book or ledger in order to examine its contents, or to visit a cultural institution like the Abbey Theatre in order to use and discover its archives.

Modern content is frequently born digital; there is no physical equivalent for email, websites, social media, etc. This digital world can facilitate new forms of participation for academics, tourists, and the general public. Therefore, if digital technology can be used to digitise the archived collections of the Abbey Theatre, then content can be preserved for future use. However, in the same way that “vinegar syndrome” affects cellulose acetate film, and humidity affects paper, a digital object is also susceptible to damage. Digital objects may also degrade over time due to “bit rot” or ongoing format changes that render the object unreadable or obsolete. Therefore, although digital preservation is the solution for ensuring future access, it entails active, ongoing data management which takes into account changing formats, standards, and software.

Most partner organisations have pre-existing repositories whose autonomy needs to be retained, and yet support is also needed for the task of long-term digital preservation. In this respect, partner organisations are cognizant of the benefits of building links between the collections they hold and collections in other partner institutions. The technical, organisational and legal infrastructure developed by the DRI is responsive to these needs. However, it has the additional benefit of strengthening and supporting partnerships via federated structures that encourage the development of shared infrastructure, policy and advocacy.

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# Gendered Discourses and Actor Representation in Eoin Colfer's *Artemis Fowl* Series: A Corpus-Based Study

*Dalia Mohammed Hamed*  
Tanta University (<[dalia.ali@edu.tanta.edu.eg](mailto:dalia.ali@edu.tanta.edu.eg)>)

## *Abstract:*

The *Artemis Fowl* series (2001-2012) is described by its Irish author Eoin Colfer as “*Die Hard* with Fairies”. *Artemis Fowl* is an eight book series of adventures and supernatural actions. The starring character, Artemis Fowl, is a twelve-year-old criminal mastermind. His primary goal is to pursue money, which makes him kidnap the fairy leader. This results in a continuing fight between two worlds: Artemis's and the fairies'. The *Fowl* adventures present many themes, of which gendered discourses and actor representation inspire this research. This paper examines the eight-series child books via Corpus Linguistics apparatus. AntConc is a corpus analysis software utilized to generate wordlists of each book so that words with higher frequency may be investigated in their context of utterance via the concordance toolkit. The next step aims to detect the occurrence of search terms pertaining to gendered discourse and actor description. In this concern, the contributions presented by Tannen (1993, 1999), Edley (2001), Weatherall and Gallois (2003), Sunderland (2004), and Wetherell and Edley (2014) are considered in the detection of gendered language. Van Leeuwen's taxonomy (1996, 2008) of social actor representation is also considered to detect actor descriptions. Accordingly, the eight-series adventure novels are linguistically analyzed so that the main themes, gender identity markers and actor representation may be uncovered. The study supports the discursive psychologists' belief that gender is created and enhanced via discourse. The study is original in incorporating corpus linguistic toolkits, discursive psychology and discourse analysis to child Irish fantasy literature to expose the gendered-identities negotiated and the features representing social actors.

*Keywords:* Actor Representation, *Artemis Fowl* Series, Corpus Linguistics, Gendered Discourse

## *1. Introduction*

Discursive Psychology (DP) is an interdisciplinary field which approaches psychological topics from a discourse-ana-

lytical perspective. Psychology starts with one's structuring of mental representations and ends with negotiating them when talking. DP's starting point is discourse, not as a consequence of cognitive abilities, but as "a domain of action in its own" (Edwards, Potter 2019, 1). DP studies "how psychology is constructed, understood and displayed" via discourse in interaction (Wiggins, Potter 2008, 73). Discourse-world relation is by no means a question of mere references, because language can be used to perform actions as "[we] can use language to hurt, stereotype, favor, or discriminate" (Mazid 2014, 2). Discourse is thought to be the constructor of both "reality and mind" (Edwards, Potter 2019, 1) due to its nature as an action-oriented process. Hence, discourse is assumed to be the world's dynamic force (Edwards, Potter 1992). Taking Van Leeuwen, Mazid, Wiggins and Potter, Edwards and Potter's words as a point of departure, the current research undertakes to examine what is done to the recipients of *Artemis Fowl* series by Colfer's discourse<sup>1</sup>.

Discourse denotes communication through language (Johnstone 2002), and signifies stretches of linguistic components constituting a coherent unit (Crystal 1992, 25). Novels, accordingly, are named discourses (Cook 1990 [1989], 7), the medium that endows these novels, or any language-based work, with a concrete living/being (Bakhtin 1981 qtd. in Wales 1989, 121). Discourse subsumes language and other forms of non-verbal communication to form a social practice (Chouliaraki, Fairclough 1999, 38). This sociological view of discourse highlights the reciprocal relation between discourse and society. Thus, linguistic phenomena are social in the sense that people's acts of reading and writing are socially determined and have social effects. Social phenomena are linguistic as whatever goes in a social context has discourse as its starting point (Fairclough 1989, 23).

Considering societal issues as a point of departure, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) endeavors to disclose the implicit ways which shape discourse-society relative interconnections. Discourse brings about changes in beliefs. The social effects of discourse depend on the process of meaning-making (Fairclough 2001, 2003). To interpret meaning, one needs to interpret the social practice and the way discourse figures in the social practice. The social practice is an articulation of action/interaction, social relations, persons, the material world and discourse. Discourse figures in three main shapes. Genre, the first shape, refers to ways of acting and interacting via speaking or writing. Discourses, the second shape, signify the representations of the social world and the social actors. This point underlies the discursive nature of representations. Styles, the third shape, are perceived as ways of being and showing identity (Fairclough 2003, 25-26). It is noted that discourse refers to either language in its abstract sense or ways of representation. This research is about discourse, as a count noun, signifying particular ways of social actors' representations.

Representation, according to sociologists, is considered to be a purely practice-dependent occurrence (Van Leeuwen 2008, 4). Discourse represented participants rarely start from scratch, as they integrate new discourse elements with previous information taken for granted (Ariel 2006, 1). Being a research enterprise mainly interested in the analysis of discourse beyond the mere sentential level, CDA is grounded on the standard that discourse is a form of social action/practice.

Social practices are ways "of doing things" (Van Leeuwen 2008, 6). Any social action is a plurality of interconnected elements. These elements include the participants involved in an action, the spatio-temporal features of the event, the relations and positions of participants and discourse. In other words, CDA deals with the situational constraints on social practice. CDA

<sup>1</sup>The page number of the books 2, 3, 5, 7, 8 refers to the pdf file (see the link: <<https://ebookpresssite.wordpress.com/artemis-fowl/>>; 05/2023).

does not analyze language per se; rather, it examines language components in the wider social/political context (Fairclough, Wodak 1997). Accordingly, the issue of gendered-discourses and social actor representations are at the heart of discourse analytical researches.

Gender means any differences between males and females in their discursive practices (Sunderland 2004, 14). Gender is socially constructed, as it refers to what it takes to be a man/masculine or a woman/feminine (Friedman, Wilks 1987, 58). Gendered identity, which is the behaviour of being masculine or feminine, is created and perpetuated by social acts (Xue 2008, 54). According to the nature of their discourse orientation, DP differs from Traditional Psychology in the sense that DP positions discourse at its center-stage (Wetherell, Edley 2014, 357). In the past, psychologists treated language as “a resource” signaling the clue to what is going on in one’s mind (Edley 2001, 190). DP, on the contrary, considers language to be its topic detecting people’s construal of attitudes. Being a sub-discipline of psychology, DP pays attention to psychological themes in discourse. Consequently, DP is considered a form of discourse analysis (Taylor 2014, 463).

Mediating between psychology and discourse analysis, DP is a bi-disciplinary field which identifies the interpretative repertoire used to develop the social action or “what speakers and writers are doing with language” (McMullen 2021, 5). Thanks to DP, one’s activities such as reciting stories or expressing attitudes are believed to be a context-sensitive process comprising diverse social acts rather than a mere retrieval of stored information (Edley 2001, 190). DP is centered around social actor-discourse relation so that social actors are both the “products and the producers of discourse” (Billig 1991 qtd. in Edley 2001, 190). Social actors are, similarly, the “masters and the slaves” of discourse (Barthes 1982 qtd. in Edley 2001, 190).

Gendered discourses refer to the acts such as ways of talking and changing positions which endow a person with a masculine or feminine identity regardless of his biological sex (191). Hence, gender is produced, maintained and developed via the doings of certain discourses. In sociology and social psychology, participants of the social practice, or social actors, signal whoever performs an act, whether (non)verbal or physical, so that certain consequences may be triggered. Van Leeuwen’s taxonomy of social actor representation relies on the linguistic realizations of the relevant representational alternative, which are reflections of the actor’s perception of his gender.

Ireland’s children laureate Eoin Colfer describes *Artemis Fowl* series as “*Die Hard* with Fairies” (Alberge 2019). The current study targets Colfer’s series in an attempt to detect instances of actor descriptions and gendered discourses. The *Fowl* adventures are a series of eight fantasy/sci-fi novels with numerous themes resultant of the *Fowl-Fairies* war. The series is about a twelve-year-old criminal-minded teen prodigy who is ready to face any challenges to reclaim his family’s fortune. Abducting the female fairy leader in hope of extorting gold as a ransom for her freedom, *Fowl* has launched the human-fairies fight. Colfer has expressed his motives behind writing as “to try to bring something new to a genre or to try to turn it on its head” (Carpenter 2011). The current study examines actors and representations to scrutinize the series to explore Colfer’s new contribution in the genre of child fantasy literature.

Gendered discourses are thought to be worthy of examination because the series addresses children and young adults who will be influenced by its discourse acts. Integrating Leeuwen’s categories of actor description (1996, 2008) with discursive psychologists’ contributions (Tannen 1993, 1999, 2003; Edley 2001; Sunderland 2004; Wetherell, Edley 2014; Kendall, Tannen 2015) and Corpus Linguistics (CL) toolkits, theoretical framework is tri-dimensional. Trans-disciplinarity, the outcome of integrating sociology, DP and CL, is thought to render analysis more comprehensive and objective.



## 2. Literature Review

Critical Linguistics (CrL) was introduced by a group of linguists in the 1970s when they decided that any linguistic examination should have a critical perspective (Fowler, Hodge, Kress *et al.* 1979; Fowler 1991, 1996). CrL was intended to unveil unequal practices in discourse, power distribution and the ideological systems underlying social practices.

In the late 1980s, CDA has become an established field in social sciences, a problem-oriented interdisciplinary research method, which seeks to unveil the production and the enactment of disparity/discrepancy amongst social actors (Wodak 2013). CDA is a method that gathers tools pertaining to various approaches (Weiss, Wodak 2003) in order to analyze forms of social relations, gendered-discourses and unequal/prejudiced discourse practices and their re(enactment) in texts (Billig 2003). It is a way of detecting a problem, scrutinizing it, understanding its background and conditions (Forhmann 1994). This is, in turn, accomplished via certain methodological frameworks which guarantee objective analyses of the problem, which is a fundamental step before suggesting any solutions to the status quo.

Fairclough presents an approach focusing on the social angle, considering discourse to be a form of social practice. He proposes the social theory of discourse through which he viewed CDA as three-dimensional. The framework is composed of the analyses of text, the discursive practice and the social practice (Fairclough 1989, 1992a, 1992b, 1995). Van Leeuwen addresses the discursive representation of a component of a social practice: social actors. He states that discourse preserves hegemonic practices such as inequality and injustice (2006, 290).

According to Weatherall and Gallois, Psychology offers two approaches to language and gender. The first is the social-cognitive approach which endorses the view that action is driven by cognitive procedures, which assumes that cognition takes priority over language. The second is that of DP which considers language to be prior to cognition when it comes to the understanding and interpretation of behaviors. DP emphasizes that language is a site for gender. DP-based gendered language takes discourse as its point of departure. Gendered-language studies assume that social actors have internal gendered identities/differences which are unveiled via discourse analysis (2003, 487-489). Capturing the paradoxical relationship between discourse and the social actor, DP treats gender as a set of “variable practices” negotiated via discourse (Wetherell, Edley 2014, 4).

Goffman refuses to correlate between discourse representation and “sex-linked” or biological identity. He, rather, relates discursive different realizations to “sex-class-linked” identity (1977, 305). It is noted that “class” does not refer to social classification, but it denotes gender: the class of men or women. Accordingly, the term gender is not biology-related. Gender is culturally and socially determined (Maccoby 1988, 775). A similar approach to gendered discourses is endorsed by Ochs as she considers gender to be the linguistic features associated with either males or females in social interactions (1992, 341). Tannen approaches gender via the concept of framing which explains what happens in the social act (1999, 226).

## 3. Theoretical Frameworks

### 3.1 Social Actor Representation: Van Leeuwen (1996, 2008)

Hallidayan grammar defines a social actor in terms of its potential of meaning so that the “actor” is the doer capable of acting/doing. Van Leeuwen deals with “actor” in a sociosemantic

manner, by which he introduces a repertoire providing a description of how a social actor can be represented. Van Leeuwen's categories of actor representations do not centralize on linguistic notions such as agency and nominalization. The coming part, based on Van Leeuwen's taxonomy of social actor representation (1996, 2008), illustrates categories related to analysis. Appendix (I) summarizes all representational categories.

### *3.1.1 Role Allocation*

In this category, social actors are endowed with roles to play, which may be either active (activation) or passive (passivation). Representation can rearrange roles so that an actor may be identified as being active, while another actor may be described as being the receiver who undergoes the activity. Being an active social actor means to be represented as an actor, a behavior, a sayer, a sayer and an assigner in material, behavioral, mental, verbal and relational processes (Halliday 1985, 1994, 2004). Activation can be achieved, accordingly, by participation so that the actor is located in the subject position. A second strategy entailing activation is circumstantialization, via using a prepositional circumstantial such as "by" or "from" followed by the agent. A third strategy endowing activation is premodification and postmodification of nominalizations/process nouns. Possessive pronouns may be used to activate or passivate a social actor, which is a form of premodification.

Passivation is divided into subjection and beneficialization. Subjected social actors are regarded as objects. Beneficialized social actors comprise a third party benefitting from the action, whether positively or negatively. Subjection can be achieved by participation when subjected social actors are the goals in material processes, phenomenon in mental processes and carriers in attributive processes (*ibidem*).

### *3.1.2 Genericization and Specification*

Social actors may be signaled by generic or specific references. Generic references can be perceived by the plural without determiners or the singular noun with the definite or indefinite article. In case of mass nouns, the generic sense is tense-dependent. Genericized entities refer to categories that are driven out of the readers' immediate world of experience. Genericized persons are considered as the others who do not share readers' burdens and responsibilities.

Specific references are realized by using specific nouns or numeratives. Specifically-referred entities are identified with the readers' immediate world where their specifics are positioned.

### *3.1.3 Indetermination and Differentiation*

Indetermination is indicated by representing unspecified or anonymous actors. Social actors are anonymized by using indefinite pronouns as "someone, some, some people" and generalized exophoric reference as "they". Differentiation sets a social actor apart from other groups: *we/us* vs. *they/them*.

### *3.1.4 Nomination and Categorization*

Nomination or being nominated signals actor representation via their unique identity. If social actors are described in terms of the shared features, this may be signaled as "categorization". Nomination is recognized by proper nouns. Categorization involves Functionalization and Identification.

### *3.1.5 Functionalization and Identification*

Functionalization and Identification are two types of categorizations. Functionalization is realized when actors are referred to in terms of their activity, doings, occupation or roles. Identification is realized when actors are referred to in terms of their identity: what they are. This may be done via classification, relational identification, and physical identification. Classification means that actors are distinguished/classified according to their age, gender, social class, wealth, race, origin and ethnicity. Relational identification is realized via work relations or kinship. Physical identification is marked by representing physical characteristics.

### *3.2 Gendered Discourses Taxonomy*

#### *3.2.1 Wetherell and Edley (2014)*

According to Wetherell and Edley the following features are indicators of masculinity:

- 1 - Jockeying for Position as males usually construct their masculinity through struggles and challenges to risky situations, and tend to show courage in critical positions.
- 2 - Independence is a major feature defining masculinity (2014, 355-364).

In this concern, gender is not a biological feature per se; rather, it is a discourse sensitive trait as masculinity is created and developed via discourse.

#### *3.2.2 Sunderland (2004)*

Sunderland explains four sets of gendered discourses:

- 1 - Traditionally gendered discourses which depict males as commanders indoors/outdoors vs. females as residing indoors. Males are described in terms of their doings and activities; they are represented as doers of actions and centers of adventures.
- 2 - Feminist discourses: feminist discourses refer to resisting and criticizing patriarchal practices. Females are included in the story where they are not needed. Counter-stereotypical depiction of females is a feature of feminist discourses.
- 3 - Androcentric discourses: discourses sometimes focus on males by showing the plot revolving around males, presenting males as protagonists and depicting males more than females.
- 4 - Gendered literacy: when books are written by males and include males outnumbering females, this presents females as disempowered (2004, 147-163).

#### *3.2.3 Edley (2001)*

Edley believes that language lies at the heart of gender, masculinity vs. femininity, which is constructed and developed through discourse (2001, 191). He adds that language is a doing or a practice that accomplishes gender (192). Edley's approach which identifies the resources constructing masculinity involves three key terms for gender analysis: Interpretative repertoires, Ideological dilemmas and Subject positions.

Interpretative repertoires refer to different ways of talking about actions and events, the discursive resources drawn upon in everyday texts and talks (197-198). Ideological dilemmas are the second category for gender analysis. Ideologies are the social actors' beliefs, values, practices and way of life (203). A dilemma is thought to take place when one is caught between an inclination to do an act and a warning against that very act. Ideologies have a dilemmatic nature as they seem to be indeterminate, which endows them richness (*ibidem*). Because people differ in their ideologies, competing themes and interests can be detected in almost all social interactions.

Subject position or subjectification, the outcome of ideology, pushes one towards/backwards a certain position (209). It refers to the "locations within a conversation" (210), or the identities created as a result of ways of discourse. Different interpretative repertoires cause different ways of talking with the result of different subject positions, which will be currently used to refer to gender identity (masculinity vs. femininity). Masculine identity, a case in point, may be created when the social actor defines himself as being courageous enough to challenge risk and face his enemies and opponents without fear. Modern representatives of this macho or heroic masculinity are Tom Cruise, Russell Crowe and Matt Damon.

#### 3.2.4. *Tannen (1993, 1999, 2003)*

Tannen illustrates gendered discourses according to status-connection relation. She presents a multidimensional grid showing hierarchy and equality in a vertical axis, while closeness and distance are stretched in a horizontal another (1993,171; 1999, 227). Apart from the American culture, Tannen adds, relationships are conceived of as an axis stretching between the upper left quadrant (hierarchical/closeness) to the lower right quadrant (equal and distant) (2003, 181-183). It is concluded that the discursive patterns which denote status and connection are gendered. "[V]ulgarity; play challenge; displays of helping, expertise, and needing no help" are thought to be male-linked (1999, 233).

Tannen adds that a female may embody a macho-man style when positioned in a role played by male sex-class (236), which underlines the view that gender is not biologically-dependent. Hence, this research considers gendered discourses as a choice.

#### 3.2.5 *Kendall and Tannen (2015)*

The following is a summary of Kendall and Tannen's observations:

Women use strategies of politeness and observe other's self-images/faces more frequently than men.

Women tend to avoid direct criticism.

Men show lack of attention to face.

Males use hierarchical structures in speech; females prefer egalitarian structures.

Males negotiate status by giving/resisting commands.

Females focus on connection whereas males on status.

Females are sensitive to being neglected; males are sensitive to being suppressed or instructed.

Females tend to focus on similarities/asymmetry via repetition of discourse items.

Males show opposition and agonism. They like challenges and debates. (2015, 642-644)

#### 4. Methodology

The current study integrates both quantitative and qualitative research methods so that data analysis may be rendered “more comprehensive” (Neuman 2011 [1994], 165). The Quantitative/computer-based analysis is performed by AntConc. Substantial data of analysis, the eight-novels corpora, are handled as follows:

- 1 - Each novel is downloaded in PDF file format and saved in a separate file.
- 2 - Each PDF file is transformed into TEXT file readable by AntConc.
- 3 - Each TEXT file is separately uploaded to the software.
- 4 - AntConc is processed to generate a word list for each novel according to which words are arranged in a descending order.
- 5 - Quantitative results are typed in a table and explained.
- 6 - Words of higher frequency, thought to be significant, are processed by activating the concordance tool which shows the sentential context.
- 7 - Given the sentential context, actor description is manually detected. Appendices (A-H) are prepared to illustrate some examples of each novel’s actor representation.
- 8 - Given the sentential context, words that are thought to be gender related are pressed so that the screen may display their wider contextual situation in the novel.
- 9 - Terms which are thought to be gendered are typed in the search box and the concordance tool is processed once more to examine them in their context. Gendered discourses are manually detected in steps 8 and 9.
- 10 - Search results are qualitatively interpreted.

Methodological framework is tridimensional. CL, via the software AntConc, is used for processing each novel. For actor description, Van Leeuwen’s taxonomy (1996, 2008) is employed. Gendered-discourses detecting tools are inspired by the contributions of Tannen (1993, 1999, 2003), Edley (2001), Sunderland (2004), Wetherell and Edley (2014), Kendall and Tannen (2015).

Analysis begins with presenting a short summary of each novel. This research proposes that gendered discourses form a major theme in the series under investigation, for this reason major gendered-discourse contributors’ taxonomies are considered as a starting point to analyze the data. In this concern, this study is a top-bottom/corpus-based research.

#### 5. Analysis

##### 5.1 *Artemis Fowl (2001)*

This book introduces Artemis Fowl II, son of an Irish crime lord Artemis Fowl I, as a teenage criminal mastermind, his bodyguard Butler and the fairy world. Captain Holly Short is the first female fairy LEPRcon (Lower Elements Police Reconnaissance) officer. She is a skilled crime-fighting fairy, yet underestimated due to her gender by Commander Julius Root of LEPRcon. Julius Root is an old soldier. Artemis, the main character, has the acquisition of money as a sole goal. Leading the Fowl criminal empire, he wants to rebuild his family’s fortune after the disappearance of his father. Artemis kidnaps Captain Holly Short, the fairy leader, and demands a massive gold ransom from the fairies for her return. These are the main four characters, of whom one female is amongst three males. The novel’s wordlist follows.

Discourse Item	Frequency
Artemis Fowl	368
Captain Holly Short	343
Commander Julius Root	304
Butler	258
his	701
he	680
him	159
her	415
she	319

Table 1– *Artemis Fowl*'s Search Results

Statistics indicate that this book is about male characters. To speak gendered-language, this is Sunderland's "androcentric discourse" and "gendered literacy", which feature a male protagonist and a plot focusing on males whose frequency outnumber females. Concordance tool is processed in order to examine the relevant context to uncover what these characters do by their discourses. This is the point at which actor descriptions are accessed. Appendix A presents actor description search results.

Generally, characters are represented using the following strategies:

- 1 - Characters are activated and allocated the role of active participants located in the subject position.
- 2 - Characters are referred to either by their unique identity, their proper nouns, or their specific references.
- 3 - Human characters are differentiated from the fairies.
- 4 - Characters are categorized and classified according to race so that the human race is set apart from the fairy race.

Though characters share the same actor representational categories, statistical/quantitative results reveal that Artemis outnumbers all other actors. "Artemis" is typed in the search box and the concordance tool is processed so that the software may show the relevant context, which helps to identify gendered discourses. Artemis is presented as a character beyond description due to his super intelligence:

"He bamboozles every test thrown at him" (6) (Activation-Specific Reference).

"He has puzzled the greatest medical minds and sent many of them gibbering to their own hospitals" (Activation-Specific reference).

"Artemis Fowl had devised a plan to restore his family's fortune" (6) (Activation-Nomination).

"Artemis is a child prodigy" (6) (Activation-Nomination).

The examples introduce an active male actor whose masculinity is based on his mental superpowers rather than macho masculinity. Artemis's reckless nature is manifest when his plan to restore his family fortune is described as "A plan that could topple civilizations and plunge the planet into a cross-species war" (6). Colfer induces the reader to sympathize with this super child when his acts are justified on the basis of retrieving his families' fortunes.

Artemis associates a female with feebleness, which is apparent in his gendered discourses as: "I don't suppose you girls ever did a decent day's work in your lives' [...] 'But by today's standards you're little more than a pack of blouse-wearing weaklings' " (52), and "Artemis saw the pain in the creature's eyes [...] A female [...] A female, like Juliet, or Mother" (44). The metaphor A FEMALE IS A WEAK is actuated, which is a form of gendered literacy and a threat to females' positive and negative faces.

In this concern, Artemis's masculinity relies on:

- 1 - His mental superpower (Gendered literacy).
- 2 - Facing challenges to save his family (Weatherell and Edley's Jockeying for position).
- 3 - Holding responsibility for his family's fortune retrieval (Weatherell and Edley's Showing independence).
- 4 - A MALE AS AN ADVENTURER metaphor (Sunderland's Traditionally gendered discourse).
- 5 - Descriptions of Artemis's actions and plans are the focal point (Sunderland's traditionally gendered discourses, androcentric discourses and gendered literacy).
- 6 - Using interpretative repertoire that pertains to a genius adventurer.
- 7 - Violating females' positive and negative faces.
- 8 - Interest in status and power.

Holly, the sole main female, is introduced in reference to her physical description and her distress caused by Root's maltreatment. A female's look and victimization are thought to be new categories added to gendered discourses. Holly is described as having "nut-brown skin, cropped auburn hair and hazel eyes" (21). She is also represented as a weak female abused by a male "Commander Root was the cause of Holly's distress" (*ibidem*). Gendered literacy is detected when Colfer presents Holly to be weaker than the male commander, and when Root is depicted as a powerful male dissatisfied with Holly because of her biological sex: "[t]he commander had decided to take offence at the fact that the first female officer in Recon's history had been assigned to his squad [...] Root didn't think it was any place for a girlie" (*ibidem*). Holly is termed to be disempowered despite her participation as an active agent: "and if Root found out she was running low on magic, she'd be transferred to Traffic" (33-34). Root, like Artemis, associates females with weakness and inefficiency.

The metaphor A FEMALE IS A VICTIMIZED GENDER is detected in the portrayal of Holly's gender-based persecution: "[t]here were at least a dozen officers on this shift who hadn't even reported in yet. But Root always singled her out for persecution" (23). Holly is referred to as " '[a] female Recon officer. The test case' " (72) and " '[y]our officer' [...] 'your female' " (137), which triggers the humiliating metaphor A FEMALE IS A TEST SUBJECT. Gender-based capacity, measuring success by gender, is a new category of gendered discourse and poses a threat to a female's faces.

An opposite image is spelled when Holly is described as being a male: "zipping the dull-green jumpsuit up to her chin and strapping on her helmet [...] Holly battled through the crowds to the police station [...] she grunted [...] set her visor [...] Holly gave him [a thief/

elf] a swipe in the backside with her buzz baton” (21-22). This is a counter stereotypical image of a traditional female. Holly acts as an active male, yet is described as a weak female. This may cause inner suffering. Holly’s internal sufferance is released when she compares a female with a male: “she [...] not like some of the male LEP officers” (42). Holly’s double identities result in two interpretative repertoires: one is connected with her victimized female identity; the other with her counter feminine image as a cop.

Holly’s femininity is based on:

- 1 - Feminine appearance
- 2 - Feminine victimization or A FEMALE IS A VICTIMIZED GENDER metaphor.
- 3 - Gender-based capacity, or A FEMALE IS UNFIT and A FEMALE IS A TEST SUBJECT images.
- 4 - Counter stereotypical depiction of female as apparent in Holly’s image as a LEPRecon.
- 5 - Interpretative repertoires pertaining two genders: a victimized female and a severe male.
- 6 - Threatened faces.

Root represents a traditional image of a male commander who never tolerates a mistake as long as it is female-related. Root’s discourse acts feature the traditional image of a male as an empowered commander. Hence, Root’s interpretative repertoires echo gendered literacy and face-threatening acts: “SHORT! GET IN HERE” (22), “[d]on’t insult me with your excuses’ [...] ‘Get up a few minutes earlier’ ” (23), “Fix your helmet [and] Stand up straight” (*ibidem*). These direct orders are a violation of Holly’s faces by which Root represents gendered literacy and traditionally gendered discourse.

Root declares his reason for continually attacking her face “ ‘It’s because you’re a girl’ ” (*ibidem*). Colfer plainly expresses gender discrimination: “ ‘You are the first girl in Recon. Ever. You are a test case’ ” (*ibidem*). Root decides to replace Short with Frond, another fairy. When Holly objects to his decision, he violates her positive and negative faces and plays the typical role of a male in control of a female: “ ‘I can and I will. Why shouldn’t I? You have never given me your best ... Either that or your best just isn’t good enough’ ” (24). The metaphor A FEMALE IS A VICTIMIZED GENDER seems to be reinforced. This very image makes Holly painfully express her anguish: “ ‘[i]f I were a male – one of your precious sprites – we wouldn’t even be having this conversation’ ” (*ibidem*). Genes-based privileges is a new category of gendered practices: males are privileged due to their genes; females are not, by which the metaphor MALES ARE QUALIFIED; FEMALES ARE DISQUALIFIED is enriched. Because of her femininity, Holly has no room for mistakes, and she has to work harder to prove that she is as qualified as males.

It is noticed that status and power are the ruling principles of male characters. Artemis and Root have power and status as their target. The hierarchy-distance quadrant encloses Short, Root, Artemis and Butler where relation is status-based.

## 5.2 The Arctic Incident (2002)

In one storyline, Artemis Fowl II, when he was in his boarding school, receives Butler’s e-mail about his father’s critical situation, Artemis Fowl senior, of being kidnapped by Russian Mafiya. The Mafiya ordered a ransom to set him free. In another storyline, Holly takes a squad up to the surface to discover what Artemis knows about the goblin’s illegal underground



activities. The two storylines meet because Artemis and Holly feel that they need each other. The novel's word list is:

Discourse Item	Frequency
his	772
he	710
him	211
Artemis	431
Butler	230
Holly	402
her	291
she	215

Table 2 – *The Arctic Incident's* Search Results

Numbers indicate that this book is male-centered. This is an androcentric discourse and a gendered literacy. The main social actors are almost the same as the first novel. Artemis and Holly are the main social actors. They are activated and nominated. Specific references are sometimes used instead of their proper nouns (See Appendix B). It is time to zoom on some resulting examples so that their wider context of situation may unveil their gender consideration.

When the screen displays “Artemis Fowl A Psychological Assessment”, this statement is processed and the screen presents Artemis's brainy masculinity activating-discourse: “Artemis Fowl, was showing signs of an intellect greater than that of any human” (1). Colfer justifies Artemis's involvement in criminal activities saying: “The answer lies with his father” (*ibidem*). Artemis always gets engaged in parlous adventures which are stirred by the noble motivations about rescuing his father, which intensifies Artemis's independence and challenge-loving nature.

In addition to the features of Artemis's masculinity mentioned before, this book presents pragmatism. This is apparent when he says to Holly: “ ‘[w]hen I abducted you, I was thinking only of the ransom’ ” (23). This is the source of Artemis's discourses: his targets justify his acts. Pragmatic masculinity is thought to be a new category of gendered discourses.

Holly is thought to be the gender-carrier participant. Her description as a peculiar mixture of the two genders is stimulated. She is an anti-stereotypical image of a female: “Captain Holly Short [...] the catlike stance and the sinewy muscles might suggest a gymnast or perhaps a professional potholer” (4-5). She is also a traditionally submitted female in a male-dominated society.

Holly's most discourses are in favor of her masculine gender. When a female plays a male role, this puts pressure on her because she exerts more efforts than her male counterparts; yet, her mistakes are not tolerated due to her biological gender: “her position as Recon's first female officer had been under review” (5). The council members blame Holly because Artemis deceives her, that is why “Holly was farmed out to Customs and Excise” (*ibidem*). If a male had been in Holly's situation, he would not have been punished. Holly's mistakes are never endured; her devotion to duty is never appreciated. Genes-based supremacy is prompted.

Her female gender appears when she depends on emotion rather than logic as she refuses to cooperate with Artemis for common interests because he kidnaps her: “ ‘Holly. There's more

at stake here than your little vendetta’ ” (19). When she gives Artemis a coin to remind him of the underlying goodness, she seems to be acting out of her emotional/female side “ [t]o remind you that deep beneath the layers of deviousness, there is a spark of decency’ ” (80). Consequently, feminine sentimentality is thought to be a new category added to gendered language.

This book presents a minor male character, Chix, trying to court Holly: “Chix believed himself God’s green-skinned gift to females” (5). This is a feature of modern masculinity: A MALE AS MR. RIGHT. Another minor character, Feral, presents a traditional gendered discourse with the metaphor A FEMAL RESIDES AT HOME when he “lost count of the times he sat his daughter down, advising her to leave business to the male pixies” (21).

### 5.3 The Eternity Code (2003)

Using stolen technology from the fairies, the shrewd mastermind, Artemis Fowl, created the most powerful supercomputer known to man, which he calls “C Cube”. The computer falls into the hands of Jon Spiro, a businessman from Chicago. Artemis needs the fairies’ help to retrieve the computer. The fairies and humans must put aside their differences to face their mutual enemy, Spiro. The fairies agree to help Artemis on condition that they mind-wipe him.

AntConc has displayed the following results:

Discourse Item	Frequency
his	750
he	728
him	226
Artemis	598
Holly	379
her	371
she	250
Spiro	355

Table 3 – *The Eternity Code’s* Search Results

To speak gendered language, androcentric discourse and gendered literacy are given prominence. Artemis and Holly are activated, nominated and referred to by their specific references (See Appendix C). The screen shows “Butler males” vs. “[t]he female Butlers” (67), which is a sign of gender discrimination. This book alludes that females are inferior to males: “[t]he Tunisian was unaccustomed to taking orders from a female, and now his friends were watching” (69), “[a] nice little surprise for anyone who underestimates females” (119). Masculinity is reported to be a sign of acuteness and brilliance: “ [a]bout my name – Artemis [...] I am that male. Artemis the hunter. I hunted you’ ” (191). The metaphor A MALE IS A HUNTER means that males are careful, accurate, clever and practical. Feminine hunting entails females’ weakness and fear. When a female is hunted, she is likened to a prey. The image activates feminine victimization and threatens females’ faces.

Previous two novels suggest that gender representation is mostly associated with Holly as she is the main female character. That is why Holly’s entrances will be processed to get a closer look at her discourse practices. When Artemis asks for Holly’s help and tries to take Root’s

permission for this, he says: “ ‘whether or not you give me Holly’ ” (104). In this instance, Holly is depicted as an object or stuff: A FEMALE IS AN OBJECT, which forms an attack against her face. This is thought to form a new category about feminine insignificance.

When Root agrees to let Holly help, he says to her “ ‘[b]e careful on this one. Your career won’t survive another blow’ ” (107). Holly does her best to perform a role of an energetic officer, yet her mistakes are never tolerated for the male-overborne society. When Holly is asked whether or not she will miss Artemis after his mind wipe, she says “ ‘[n]o [...] But her eyes told the real story’ ” (150). This mirrors feminine emotionality. Despite Holly’s, the LEPrecon, counterstereotypical image of females, her female gender can be detected in some examples where she returns to her original identity. A female tries to hide her feelings especially when she knows that they cannot be met, yet her eyes unveil her secret. This is a female practice.

#### 5.4 The Opal Deception (2005)

Suffering from amnesia, Artemis forgets all about the fairy underworld and returns to his illegal occupation. Opal Koboi, an evil pixie, manages to get revenge on LEPrecon fairy police and Artemis.

Discourse Item	Frequency
his	893
he	814
him	223
Artemis	598
her	547
Holly	543
she	449
Opal	366

Table 4 – *The Opal Deception’s* Search Results

Spiro is replaced by Opal in this book. Numbers indicate that the book is about males in its majority. Needless to mention that androcentric discourse and gendered literacy overrule. Artemis and Holly, the main actors, are the activated participants in the subject position (See Appendix D). It is noticed that “Artemis and Holly” and “Holly and Artemis” appear with observed frequency in the search results. Actor descriptions seem to have a balanced distribution. It is gender allocation that needs a closer look. Artemis’s repertoire is thrill-related. It is also filled with complicated scientific terms which settle his position as a brilliant masculine.

Opal’s physical description, especially that of her eyes and hair, is reminiscent of Holly’s: “[t]he killer [Opal] [...] She was female with pretty, sharp features, cropped auburn hair, and huge hazel eyes” (57), which activates feminine look as a category of gender. Colfer intends to negotiate an anti-feminist attitude when he expresses that “eight of the top-ten paid hitters in the world were women” (*ibidem*). Opal joins Holly to depict an anti-traditional image of a female. Holly’s male gender comes to the fore whenever she performs her role as an officer, yet she is presented as subordinate: “[t]he only reason she hadn’t already been booted out of the LEP was the commander [...] and now he was gone [...] Artemis Fowl must be saved”

(58). Though Holly is depicted as an active male agent, she is male-dependent. Her fortune is caught between two males: Root and Artemis. A Male-dependent female is a discovered trait of gendered language.

No matter how clever a female is, she is portrayed as being helpless and defenseless without males: “Julius was gone. Artemis was dead. Butler was dead. How could she go on? What was the point? Tears dropped from her lashes [...] She felt hollow, numb. Incapacitated” (59). Holly’s feeling “hollow” seem to interpret her name. Holly’s masculine-governed community disregards her skill as a field operative only because of her gender as “female officer” (3). Instead of honoring her, Holly’s community is “scapegoating” her (*ibidem*). Hence, the female prey/victim image is emphasized.

Holly is underestimated because her society considers that “ ‘[f]emales are too temperamental for police work. They couldn’t even handle a simple transport job like this’ ” (79). The generic reference “females” creates a sharp gender-based discrimination, which results in the genes-based discrimination that ALL FEMALES ARE UNQUALIFIED; ALL MALES ARE QUALIFIED. The book goes further in genes-based segregation and considers females to have a unique unpleasant smell: “ ‘you smell like females in heat’ ” (95). This is a severe attack against females’ faces.

### 5.5 The Lost Colony (2006)

This book is about the lost demon colony Hybras where demons regroup to overthrow the human race. Hydras was captured in Limbo and because the time spell deteriorates, the demon colony is about to return except for Artemis, the super genius, who knows how to rescue the humans and the fairies. The quantitative analysis is presented in the following table:

Discourse Item	Frequency
he	1163
his	1127
him	358
Artemis	695
Holly	525
her	476
she	360

Table 5 – *The Lost Colony’s* Search Results

This novel, too, revolves around one male protagonist and his risks. “Artemis” and “Holly” are pressed to get the sentential context which clarifies actor’s description. Artemis and Holly are described either by nomination or references. They are positioned as active participants (See Appendix E). Again, actor’s description shows gendered parallelism. It is time to consider gender description.

Artemis’s brainy masculinity is usually stressed: “ ‘I’m bored, Holly. My intellect is not being challenged’ ” (73). Holly accepts Artemis’s brainy masculinity: “ ‘[y]ou have a plan. You always have a plan’ ” (212), and all accept Artemis’s preponderance: “[t]here was something

about him that made people assume that he was the leader” (*ibidem*). It seems that masculine leadership is a category of gender indication.

When “the only girl” is screen-displayed, the phrase is pressed to get its wider context in the book. The coming part appears:

Holly was not too happy playing the victim. She had enough of this in the Academy. Every time the curriculum threw up a role-playing game, Holly, as the only girl in that class, was picked to be the hostage, or the elf walking home alone, or the teller facing a bank robber. She tried to object that this was stereotyping, but the instructor replied that stereotypes were stereotypes for a reason, so get that blonde wig on. So when Artemis proposed that she allow herself to get caught, Holly took a bit of persuading. Now she was sitting tied to a wooden chair in a dark damp basement room, waiting for some human to come and torture her. The next time Artemis had a plan involving someone being taken hostage, he could play the part himself. It was ridiculous. She was a captain in her eighties, and Artemis was a fourteen-year-old civilian, and yet he was dishing out the orders and she was taking them. That’s because Artemis is a tactical genius, said her sensible side. Oh, shut up, responded her irritated side eloquently (143).

This quote presents cisgendered/hegemonic masculinity in its worst form. A young teen feminine, Holly is gender-forced to play the role of the weakest participant: a hostage or a sprite. Her instructor threatens her faces and compels her to act in a manner she refuses. When Holly grows up, she is accustomed to submission. The quote presents Holly’s conflicting personality, she is used to surrender, yet she refuses it and cannot fight. Artemis, being a masculine leader/commander, gives commands that she has to follow. Her rank as LEPrecon does not save her from males’ domination. The metaphor A FEMALE IS A SURRENDER; A MALE IS A COMMANDER is spotlighted. This makes Artemis behave as a warlord assuming obedience from his subordinate follower, Holly: “ ‘[h]ere we go, Holly. Are you ready?’ ” (119); “ ‘trust me to get us all out of this. I will explain later’ ” (172). The image of the male commandant is extended to enclose the whole world regardless of the species: “[n]o matter what dimension you’re in, there’s a big-headed male trying to take over the world” (237). A MALE IS THE WORLD HEAD directly spells hegemonic masculinity.

Artemis unfavorably describes females to be “[w]arm one moment and icy the next” (150), which leads to the metaphor A FEMALE IS UNBALANCED/UNRELIABLE and the triggered category feminine fluctuation. This is an attack against females’s positive and negative faces. This matches the Council’s hostile attitude towards Holly. Without Root’s backing, she would not have “survived in LEPrecon” (20).

It is noticed that females are associated with undesirable descriptions: “ ‘one more day of dishonor, grub-hunting with the females’ ” (50), “[h]e’s going to cry now, just like a female” (60), “belittling the females in the compound – another of his favourite pastimes” (63) and “[s]he supposed this irritating bickering was how the males of every species showed affection” (37). These are hegemonic masculinity practices stating the metaphor A FEMALE IS INSIGNIFICANT which violates females’ faces.

### 5.6 The Time Paradox (2008)

Artemis’s mother, Angeline, is ill. Her cure is in the brain fluids of the silky sifaka lemur, which Artemis terminated. He has to make a time travel, with Holly, to the past to recover the cure. The software presents the following results:

Discourse Item	Frequency
his	1030
he	1006
Holly	558
she	495
him	213
Artemis	209

Table 6 – *The Time Paradox*'s Search Results

“Artemis” and masculine references illustrate that gendered literacy and andocentric discourse overwhelm. Actor description is in harmony with previous books (See Appendix F).

Holly presents herself as Artemis/male dependent, “ ‘I couldn’t do without you’ ” (130), and is presented as Root’s pet/dog, “[o]ne of Julius Root’s pet Rottweilers” (107), which marks a new set of gendered discourses: feminine subordination. She is described by her mother as having a “prickly personality” (108). These quotes present A FEMALE IS MALE’S PET and A FEMALE IS UNFRIENDLY metaphors which form a violation of Holly’s faces. When healing Artemis, Holly is represented as being unprofessional and her description concludes that all females are emotional and can’t stand serious situations: “Holly’s hands were shaking and her eyes were blurred with tears. [...] She didn’t feel very professional. She felt like a girl out of her depth” (129-130), and “[s]he felt panic scratch at her heart” (261). The metaphor A FEMALE IS EMOTIONAL/UNPROFESSIONAL is generated. On the contrary, Artemis is depicted as being genius, well-balanced, reliable, rational and credible.

### 5.7 The Atlantis Complex (2010)

In this narrative, Artemis suffers from Atlantis Complex, a psychological disease with symptoms including multiple personality disorder embodied in his alter ego Orion. The mental disease made Artemis announce love to Holly. Unfortunately, a deadly foe, Turnbull Root, attempts to break out prison and destroy the city. Artemis is invited to escape the confines of his mind and save the city and the fairies. Quantitative analysis is presented as follows:

Discourse Item	Frequency
he	973
his	941
Artemis	679
him	286
her	514
Holly	436
she	431

Table 7 – *The Atlantis Complex*'s Search Results

As expected, the book revolves around one male; actors are referred to in the same manner as previous books (See Appendix G). Gender representation pursues two directions. One goes with Artemis's brainy masculinity "ARTEMIS [...] read book after book until his brain swelled with astronomy, calculus, quantum physics, romantic poets, forensic science, and anthropology, among a hundred other subjects" (6) and the resulting metaphor ARTEMIS IS THE SAVIOR: " 'No1 is alive, thanks to you, not to mention everyone on this hospital ship' "(174). The other direction accompanies Holly's weakened femininity. Another narrative line presents Holly's attempt to be a good soldier/fighter: "[g]et a move on, soldier, she told herself, imagining Julius Root giving the order" (73). This will lead to a disordered/clashing personality.

### 5.8 The Last Guardian (2012)

Teen genius Artemis Fowl battles Opal Koboi, a power-crazed pixie and his arch rival, who plots to exterminate mankind. Opal reanimates the spirits of dead-fairy warriors to possess Myles and Beckett, Artemis's little brothers. Opal will reignite a war that wrecks mass destruction, unless Artemis and Holly have stopped her.

Discourse Item	Frequency
his	762
he	713
Artemis	651
him	208
her	615
she	506
Holly	459

Table 8 – *The Last Guardian's* Search Results

It seems that Artemis is A KNIGHT IN SHINING ARMOR. Actor representation looks like previous books (See Appendix H). Gendered discourses emphasize Artemis's brainy masculinity: "Holly knew that Artemis was a genius" (37). The metaphors ARTEMIS IS A WONDER, in "Artemis Fowl. Wonder boy" (54); "[t]here never was anyone like Artemis Fowl, he thought" (370), and ARTEMIS IS FIRST AND FORE, in "Artemis Fowl will never be *secondary*" (267), are presented. The metaphor ARTEMIS IS A MASTER is actuated: "Artemis Fowl makes choices for everyone, as usual" (329). ARTEMIS IS THE CHAMPION is also induced as he is the sole rescuer: "Artemis has a plan" and "Holly knew him well enough by now to unravel his motives later" (356). This is hegemonic masculinity.

Depiction of femininity is contrastive. Females are portrayed as snaky: "[f]emales were ever treacherous" (193), and foolish "[a]nd that all girls are stupid" (176). Accordingly, the metaphors A FEMALE IS SNAKY and A FEMALE IS EMPTY are created, which violates females' faces.

## 6. Discussion

Humans have some need to tell stories, and such stories help children to develop academically (Von Stockar 2006). Reading books is crucial to help children enlarge the level of knowledge, socialize and build confidence (ChalkyPapers 2022). Accordingly, Children's ability to read is indispensable to their academic advancement (Myers 2016). Children prefer story-books which tell about events everywhere (Shavlik, Bauer, Booth 2020). Due to their reading ability, the relevant progress in their competence and their continuing query about the world around, children are described as little scientists (Piaget 1952). Literature, in particular, derives children to success as it prompts their psychological and social development via capturing their attention in its fictional characters (Biswas 2023).

Fiction is thought to expand children's imagination and open up doors to other facets of life (*ibidem*). Hence, when a child reads a fictional story, he is expected to experience the lives of fictional characters and get a deeper insight into their psychology, which is critical to his evolution. According to Braga (2022), children's literature is a key issue in their growth and discovery of the world, as they form their reality according to the models provided by stories and the characters involved.

Fairy tales shed light on the mentality of children, because fiction helps children learn to interpret and infer and aids creativity (Martin 2021), this study investigates Irish child fiction through the lens of Colfer's *Artemis Fowl* series. This paper expounds what children encounter throughout their journey in the Fowl adventures. This is significant as the series discourse analysis propounds the soft points that have to be considered on presenting child fiction.

It is suggested that further studies should pay more attention to child fictional literature and tackle gender imbalances and hegemonic masculinity so that children may get a more mature/thoughtful view of life. Having said that, I will pinpoint some implications detected in the series linguistic analysis.

Introducing the human realm vs. the fairies, the series has a split textual world. The human species is set against the fairy species, that is why the fairies live underground as it is the last human-free zone. Colfer's transition between the two realms throughout the narrative sharpens the sense of division between the two worlds/species. The series acknowledges another gender- based dichotomy splitting the human species into masculine and feminine, which is this research's interest.

In the eight-novel series, "Artemis" and masculine references "he, him, his" occur 19876 times; "Holly" and feminine references "she, her" occur 9976 times. The whole series has 644588 words. Masculinity has 30 occurrences per 1000 words; femininity has 15 occurrences per 1000 words:

Gender Category	Number of Occurrences	Per 1000 words
Masculinity (Artemis, he, his, him)	19876	30
Femininity (Holly, she,her)	9976	15

Table 9 – The series Search Results



Accordingly, *Artemis Fowl* series is an androcentric discourses where gendered literacy prevails. Social actors' description is almost symmetric, as all main characters are activated, nominated and referred to by specific references, which seems apt for this genre of action/sci-fi fiction. There seems to be uniformity among actors regarding the choice of representational categories. Gender is the leading standard which manifests noteworthy discrepancies.

Artemis's masculinity depends on jockeying for positions and defying ventures. He is autonomous and represents brainy masculinity which depends on his intellectual superpowers. Being a gifted masculine, Artemis is the commander who assumes complete obedience, that is why he allocates roles and explains his plans later. Artemis's interpretative repertoire is so scientific and technical, which is convenient to his boundless perception. This repertoire positions Artemis as a highly-talented teenager. Artemis depends on reasoning rather than senses. His relations are arranged according to power and distance. When he takes over a certain role, he is motivated by his endeavors to reclaim his family's fortune or save the world. That is why relations are located in the upper right quadrant. This means that characters consider certain targets according to which relations are settled (See Figure 1).

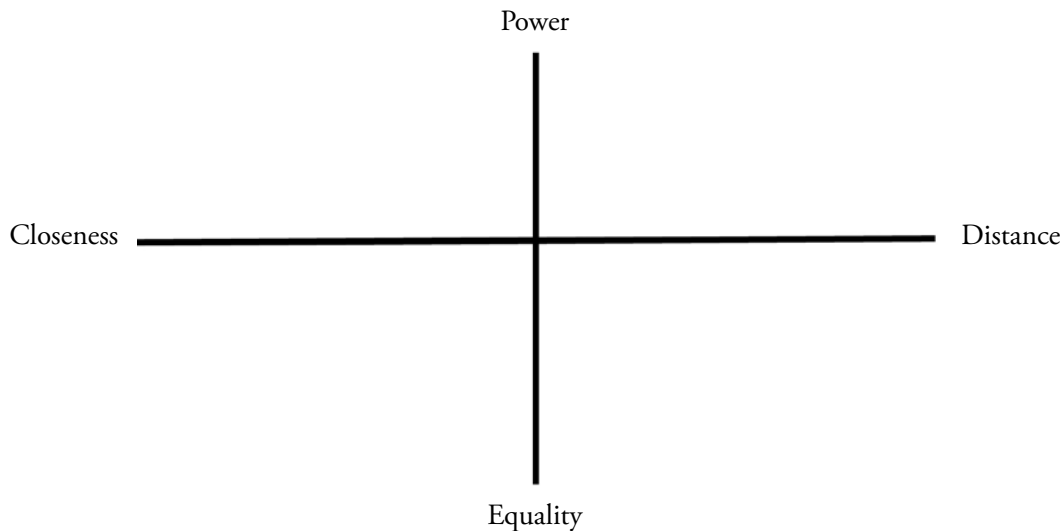


Figure 1 – Status-connection axes

Artemis is interested in his status. Even when he cooperates with the fairies, he does so to save his world. He negotiates his status by imposing his plans as the only way out of the dilemmas. This poses a threat to other participants' positive face, by showing them incompetent enough to offer alternatives, and negative face, by forcing them to follow a certain course of action.

Captain Holly Short is a skilled fighter and the first LEPRecon female officer. She is dedicated to her work. Yet, she is internally torn. Being the first female officer amidst a male-dominated environment, she is forced by Commander Root to work harder to prove that a female can perform a male's role. Holly is Captain Short, the fierce officer, who storms fearlessly into dangers for her People's safety. In this concern, Captain Short is a male with interpretative repertoires filled with directions and actions related to adventures. Holly is also an underestimated female due to her genes. She manifests weakness in serious situations. She is dependent

either on Root for her protection or on Artemis for her salvation. She is victimized and is used to being so since her early years in the academy. She is trapped between Artemis and Root, without whom she feels lost.

Holly's discourse as a male LEPRecon presents an image contrary to the traditional female discourse. Hers as just Holly mirrors her agony inside, her sentimentality and her surrender. This is a warning against hegemonic masculinity as it leads to a distorted personality.

The whole series celebrates masculinity. In *Artemis Fowl*, Artemis is summarized by the metaphor ARTEMIS/A MALE IS A MARVEL, and in the same context the image A FEMALE IS A WEAK is implanted. Based on her frailty, Holly /a female is linked with her appearance and male-caused victimization, and is portrayed by A FEMALE IS A TEST SUBJECT metaphor. Feminine look, victimization, gender-based capacity and genes-based privileges are new gendered categories added by this research. Holly's identity as a LEPRecon officer resembles a severe male cop. Her opposing gender identities may lead to an unstable personality. Hence, Holly is a complex persona: she is an anti-stereotypical depiction of females and at the same time she is a traditional image of a submissive female.

*The Arctic Incident* develops Artemis's brainy masculinity and adds pragmatic masculinity and feminine sentimentality as newly- discovered features of gendered language. A MALE AS MR. RIGHT is the seventh presented trait. *The Eternity Code* likens Artemis to a hunter and triggers the eighth set of gendered discourse: feminine hunting. The ninth category has to do with feminine insignificance, which refers to talking about females in an inadequate manner.

*The Opal Deception* presents a male's independence and a female's male-dependence as a tenth feature of gendered language. Genes-based discrimination is an eleventh one, which forms an attack against females' faces. *The Lost Colony* introduces masculine leadership as the twelfth gender marker. Hegemonic masculinity and the related A MALE IS THE WORLD HEAD metaphor are a newly gendered set. The fourteenth set is feminine fluctuation and unreliability, an attack on females' faces.

*The Time Paradox* considers feminine subordination as a set of gendered discourses, the fifteenth. *The Atlantis Complex* reinforces hegemonic masculinity and A MALE IS A SAVIOR metaphor. *The Last Guardian* focuses on hegemonic masculinity. It is noted that names are gendered. Artemis Fowl means a hunter, brilliant and fast. Holly Short means empty and incapable. Root means the essence of things.

The novels are interesting, but praising cisgendered masculinity. Cisgender means that the gender identity is the same as the biological sex assigned at birth. It is obvious that the novels glorify masculinity and consider it a precondition for mastery and preponderance. Despite Holly's commitment to her work, her mistakes are never tolerated. Had Holly been a male officer, the council would have dignified her and overlooked her mistakes. Femininity is almost distorted by ascribing negative features to females, such as disqualification, infidelity and opacity. Masculinity is associated with independence, sharpness, quickness of the mind and giving orders.

## 7. Conclusion

*Artemis Fowl* series is fascinating and irresistible, so to speak. Yet, it has a major flaw: boosting hegemonic masculinity. A male's superiority vs. a female's inferiority, a male's superpower vs. a female's weakness, a male commander vs. a female surrender, a male-based efficiency vs. a female-based inefficiency, masculine pragmatism vs. feminine emotionalism, a male hunter

vs. a female prey, a male empowered vs. a female disempowered, a male's significance vs. a female's insignificance, a male independent vs. a male-dependent female, a male qualified vs. a female disqualified, a male threatening positive and negative faces vs. a female having her faces threatened, masculine professionalism vs. feminine unprofessionalism and a male as a master/wonder vs. a female as a subordinator – all are detected by the analysis. Theories of politeness seem to be that of gendered masculinity, since males usually violate females' faces.

This study does not detract the value of *Artemis Fowl* series, it highlights negative discourse practices so that such practices may be handled in future works. To present hegemonic masculinity in child/teens fiction may stimulate young readers to act in accordance with their genes, claiming hegemonic masculinity.

## Appendices

### Appendix A

Artemis, behind me. Intruders.' The boy  
 Artemis believed that with today's technology  
 Artemis blinked back a few rebellious tears.  
 Artemis blinked. That was his second joke in  
 Artemis brushed past the girl, taking the steps  
 Artemis burst through the double doors.  
 Artemis catalogued the events of the last few  
 Artemis checked his nails patiently, waiting for her  
 Artemis choked back a sob, his hopes vanishing  
 Artemis chuckled. 'That's were you are mistaken,  
 Artemis cleared hit throat. 'Let us proceed under  
 Artemis clicked 'Print'. A single page scrolled from  
 Artemis climbed to the study that he had  
 Artemis closed the text. 'Do you see?'  
 Artemis consulted the basement surveillance monitor  
 Artemis could begin planning in earnest. He already  
 Artemis could have sworn his heart had stopped  
 Artemis could hear a voice calling his name

Holly activated her Sonix ... and nothing happened.  
 Holly activated the thermal coil in her suit  
 Holly added her own thrusters to the upward  
 Holly adjusted her helmet mike. 'Focus, Foaly.  
 Holly adjusted the trim on her backpack and

Holly **attempted** an **amuse** smile. What actually formed  
 Holly **bared** her **teeth**, it was answer enough.  
 Holly **battled** **through** the crowds to the police  
 Holly **beamed** **behind** her visor. Perhaps she wouldn't  
 Holly **became** the LEP's foremost expert in  
 Holly **began** **smashing** the bed into the concrete.  
 Holly **bent** to the ground, brushing the dried  
 Holly **bit** her lip. Root was in the  
 Holly **blinked**. Root **had** never said anything like  
 Holly **blinked** **salty** sweat from her eyes and  
 Holly **breathed** **deeply** **through** her nose. Courtesy at

Root **activated** his **wings**. This would take some  
 Root **alighted** **gently** on the deck, his boots  
 Root **allowed** himself a fleeting grin, then it  
 Root **almost** laughed. 'Don't tell me you'  
 Root **always** **singled** her out for persecution

Butler **saw** the **face** of a young boy  
 Butler **scanned** the **hall** for a nook  
 Butler **scanned** the **sheet**: basic field  
 Butler **scrambled** to his feet. Fairy  
 Butler **scratched** his **chin** thoughtfull  
 Butler **set** the **camera** rolling again  
 Butler **set** the **fairy** down, brushing

## Appendix B

Artemis **cleared** his **throat**. 'This reunion  
 Artemis **climbed** **into** the tube, beginning  
 Artemis **climbed** **up** on a hover trolley,  
 Artemis **closed** his **eyes**. Concentrating.  
 Artemis **closed** his **fingers** around the  
 Artemis **closed** the **laptop's** lid. 'Captain.  
 Artemis **peered** at the shape in the hole.  
 Artemis **placed** his **finger** and thumb around  
 Artemis **placed** his **palm** against the metal.

Artemis pointed out testily. 'He was moving  
 Artemis poked his head through from the  
 Artemis pressed on. 'This is important to me  
 Artemis pressed the button. 'Foaly!' he  
 Artemis pulled an LEP field parka closer to  
 Artemis pulled off his gloves with chattering

Holly activated a motion-sensor filter in her helmet  
 Holly activated a static wash on the shuttle's  
 Holly activated her helmet Optix, zooming in on the  
 Holly activated the computer navigation package, callin  
 Holly adjusted the internal gyroscopes, otherwise there  
 Holly adjusted the screen focus, wondering what you

## Appendix C

Artemis clenched his fists behind his back  
 Artemis climbed down from the van.  
 Artemis climbed into the van. The floor was  
 Artemis climbed through on to a white  
 Artemis, closing the freezer drawer.  
 Artemis clobbered together a microcomputer  
 Artemis coldly. 'Not one of your steroid-  
 Artemis composed himself. He would have to  
 Artemis concocts will feature yours truly.  
 Artemis consulted the clock on his mobile phone  
 Artemis coughed, clearing his throat. 'The Cube  
 Artemis could feel the weight of his jewellery

Holly activated the amplifier in her LEP helmet  
 Holly added a few more layers to her voice.  
 Holly adjusted the Neutrino's output, concentrating  
 Holly, adjusting the air con to extract. 'For now,  
 Holly agrees to help. 'Where is Holly? I need  
 Holly aimed at a clip protruding from the fire-  
 Holly and Artemis climbed through on to a white

## Appendix D

Artemis and Holly are alive. But Opal has something  
 Artemis and Holly arrived in Haven City. All the  
 Artemis and Holly clambered up the twenty or so  
 Artemis and Holly had to spend running from trolls.  
 Artemis and Holly. “Jump on,” he said. “Quickly.” Artem  
 Artemis and Holly let go of their logs and  
 Artemis and Holly’s own fate. There was only  
 Artemis and Holly that its shaggy forearm rested across  
 Artemis and Holly to their deaths. The seats were  
 Artemis and Holly to charge through the hole in  
 Artemis and Holly were stirring int their seats. Scant  
 Artemis and Holly were cuffed and led down the  
 Artemis and Holly were locked in with a bunch  
 Artemis and Holly were not in fact female trolls,

Artemis struck gold on the fourth box. Figuratively  
 Artemis struggled from the shallow water, climbed  
 Artemis studied the locker with the X-ray panel  
 Artemis stumbled after her. All this running for one  
 Artemis summoned everyone to the passenger area  
 Artemis, surrounded by temporarily blinded trolls.  
 Artemis switched on a laser pointer and began his  
 Artemis tapped a few keys, zooming in on Sicily.  
 Artemis tested his cuffs. They were tightly fastened.  
 Artemis tested the rope skeptically. ‘Surely that

Holly” replied Foaly testily. “I’ll say it again  
 Holly replied. The flaps werw vibrating now, and the  
 Holly rested her forehead against the cham pod’s  
 Holly, resting the bull’s-eye of her laser  
 Holly returned her attention to the plasma screen. “So,  
 Holly returned to the climb, feeling the tele-pod  
 Holly ripped the LEP badge from her shoulder  
 Holly rolled her eyes. “Friendship is not a science,  
 Holly rounded on him. “Your fee? Are you serious?  
 Holly rushed forward to help, but before she could

## Appendix E

Artemis recognized the pretty girl from Barcelona and  
 Artemis, relieved that Holly didn't remember what  
 Artemis remained silent as the limousine swung down  
 Artemis remembered. There was no time to reflect  
 Artemis,' replied Butler. 'In case there is a  
 Artemis replied in a whisper. 'Just let the  
 Artemis retreated to his own mind-space, but  
 Artemis, retrieving his finger and checking it for  
 Artemis, risking the audience's displeasure. 'Best and  
 Artemis rolled his napkin into a tube, popped  
 Artemis rolled onto his stomach, then struggled  
 Artemis rose, walking swiftly to his fallen friend.  
 Artemis rubbed his eyes, suddenly fatigued. 'I am  
 Artemis rubbed his temples. 'It's his blasted

Holly took a bit of persuading. Now she  
 Holly took advantage of this lack of focus  
 Holly took her time to think about this.  
 Holly took the opportunity to catch up with  
 Holly took the other. 'Did you shoot him?'  
 Holly touched a button and her visor slid  
 Holly touched a skin-coloured microphone pad glued  
 Holly turn to leave. 'Where to now?' asked  
 Holly turned away from her prisoner. There were  
 Holly understood exactly what Foaly was trying to

## Appendix F

Holly laid her palm on the gel so  
 Holly lay huddled in the dark, swallowing  
 Holly leaned down and kissed Artemis  
 Holly leaned him with her candour  
 Holly lifted her visor to look  
 Holly like a soft, feverish glove, further  
 Holly lost concentration, her

Artemis placed a finger on  
 Artemis pleaded. 'Just  
 Artemis pointed at the pit  
 Artemis pressed his nose  
 Artemis pressed on, deter  
 Artemis pressed past into  
 Artemis quickly saw that

## Appendix G

Artemis actually succeeded in capturing a leprechaun and  
 Artemis actually wrung his hands, a physical sign of  
 Artemis agreed to track down goblins' supplier if  
 Artemis alive?" "Don't know," said Foaly brusquely.  
 Artemis, all right." "Thank for shooting me the seco  
 Artemis allowed his mind to fly, and he found  
 Artemis almost enfolding him with his bulk. "You're  
 Artemis almost giggled. Even in the death grip of  
 Artemis almost laughed. Take a break during a presentation  
 Artemis. "And a T-shirt." Artemis knew that he  
 Artemis and checked his pulse. "How's Artemis's

Holly counted, and soon the pattern was clear. Fives  
 Holly cranked open the for'ard porthole and was  
 Holly crawled across the roof, feeling her insides buzz  
 Holly crazy. The other you." "I can't say  
 Holly cut through the male posturing. 'Commander, is At  
 Holly decided that it would be best to leave  
 Holly descended to earth, barely making a footprint in  
 Holly did as they were told with the emotion  
 Holly did know. There were three conscious people breat  
 Holly did not answer, but with that touch, No1  
 Holly did not have time to check the settings.  
 Holly did not laugh. "That wasn't fun, Artemis.  
 Holly did not meet his eyes. "Artemis is sick.  
 Holly did not slow down to see what the



## Appendix H

Artemis buttoned his navy wollen suit  
 Artemis called to her from the rear, but  
 Artemis. “Can we argue later?”  
 Artemis capitalized on her hesitation.  
 Artemis, checking the instruments. “The  
 Artemis chose to interpret it as an affir  
 Artemis chuckled. “I am sure he would  
 Artemis chuckled, showing his blood-  
 Artemis claimed it was custom-built,  
 Artemis clasped his hand, stunned that

Holly called from behind. “There will be more of  
 Holly called to a sprite she recognized on the  
 Holly caught his arm. “There’s no time,” she  
 Holly caught sight of her reflection in the windshield.  
 Holly checked her coms. “Nothing. Everything is down.  
 Holly, checking the fuselage’s porthole. “And the Berse  
 Holly clambered after him, struggling up the human-  
 Holly cleared a space beside Trouble Kelp, who seemed  
 Holly closed her eyes and tried to tell it  
 Holly. “Come on, No1. You’re my last single  
 Holly comfortable with cushions. “I want you to know,  
 Holly confirmed. “There was a dwarf corps that rode

## Appendix (I)

## Taxonomy of Actor Representation

The Sociological Category of Discourse	Type	Discourse Description/Realization
Exclusion	Suppression: elimination of the social actor	1-Passive Agent Delation 2-Non-finite Clauses 3-Nominalization/Process Nouns 4-Process Adjectives
Exclusion	Backgrounding	The social actor is included or mentioned elsewhere in the text.

Role Allocation	Activation	1 - Participation: The Actor is in the Subject Position. 2 - Circumstantialization: Using a Prepositional Circumstantial Such as “by” or “from” Followed by the Agent. 3 - Premodification of Nominalizations/Process Nouns. 4 - Postmodification of Nominalizations/Process Nouns. 5 - Possesivation: Premodification by Possessive Adjectives.
Role Allocation	Passivation	1 - Subjection: Subjected Social Actors Are Treated as Objects. 2 - Beneficialization: Beneficialized Social Actors from a Third Party
Genericization	Generic Referencies	1 - Plural without Determiners 2 - The Singular Noun with the Definite or Indefinite Article.
Specification	Specific References	1 - Using Specific Nouns 2 - Using Numeratives
Assimilation	Aggregation	Using quantifiers
Assimilation	Collectivization	Plural Pronouns
Association	Groups	1 - Parataxis 2 - Attributive Clauses
Indetermination	Anonymizing actors	1 - Using Indefinite Pronouns 2 - Using Exophoric References
Differentiation		1 - Using Comparative and Superlative Adjectives will be Considered. 2 - Using “other, another” are Considered.
Nomination	Actor’s Unique Identity	Using Proper Nouns
Categorization	Functionalization	1 - Suffixes: -er, -ant, -ent, -ian, -ee. 2 - Nouns Denoting Activity when -ist and eer are Added 3 - Compounding by Adding “man”, “woman” and “person”
Categorization	Identification	1 - Classification according to race, gender, age, ... 2 - Relational Identification via Work Relations or Kinship 3 - Physical Identification via Physical Characteristics.
Impersonalization	Abstraction	Using a Quality to represent Actors
Impersonalization	Objectivation	Actor is represented by reference to place, instrument, utterance or parts of body.
Overdetermination	Actors has more than one activity	1 - Inversion: Opposite practices. 2 - Symbolization: when a fictional social actor stands for real one. 3 - Connotation means culturally-determined traits. 4 - Distillation: a combination of generalization and abstraction.

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# The Irish in Bolivia: An (almost) Unknown History

*María Eugenia Cruset*

National Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET)-  
National University of Quilmes-Catholic University of La Plata  
([mariaeugenia.cruset@ucalpvirtual.edu.ar](mailto:mariaeugenia.cruset@ucalpvirtual.edu.ar))

## *Abstract:*

Irish immigration to Bolivia has been largely ignored by academia. However, although few in number, it has exerted its influence both in the country itself and in the cause of Irish nationalism. Whether they arrived with General Bolívar's liberating troops or collaborated in the development of the nation through their work in mining, commercial or railway companies, their contribution was significant. They were also important in the fields of culture, the press and domestic politics. Despite the political instability of the Andean country and the obstruction of the British Empire, they have left a mark that I intend to show in this article.

*Keywords:* Bolivia, Diplomacy, Ireland, Nationalism, Politics

## *1. Introduction*

There is a broad consensus in academia on the low level of interest within Irish studies towards the Diasporas which settled in the southern hemisphere. While of course the largest number of Irish went to North America (both United States and Canada) and the most significant research and financial resources are understandably devoted to that migration, it has led to decreased resources being devoted to other geographical areas of importance, notably Australia, New Zealand and, particularly, South America.

Among recent academic publications we find Tim Fanning's work about the nineteenth century (2017) and the extremely valuable volumes by Dermot Keogh (2016 and 2021). However, both authors being Irish inevitably means that their perspective is from the island of Ireland. I hope that my presentation will prove an incentive to other academics, from both north and the south, to delve deeper, perhaps also through collaborative work would of course be even more fruitful.

In this paper, I intend to comment on the Irish who settled in Bolivia, their arrival to the South American country, their composition as well as their transnational political participation in support of the Irish republican cause. My hypothesis is that the activity of the Irish migrants in the latter regard was conditioned by certain factors – economic, quantity, political commitment, financial situation – and by guidelines sent by the Irish Government delegation in Buenos Aires. British opposition on the ground to the activity of these Irish individuals was undoubtedly also a factor.

## 2. *The Historical Context and the Irish*

The Republic of Bolivia obtained its independence from Spain on 6 August 1825, with the help of the General Simón Bolívar's armies. During the first years, the country struggled between civil wars and external invasions until 1837 when it joined Peru to form a loose confederation which was soon dissolved and which led to a military confrontation. However, the most serious challenge came from Chile in the Pacific War (1879) which ended with the Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1904. Under the treaty, Bolivia's entire coastal territory became Chilean possession. While Bolivia was granted a right of commercial transit through Chilean ports, the country lost its full access to the sea and has since remained a landlocked state.

Between 1880 and 1900 the Conservative Party ruled the country and the mineral industry was the principal economic activity. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the production of tin became more valuable than silver around the time that the Liberal Party took power. The owners of the mines, known as "the tin barons", became wealthy at a fast pace and enjoyed great political influence. Railway construction and the general modernization of the country took place under the latter government. In 1920 the Republican Party won the elections and social political parties with a Marxist orientation came into being. Enactment of the first labor law responded to the first social revolt. The 1929 Great Depression led to a sharp fall in influence among the political class and was followed by the outbreak of the Chaco War.

Irish migration was scarce and probably indirect. Bolivia might not have been a first option since it was distant, little known and, in contrast to many of the neighboring countries, it lacked an active policy to promote migration. It is highly probable that the vast majority of the migrants who arrived directly to Bolivia did so to work in British mining companies, which had first become active in Chile and later expanded to Bolivia<sup>1</sup>. It was known that the British companies were in search of Irish managers and other mid-ranking employees. That was the case, for example, with the railway companies in Argentina, but it was the general practice throughout the empire.

Migrants also arrived from Argentina. Patrick Boland was one of them. Son of Matthew Boland, born in King's County (Cloghan, Ireland), Patrick had travelled from Australia in the ship "Light Brigade", around 1875. He was born in Amaroo (Australia) and was the youngest of Matthew's offspring. His first destination as a migrant was the USA and then Argentina, to finally settle in Santa Cruz de la Sierra (Bolivia) during the first decades of the twentieth century. There he dealt in mechanics and ice selling using a machine that he had designed for that purpose. Considering such humid and warm weather, he must have been a successful salesman<sup>2</sup>.

According to the 1900 National Census, there were only 29 British residents in total: 27

<sup>1</sup> Frank Egan himself, representative of the Irish Republican Nationalism in Chile and close to the cause through his relationship with Ginnell, made his fortune in the mining industry (Cruset 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Julia Bowland carried out by Elisa Boland for *The Southern Cross*, March 2006.

men and 2 women, although it is not possible to determine which were of Irish origin. While the total foreign population was 2654, the United Kingdom's subjects were as few as 1%. This number drops notably when referring to women: 2 British women out of 374 foreigners. At the time, the overall population was 1.766.451.

### 3. *The O'Connors*

The arrival of the Irish migrants to Southern Latin America is multi-causal but their participation as mercenaries in the service of Simón Bolívar's army was one of the main reasons for choosing that destination. The long process towards independence, of what later would become Great Colombia, started on 20 July 1810. In 1813 Napoleon again recognized Ferdinand VII as King of Spain who returned to the country in 1814. In order to suppress the insurgent movement Ferdinand sent in 1815 Pablo Morillo with an army of 10.000 men in order to reconquer Nueva Granada, which had rebelled against the Crown and declared its independence.

Bolívar, who was at the head of the revolt and was defeated by the royalist forces, had to go into exile in Jamaica. There, and with little hope, he prepared his well-known letter dated 6 September 1815. At the time, the only place on the continent that still enjoyed independence was Río de la Plata. Bolívar, without any resources, contacted John Devereaux, who committed to recruit soldiers to the cause and send them to the other side of the Atlantic in exchange of a payment. Within that group, that later became an Anglo-Irish troop, was Francis Burdett O'Connor.

Burdett O'Connor born in Cork in 1791, he joined the cause of independence of the former Spanish. After taking part in the Battle of Junín, where the Royal army was finally defeated, he decided to settle in the recently created Republic of Bolivia and acquired citizenship of the new state by naturalization. There, O'Connor helped General Sucre to annex the region of Tarija and, for this reason, was appointed governor of the new territory. From this position and through a proclamation published in 1827, he tried to promote Irish migration.

Tarija, 24 de junio de 1827

Mis queridos compatriotas:

Después de nueve años de luchas y penurias, he tenido el placer de ver estas hermosas provincias libres del yugo hispánico y gozado de una forma republicana de gobierno, de verdadera felicidad e independencia. El país es bello: hay gran abundancia de la mejor tierra del mundo, pero muy pocos hombres y mujeres para cultivarla.

He escogido esta provincia como mi residencia; aquí quiero fundar la colonia de New Erin – tan verde, fértil y floreciente – como nuestra pobre tierra nativa. La provincia de Tarija es mucho más grande que Irlanda y nuestra colonia puede ser tan extensa como el más grande condado de allí o quizá como dos condados.

Hombres de Irlanda: aquí está el sitio de todos los que quieren hacer de New Erin un hogar. Los más pobres de mis compatriotas serán recibidos por mí con los brazos abiertos, ellos son mi carne y mi sangre. Y después de trabajar corto tiempo para hacerse una casa, ellos serán provistos con una propia con todo lo necesario, una vaca, un caballo, un cerdo, patos y gallinas y semillas en el depósito. Esa casa y tierras será para ellos para siempre y no habrá hombre con el poder de expulsarlos. No se les pedirá renta, más que una ayuda en algún día de apuro para el bien general. Ellos serán sus propios amos para siempre.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Although the letter is most likely in English, the source found is in Spanish at: Gumucio 2016, 162. "My dear compatriots: After nine years of struggle and hardship, I have had the pleasure of seeing these beautiful provinces free



Being considered one of the liberators, he was given a pension of 5.000 pesos by the Bolivian Congress as a reward for his services (Murray 2006b). Tim Fanning describes him by saying: “he seems to be the image itself of the Victorian mid-class respectability. In his last years, he was a fervent Catholic and a famous Bolivian hero who had served as a Commander in Chief” (2017, 354).

Only one child survived from his marriage to Francisca Ruyloba, Hercilla O’Connor. She married Charles Adolphe Adhemar D’Arlachy and they had several children, Tomás O’Connor D’Arlach among them, who was born in Tarija in 1853. A lawyer, journalist, poet and politician, Tomás wrote Tarija’s anthem, the region that his grandfather had annexed to Bolivia. He kept the Irish tradition of placing his mother’s surname in first place, followed by that of the father.

One of his poems was published in MacManus’ nationalist newspaper, *Fianna*<sup>4</sup>. More than a political text, the poem reflects on the fragility of life with a pessimist tone and it recalls the deaths of Tomás’ mother and daughter.

De esas tardes grises la fatal melancolía,  
 Y el recuerdo persistente de mi hija y madre muertas.  
 Y el recuerdo de mis yertas  
 Esperanzas e ilusiones,  
 ¡Ay! En esas tardes grises  
 Me destroza el corazón! (*Fianna*, January 1912)<sup>5</sup>

#### 4. *The Nationalist Connection*

From the first decades of the twentieth century, a small group of Irish people in Bolivia were committed to the Irish cause in different ways and with varying degrees of enthusiasm. They were organized and directed by Jaspas Nicolls, better known as Gaspar, as he preferred to be called as soon as he arrived in a Spanish-speaking country. His leadership was not accepted by all owing to difficulties which arose and which were explained by Nicolls himself in his numerous letters.

Nicolls had already gained experience as a secretary in Ireland and, once in Bolivia, he continued working in a similar administrative position. He lived in Oruro and was hired by a Bakelite

from the Hispanic yoke and enjoyed a republican form of true happiness and independence. The country is beautiful: there is a great abundance of the best soil in the world, but very few men and women to cultivate it. I have chosen this province as my residence; here I wish to found the New Erin colony – as green, fertile and flourishing – as our poor native soil. The province of Tarija is much larger than Ireland, and our colony may be as large as the largest county there, or perhaps as large as two counties. Men of Ireland: here is the place for all those who want to make New Erin a home. The poorest of my countrymen will be welcomed by me with open arms, they are my flesh and blood. And after working a short time to make a house for themselves, they will be provided with a house of their own with everything they need, a cow, a horse, a pig, ducks and chickens and seeds in the storehouse. That house and land shall be theirs forever and no man shall have the power to drive them out. No rent shall be asked of them but a help in some day of trouble for the general good. They will be their own masters forever”. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

<sup>4</sup> There are two important newspapers among Irish immigrants to the Southern Cone: *The Southern Cross* and *Fianna*. The former was founded in 1875 and had the largest circulation. It was founded by Bishop Dillon and, from 1896, was edited by William Bulfin, father of Eamon. The *Fianna* began publication in 1912 under the editorship of Patrick McManus, William’s brother-in-law and Eamon’s uncle, and was radically nationalist.

<sup>5</sup> From those grey afternoons, the fatal melancholy / And the persistent memories of my dead mother and daughter / And the memories of my frozen stiff / Hopes and illusions / Oh! In those grey afternoons / It breaks my heart!

mine<sup>6</sup>, but it closed down in 1918. As a result, Nicolls' financial situation collapsed dramatically. Although this unfortunate event gave him more free time to fight for the Irish cause, it also prevented him from buying the propaganda material that was sent to him from Buenos Aires.

In September 1920 Laurence Ginnell settled in the city of Buenos Aires. He had been sent from Dublin by the provisional government and he was asked to perform several duties: informal diplomacy,<sup>7</sup> selling of a patriot bond to finance the cause, advertising and intelligence in South America – with special focus on Argentina. These activities were already being carried out by Eamon Bulfin, the son of William Bulfin, who was well-remembered for his participation in the 1916 Easter Rising. The incorporation of Laurence Ginnell was intended to reinforce the strategic value of support for the Irish cause from Argentina itself and from the Irish-Argentine diaspora. Ginnell was convinced of the importance of networking and the synergies that could be derived from it. For this reason, he tried to foster links with Irish community leaders in Chile, Uruguay and Bolivia, with uneven success.

The political and economic situation in Bolivia was complex as indeed was the position faced by the Irish migrants. They were few, spread over a vast territory with ineffective means of communication, they showed different degrees of commitment to the cause and, finally but not least importantly, they faced the serious obstacle of British influence and power on the ground.

In 1906 “The Boys” in Dublin had helped Nicolls to emigrate to Butte (Montana, the USA)<sup>8</sup> and work there. However, for some unknown reason he preferred to head south. When he lost his job and faced a critical financial situation, he wrote to Ginnell: “To be frank, I am penniless at the present time” (11 October 1921).<sup>9</sup> Considering that only his family knew about his economic problems, he also called for discretion. On top of that, the British warned him that he would never get a job and should therefore leave the country. He also received a clear warning from the British Charge d’Affaires: he would be taken to court or directly to jail due to his connections with the Irish Volunteers. In Nicolls’ own words: “English railway company here declared that Sinn Feiners were worse than Germans” (25 October 1921) and if an Irish man was in need of a job, then he would be asked to sign a declaration claiming not to be a supporter of Sinn Féin’s ideas<sup>10</sup>.

In his private life, Nicolls married a Bolivian woman, Francisca Guzmán in Chayanta, Potosí, on 7 August 1912. From the marriage certificate it was possible to obtain additional information: he had been born in 1880, his parents were Juan A. Nicolls and Maria Laffa and he was an engineer by profession. He had three children: Eduardo Patricio in 1914, Evelina Constans in 1916 and, once in Oruro, Eduardo Donaldo (Eamonn)<sup>11</sup> in 1919. His strong national bonds and deep feeling towards his native country were well demonstrated with the

<sup>6</sup> It must have been tin and not Bakelite.

<sup>7</sup> Traditionally, diplomatic activity is considered to be an attribute of the Nation-State sovereignty. At the time, Ireland could not be strictly defined as such. This is the reason for using here the concept of informal diplomacy.

<sup>8</sup> The city of Butte in Montana was born in 1864 as a mining camp and, thanks to copper extraction, it rapidly grew throughout the nineteenth century. As a result, it became a promising destination for migrants, especially for Irish ones. Nowadays, the proportion of American-Irish citizens per capita in Butte is larger than in any other city in the USA (Pocock 2017).

<sup>9</sup> All these dates correspond to correspondence between Ginnell and Nicolls. National Library of Ireland

<sup>10</sup> From 1900 to 1929, 40% of the foreign capitals – the British ones among them – was absorbed by the railway. By 1925, more than 50% of the railways tracks had been installed by British capitals (Contreras 1993).

<sup>11</sup> Although the names were translated into Spanish, the Irish version was also included in the birth certificate (between parenthesis). However, it was not common practice and it could have been a deferent on behalf of the priest in charge of the baptism.

birth of his daughter Evelina. She was baptized on 29 September 1916 and her Godmother was Countess Constance Markievicz<sup>12</sup>. We will probably never know how he managed to get that privilege, but it is clear that he retained close connections to Nationalists in Ireland.

As regards the rest of the Irish migrants in Bolivia, in his report to Ginnell he says there were sixteen whom he knew or had contact with.

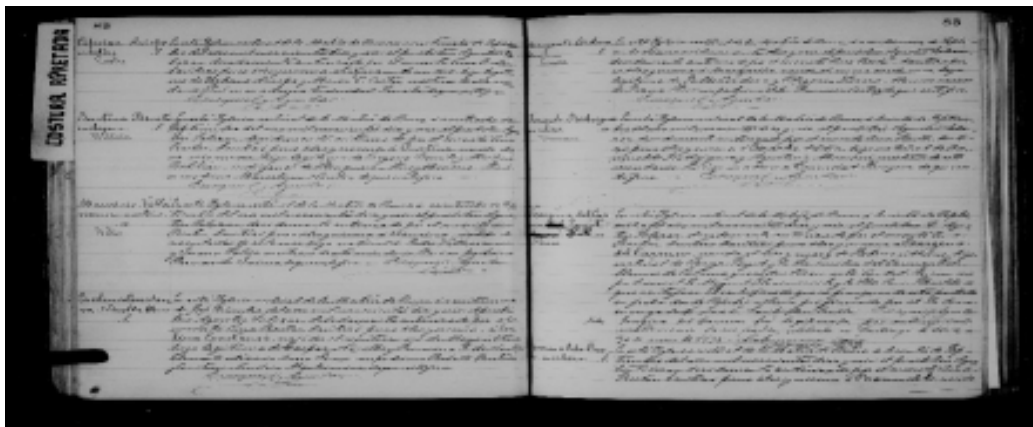


Figure 1 – Baptisms Book, Matriz de Oruro Church, book number 1916-1919, 82

##### 5. *The Nicolls' Report or The Sixteen from Bolivia*

Nicholls had promised the delegation in Buenos Aires a detailed report on the situation in Bolivia, containing a list of the Irish people settled in that country with whom he had contact or was aware of. The information provided would be related to the cause and level of commitment (27 September 1921).

From 1906 to 1926, the migrants' names were: D.E. O'Kelly, C.J. Bowden, J. Kennedy, J. Vize, A.B. Casey, G.O. O'Shaughnessy, E. Nicolls and J. Nicolls. As regards M. MacCarthy, T. Donaghy and Burns, they had arrived in Bolivia fairly recently and, up to the date of the report, they had not taken action of any kind. Mrs Ugarte was a resident in Cochabamba. Mr Ryan and Mr Donaghy were not taken into account considering their advanced age.

O'Kelly was a Gaelic League's enthusiastic member and an Irish Language National Fund's contributor but he had remained inactive until 1916. As was the case of Ireland and many other places, the Rising and subsequent British repression fanned the flames of nationalism. As a consequence, O'Kelly became a donor to the Irish National Aid and Volunteer Dependents' Fund, although his fluent Spanish was his major contribution to the cause. Within a group whose members could barely keep a conversation in that language, he was considered "a fine Spanish and good Irish scholar", "and actually prepared the Spanish version of the appeal" for the Bonne subscriptions for raise money (*ibidem*). However, the British Minister's threats together with O'Kelly's fear of having his businesses somehow affected, obliged him to abandon not only the translation work but also his commitment to the cause.

<sup>12</sup> Baptisms Book, Matriz de Oruro Church, book number 1916-1919, 82.

O’Kelly was not the only one. The fear of retaliation was also shared by Vize, Kennedy and Bowden. Bowden was the Dublin Priest Bowden’s brother, but since his arrival in South America he had lost contact with Ireland.

Both Casey in La Paz and O’Shaughnessy in Cochabamba had on a few occasions contributed economically at Nicolls’ request, but the truth is that they were not very active in the movement.

Nicolls sadly complained about his own brother’s lukewarm attitude:

My own brother Eamon, who is stationed in La Paz, is an old member of the Republican Party, but he is exceedingly apathetic or indolent when it comes to working in any way for Ireland. He is, and has been for several years, one of those who causes most unnecessary trouble by his slackness in the matter of replying to letters and supplying information which it is power to obtain. He could do a good deal if he exerted himself, but he does very little indeed. (*Ibidem*)

He also expressed his discomfort with other migrants who showed affection towards the motherland and gave fervent patriotic speeches but who failed to make any practical contribution.

In the report, he added that he had been unable to locate Mrs Ugarte, who seemed to be a strong supporter of Sinn Féin. Although he knew she was somewhere in the Department of Cochabamba he was not able to get the exact address. Long distances, inadequate means of transport and communication made the organization of the nationalist campaign much more complex.

A new list with twenty Irish and six Irish-American people living in Bolivia was sent on 28 October 1921. The idea was that Ginnell would send each a letter to ask for some collaboration, in particular to buy the bond.

More information is derived from the same message: Mrs Clara Eagar de Ugarte had previously written to Nicolls to express sympathy with the cause, although she admitted not being well informed about developments in Ireland. This lack of information is fairly understandable considering that Ugarte, as were Casey and O’Shaughnessy, descended from Irish parents but they all were born in England.

Thus, he concluded by saying: “From the foregoing you can form an idea of the various types which constitute ‘the Irish of Bolivia’ to-day” (*ibidem*).

## 6. *The Issue of the Congress in Paris*

1918 was an important year in the global context and, particularly, in Ireland. 11 November marked the end of the First World War leaving behind death and destruction. The British army had nearly lost seven hundred thousand soldiers, most of them young men who might have contributed to national economic development. Without doubt, a major humanitarian tragedy and the beginning of the end of the British Empire.

Once the prisoners from the Easter Rising’s were granted amnesty, London convened parliamentary elections in Ireland. Sinn refused to take part in an election to the Parliament in Westminster and decided to form a national parliament in Dublin. After a huge victory, the First Dáil was established.

On 28 June 1919, The Treaty of Versailles was signed. American president Woodrow Wilson had presented “The Fourteen Points”, a list of principles for a postwar peace settlement. The declaration served as a moral base for later negotiations on what actions or reparations would be imposed on the defeated.

The fifth point referred to decolonization and the right of the self-determination of people:

5. A free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined.

Although this principle was applied to the defeated – Poland gained independence and the nationalities within the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empire had to be considered – the British Empire, one of the clear winners, was treated on an unequal and partial basis.

However, the Dáil saw the possibility of making the Irish cause known through an international congress in which delegates on behalf of the Diasporas would participate.

On 9 September 1921, Nicolls received this telegram:

President de Valera and Ministry of Dáil Eireann hereby invite five delegates from the Irish in Bolivia as delegates to the Irish Race Conference to be opened Paris or Dublin January 21<sup>st</sup>., 1922. We entrust arrangements for the Bolivian Delegation to you.

Not only did Nicolls send out the invitation among the small group but also ordered its translation into Spanish to be later distributed to Tomás, Hugo and Amable O'Connor d'Árlach, all General O'Connor descendants, who had fought in Bolivia's War of Independence. Hugo had already visited the office of the Irish delegation in Buenos Aires.

Nicolls now faced a serious problem:

I presume that when the members of the Irish Government invited five delegates they based their calculation upon the amount of financial support which have been received from the Bolivian Group in former years. It is true that in that respect Bolivia did far better, not only relatively but positively, than others countries where Irishmen are far more numerous [...] But from my report you will see [...] we could never have been entitled to such heavy representation as that suggested; to-day, when we are doing nothing for Ireland, I doubt that we are entitled to any representation at all. (27 September 1921)

Moreover, in a letter dated 23 September, Nicolls had already explained that only two or three people had enough money to travel. On top of that, everyone was very busy with their business while others showed no interest in participating.

### *7. Intelligence, Propaganda and Lobbying*

As already said, the Delegation in Buenos Aires undertook multiple activities including intelligence, advertising and lobbying<sup>13</sup>.

The activity of intelligence was highly important. It was vital to gather the most information possible about the enemy – Britain – which had such global influence. It was carried out by the members of the diaspora who reported to the delegations. This explains why Nicoll's contribution was crucial: he had worked as a secretary in Ireland before migrating and he was extremely precise when collecting information and sending the news. To assist him in his task, he was given a significant amount of money to purchase a typewriter in order to guarantee a regular supply of reports (12 October 1921).

<sup>13</sup> It was also of huge importance the sale of the patriot bond in order to meet the expenditures of the new provisional government.

On enquiry from Nicolls about the use of a code to keep correspondence confidential to answer the cablegrams, he is told that there is none, but is advised to write via the United States if it is not urgent (13 September 1921).

The large majority of the correspondence was written in English and was sent by mail. The legend “confidential” was added on the envelope if Ginnell was the only one allowed to read its contents (9 September 1921). In cases of urgency, letters were replaced by telegrams, which were written in Spanish, probably with the aim of facilitating the task of the telegraphist.

As regards propaganda, a circular and pamphlets would be distributed. The idea was to make the Irish nationalist cause public known in the local press. The delegation was asked to become an “information agency”, mainly because Bolivian newspapers lacked their own correspondents and, therefore, only could reproduce news published in Argentina and Chile<sup>14</sup> (30 September 1921).

Lobbying was of utmost importance to create alliances among countries with the aim of countering British power and influence. In the region, due to the international division of labour, Britain had an almost symbiotic relationship with the nation-states. British presence spread across nearly all social and economic spheres with the consequent loss of national autonomy (Cruset 2006 and 2009).

One rule for any successful negotiation is to know who is on the other side; internal political stability is always essential. The problem was that the Bolivian unstable context made lobbying very hard.

However, thanks to Gaspar’s contacts in La Paz, he managed to get a cover letter for Ginnell addressed to Jaime Freyre. Other potential recipients were José María Escalier and Daniel Salamanca, who were supporters of the Republican Party and with great influence within it. Despite the good relationship with Hugo O’Connor, it was not possible to ask him to obtain the letters since he was a member of the Liberal Party and such a request would not therefore have been considered.

## 8. *Conclusion*

Since the 1918 elections in Ireland, the provisional government, in general, and De Valera, in particular, concentrated their efforts on internationalizing the Irish cause as a way of countering the British Empire. De Valera himself started a tour of the USA with the aim of disseminating the message as widely as possible.

In this respect, the diaspora was crucial. But the migrant population was not homogeneous: they were spread across different countries and their political ideas were not uniform. However, there was always a hard nationalist group willing to commit to the cause, even when that involved putting at risk their wealth, business or their physical safety.

For this reason, Laurence Ginnell along with his wife Alice were sent to Buenos Aires to cooperate with Eamon Bulfin. This city became the “beachhead” to go to the interior of the country and neighbouring countries.

The existing migrant group in Bolivia had arrived at different times and was heterogeneous in terms of interests and goals. Ginnell found it difficult to work with them and, in the end, the results were meager. Bolivia’s economic dependency on Britain deprived them of autonomy and capacity for action.

<sup>14</sup> To expand on how Great Britain collected information in the region, see Cruset 2021.

While the results of Nicolls' activities were meagre, and virtually irrelevant, his efforts must be recognized and studied.

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## Ireland's Diplomatic Performance in the Mid and Late-Twentieth Century: A Model for Other Small States?

*Hajer Gandouz*

University of Sousse (<[hajer.gandouz@gmail.com](mailto:hajer.gandouz@gmail.com)>)

### *Abstract:*

After its intense phase of insularity, Ireland has reached a considerable diplomatic role. The past vulnerability of Ireland due to its subjection to colonialism made its domestic sphere and foreign agenda in the early 1920s insular. However, Ireland started to transcend its isolation as it showed more openness to the world in the mid-twentieth century. More specifically, Dublin, in the post-World War II context, began to exhibit its interest in having a more dynamic role in the international scene. In fact, Ireland displayed its engagement with matters that exceeded its domestic sphere through its membership in the United Nations. Its performance in such an Intergovernmental Organization unveiled the Irish devotion to principles like peace-keeping and collective security. This article aims to assess Ireland's dynamic role, which started to appear in the mid-twentieth century. Besides, the late-twentieth century was also a significant phase for Dublin and its international presence. This epoch was characterized by Ireland's integration into the European region. Most importantly, the phenomenon of globalization reached its peak at that time, and Ireland witnessed an unprecedented experience of economic opulence known as the Celtic Tiger. Focus should also be laid on Dublin's interesting development in such a globalized climate. Its remarkable evolution, especially in the 1990s, tends to be considered a "model" for other small European and non-European states. Therefore, this paper attempts to scrutinize the extent to which other small states can learn from the example of Ireland.

*Keywords:* Diplomacy, European Integration, Late-Twentieth Century, Mid-Twentieth Century, Multilateralism

### *1. Ireland in the Early Years of Independence: An Insular Policy*

Since this article deals with Ireland's move outward and its international involvement, it is crucial to briefly refer back to Dublin's protectionism as a newly-established Free State. In fact, the period of insularity influenced the country's character during its early years of independence. The Irish Free State opted for



protectionism in 1932, and Éamon de Valera's party, the Fianna Fáil, was one of the prominent framers of this insular approach (Kennedy, Giblin, McHugh 1988), 40). The goals that were set by de Valera and his Fianna Fáil Party sought to emphasize nationalism and traditional values (Puirseil 2017, 6). It is pertinent to mention that the protectionist approach of Ireland entailed a sense of conservatism. Indeed, political conservatism was brought to the fore during the early years of independence and the state-building process, especially with the emergence and rise of de Valera's Fianna Fáil.

In their scrutiny of Fianna Fáil's ideological character, experts in Irish Politics, Eoin O'Malley and Sean McGraw (2017) note that the party seemed to have a conservative character. Since it played a crucial role in shaping Ireland's insular approach, it is notable to highlight the conservative features of Fianna Fáil. In this regard, Olivier Coquelin, a specialist in Irish Studies, maintains that Fianna Fáil was ideologically inspired by certain conservative schools of thought (2005, 34). Coquelin identifies a sort of "reactionary conservatism" in the party's call for the primacy of "the community" (*ibidem*). Indeed, Fianna Fáil tended to magnify "[the] mythical and glorious past" of Ireland (*ibidem*). This conservatism was employed to feature a communal kind of Ireland that highly prioritized tradition and rested upon some fundamental moral bases like family and the Church. Also, "reactionary conservatism" was used to accentuate the importance of the rural aspect of the Irish lifestyle (*ibidem*). Such a way of life was seen as a means to preserve tradition and morality. Therefore, "reactionary conservatism" was implemented by de Valera's party to serve the advocated theme of the glorious Irish past. This theme encompassed elements like tradition, morality, and rurality that would eradicate the notion of change. Instead, such a theme would inspire people to maintain the past and rally around continuity.

Consequently, it is important to deduce that the approach of insularity was nurtured by political conservatism which was highly advocated by Fianna Fáil and its leader Éamon de Valera. Throughout the early years of independence, Fianna Fáil constantly supported and accentuated the idea of a "self-sufficient Ireland" that would not be susceptible to dependence on other nations (Prager 2009, 205). In fact, the essence of protectionism was not only political and economic; it was also cultural. On the political level, the approach aimed at establishing an Irish Free State autonomous from British "colonialism". From an economic perspective, protectionism was adopted to catalyze and develop the Irish domestic market. In this context, Kennedy, Giblin, and McHugh allude to different economic reasons behind the principle of insularity, like reducing emigration by creating jobs (1988, 40). On the cultural level, Ireland's protectionist agendas sought to create and forge a distinct Irish identity. In this regard, R.F. Foster, Professor of Irish History, contends that a new national cultural program to "Gaelicize" the Irish Free State was considered in the 1920s to highlight Ireland's cultural separation from the United Kingdom (1989, 518).

Accordingly, it is possible to argue that the insular approach adopted in Ireland's independence years entailed a sort of self-confidence and national pride. Indeed, it diverted attention to the cultural specificities of Irishness after an intense experience of colonization. As a result, Irish insularity helped shape and forge a sense of political and, more importantly, a cultural separation from its past "colonizer", the UK. Although this insular approach might have nurtured a feeling of national pride, such an ideology was no longer efficient afterwards. Dublin had to change its approach to keep up with the outside world and its developments.

## 2. *The Diplomacy of Ireland in the Mid-Twentieth Century: A Changed Approach*

It is first essential to precise that in this article, the mid-twentieth century refers to the period from post-World War II to the early-1970s. It is crucial to scrutinize the diplomacy

of Ireland during the post-World War II context, which witnessed the emergence of regional and international organizations. In this regard, Brigid Laffan and Jane O'Mahony, experts in European politics, maintain that Dublin showed a sense of inclination to the "multilateral organizations" that surfaced in Europe at that time (2008, 12).

Before examining the diplomacy of Ireland during the mid-twentieth century, it is pertinent to contextualize and highlight the call for change that characterized that period. The latter eventually resulted in the transcendence of protectionism that Dublin had adopted. In this context, Niamh Puirseil maintains that there was a crisis on the political and economic levels in the 1950s (2017, [60]). The depression that prevailed in Ireland caused the rise of unemployment and emigration (*ibidem*). Not only did these two interconnected phenomena lead to the insular policy of Dublin, but also raised concerns about the need to change such a protectionist outlook. More importantly, after losing power two times in the Irish general election, Fianna Fáil realized that "it was time for change" (*ibidem*). Consequently, the critical atmosphere of the 1950s increased the party's awareness of the necessity to alter its convictions (*ibidem*). Seán Lemass, de Valera's successor, explicitly called for more openness to the outside world. He reversed the party's ideology and aspired to make Ireland more "modern" (61). Lemass's idea of Ireland differed from that of de Valera, which made him promote a divergent state-building program that entailed openness and change.

In the same context, Lemass believed that Ireland needed to be more outward-looking to integrate itself into the international arena. His approach, dissimilar from de Valera's, revolved around trying to make Ireland more "business oriented than ever before" (62). Accordingly, along with his administration, Lemass sought to deviate from "economic nationalism", which was the fundamental ideology of the ruling party under de Valera (*ibidem*). Economic growth and adaptation were the key goals of his agenda (Brown 2004). Besides, Lemass's different vision was not limited to economics; he also called for another cultural outlook. Unlike de Valera's support for a strong attachment to Gaelicism, Lemass advocated cultural openness. Lemass sought to make Ireland less isolated and more receptive to foreign influences. In fact, Lemass's administration was characterized by its engagement with openness to foreignness as well as change (Brown 2004). Lemass's economic and cultural approaches were complementary. More precisely, his economic vision to make the country welcome foreign capital and trade required a new cultural agenda of openness to difference.

The constant call for change after World War II paved the way for the adoption of an outward-looking approach which was initiated by Seán Lemass when he ascended to power. His agenda revolved around change and pushed Ireland closer to the outside world. Consequently, Dublin in the mid-twentieth century started to display its interest to become more involved with the regional and international organizations that emerged. Therefore, it is important to allude to Ireland's move outward in the mid-twentieth century. More precisely, Dublin's interest to be more open to the outside world was seen in its involvement in the Council of Europe and the United Nations (UN).

### *2.1 Ireland and The Council of Europe: A Closer Move to Europe*

To begin with, Ireland opted for neutrality during World War II. This diplomatic approach isolated Ireland from its counterparts in the European region. In the same context, specialists in Irish Studies, Michael Kennedy and Eunan O'Halpin contend that the impractical protectionist approach that characterized Ireland in the early-twentieth century pushed it closer to Europe (2000, 21). More specifically, the failure of insularity, which intensified Ireland's diplomatic

isolation, paved the way for the country's interest in international involvement. As a result, Dublin's new outward-looking agenda necessitated its need to move closer to the outside world in general and to Europe in particular.

In practical terms, Ireland joined the Council of Europe in 1949. It is crucial to have recourse to the rationale behind establishing the Council. It was noted in the Statute of the Council of Europe that the Council was formed to forge "a closer unity between all like-minded countries of Europe" (Council of Europe 1949, 1). In other words, it sought to solidify a Western European bloc in the fragmented international sphere of the Cold War. Accordingly, the Council of Europe rested upon "democratic" and "capitalist" principles as it included Western European nations that supported "individual freedom, political liberty and the rule of law" (*ibidem*). Indeed, the Council sought to harmonize the Western European region. Thus, it called for "discussing" issues that worried the nations involved in the Council to ultimately reach a collective approach and secure their bloc. The scheme determined and adopted by the Council of Europe paved the way for collective and multilateral actions among the countries involved in the Council.

In this context, it is essential to scrutinize Ireland's involvement in the Council of Europe. Its membership in such a Council, when the international sphere was divided into two, reflected Dublin's attempt to move beyond its previous diplomatic isolation and protectionist policy. This proved that Ireland was ready to perform actively on the regional and international levels. More importantly, its involvement in the Council of Europe displayed Ireland's inclination toward Europe, particularly the Western European bloc. As a result, such a propensity mirrored Dublin's adherence to the capitalist ideology and guidelines supported by the West at that time. Ireland's inclination also showed its commitment to forge a more dynamic diplomatic identity and to start playing a more active role in the regional arena.

Furthermore, the adoption of the Western and pro-capitalist ideology reflected the desire of Ireland to completely change its inefficient protectionist policy and adapt itself to the guidelines propagated by West. Dublin's membership in the Council of Europe was probably a pragmatic strategy to move away from its past colonial experience. More remarkably, it is crucial to notice that Ireland joined the Council of Europe to enhance its status in the international arena and move closer to its Western European counterparts. Also, such an involvement unveiled Ireland's adherence to the key principles of the Council, which included "cooperation" and "collective action" to bring about peace and justice, particularly in the European region. Therefore, Dublin showed its inclination to the principle of "multiculturalism" that this Council seemed to embrace. Accordingly, it is essential to allude to Ireland's involvement in multilateral organizations like the UN.

## *2.2 Ireland in the UN: A Multilateral Approach*

Dublin displayed another attempt to move beyond its previous isolation on the international and regional levels. Indeed, this initiative consisted of its membership in the UN. To begin with, it is essential to highlight the principles upon which the UN was initially based. The key purposes of this entity were introduced in the Charter of the UN, which included securing "international peace and security" by embracing "the principles of justice and international law" (Department of State 1945, 3). Indeed, The UN aspired to preserve world peace and order through pacific means and collective action among states. Moreover, the UN Charter included multilateral solutions resolving disputes, such as opting for "negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful

means of their own choice" (UN 1945, 8). Consequently, Dublin's willingness to become part of the UN reflected its adherence to the core multilateral ethos of such an organization.

Ireland was accepted to join the UN at the end of 1955. Irish Diplomat and former representative of Ireland to the UN from 1998 to 2005, Richard Ryan, argues that Dublin's entry to the UN was a significant move (2003, 13). Its involvement in the UN was a highly important aspect of the Irish foreign agenda in that specific Cold War and post-World War I climate. Although it opted for neutrality during World War II, Dublin showed its propensity for collective action afterwards. Accordingly, former Secretary of the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, Noel Dorr, maintains that Ireland's willingness to join the UN was catalyzed by its belief in the principle of "collective security" (1996, 41). In the same context, the Political Scientist Hans Kelsen tackles the concept of collective security. According to Kelsen, collective security revolves around finding an agreement on how to curb potential "violations of the law" (1948, 783). Also, it is one of the major purposes of the UN (*ibidem*). It is possible to note that the neutral diplomatic stance of Ireland did not restrain its commitment to peace and justice through collective and pacific means.

The intense colonial experience undergone by Ireland nurtured its interest in joining an entity like the UN, which would assert collective security. Consequently, as a member of the UN, Dublin did not hesitate to exhibit its active performance. Professor Christophe Gillissen argues that Ireland was prompt to shape its "reputation" as a member of the UN (2008, 153). More precisely, it presented itself as an "independent" and "anti-imperialist" member state right after its membership (*ibidem*). Therefore, participation in the UN enabled Dublin to take a significant step forward and become more active in the international arena. Indeed, it is crucial to highlight that the Irish involvement in the UN allowed Dublin to simultaneously address world concerns and build diplomatic relations.

In his scrutiny of Ireland's UN performance, Dorr describes the epoch from the late-1950s to the 1960s as "[the] golden age of Irish UN membership" (1996, 43). As a UN member, Dublin sought to become more active and dynamic in the international sphere. Moreover, it is crucial to note that Ireland was asked to "delegate" the UN's General Assembly. The task of the delegation was inevitably a productive and rewarding experience that allowed Ireland to develop on the international level. Thus, it is essential to acknowledge Ireland's management of delegations and its importance for Dublin as well as its foreign agenda. In this regard, Dorr asserts the prominence of the ones conducted by the Minister for External Affairs in 1956, Liam Cosgrave, and, later, by his successor Frank Aiken (44). The first Irish delegation, managed by Cosgrave, accentuated Ireland's basic precepts as a UN member (Murphy 1998, 26). In practical terms, Cosgrave constantly emphasized Dublin's simultaneous commitment to meet the purposes stated in the UN Charter and to secure its independent position (*ibidem*). Therefore, it is necessary to note that as a UN member, Ireland sought to preserve its independent status, more specifically, its interests. Yet, it still showed an active commitment to world matters and collective action through leading delegations. Most importantly, Ireland's belief in and adherence to multilateralism was crucial in catalyzing its performance as a UN member. Dublin's foreign policy principles were compatible with the aspirations of the UN.

Dublin's diplomatic approach needed to meet the fundamental aims of the UN and to be consistent with these purposes. Accordingly, Ireland continuously expressed its commitment to peacekeeping. In practice, Dublin participated in peace-keeping actions beyond its borders, regardless of its small "size" and lack of "resources" (29). Furthermore, it is crucial to mention Dublin's engagement in making the General Assembly address the South African "apartheid issue" in its scheme (Dorr 1996, 46). Ireland's delegation was, indeed, tainted by an "anti-colonial" stance in 1960 (43). Dublin's previous experience with colonialism influenced such an anti-imperial

position. Also, the intense Irish strife, which included bloodshed, to ultimately gain independence shaped such a diplomatic stance. Moreover, Murphy alludes to Frank Aiken's proposition of "military disengagement in Central Europe and general disarmament" in the late-1950s (1998, 28). The suggestion to curb the spread of "nuclear weapons" was neither welcomed nor supported by Western nations in that context (Dorr 1996, 46). Yet, this proposition was accepted in 1961 by the General Assembly after several discussions between "major powers" (*ibidem*). Therefore, Ireland constantly showed its anti-imperialist character and its commitment to peacekeeping. Both principles were inevitably catalyzed by Dublin's past struggle with colonialism.

In addition, under Cosgrave's rule, Ireland's diplomacy was considered "pro-Western" and "anti-Communist" (Murphy 1998, 27). This shows that Ireland sought to preserve friendly relations with the Western bloc, mainly the United States of America (US) and Western Europe. Noel Dorr contends that the diplomatic positions of Dublin in the Cold War atmosphere were cautious (1996, 48). Despite its "courage" and anti-imperial stance, Ireland was still cautious about securing its special relations with the US and Western Europe (*ibidem*). This was seen in Ireland's involvement in resolving the Algerian conflict then. Although it lucidly intended to opt for a "pro-Algerian stance", Ireland considered the need to avoid any potential "upsetting resolution" that would lead to the "radicalisation" of the UN (Gillissen 2008, 166). It is important to note that Dublin explicitly called for the end of imperialism as a UN member. Nevertheless, it considered the significance of securing cordial alliances with Western states, like France in this case. As a result, it is possible to maintain that its "UN policy" witnessed some changes (*ibidem*). Indeed, these shifts in Dublin's UN plans were the outcome of its oscillation between anti-imperialism and its special relations with the West.

In his assessment of the Irish UN performance, Murphy deduces that Dublin managed to reach the position of a "middle power" in the UN due to its several peace-keeping operations (1998, 28). The international climate of the Cold War paved the way for Ireland's "middle power status" (*ibidem*) in the UN. More precisely, the concepts of multilateralism and "collective security" (29) were accentuated in such a delicate bipolar context. In this regard, Richard Ryan maintains that multilateralism was essential for states like Ireland which had thoroughly struggled with colonialism (2003, 13). As a result, that allowed Ireland to have a "middle power" position in the UN through its contribution to different peace-keeping operations. Murphy contends that Ireland was perceived as a " 'peacekeeper' or 'middle power' policeman" at that time (1998, 29). Thus, its participation in the UN enabled Dublin to move beyond its past isolation and assert its position on the international level.

### *3. The Diplomacy of Ireland in the Late-Twentieth Century: A European Member State*

To begin with, to avoid any chronological ambiguities, it is crucial to specify that in this article, the late-twentieth century started when Ireland joined the European Communities (EC) in 1972. The aim is to mainly scrutinize the diplomacy of Ireland starting from that year, as an official member of the EC, then, in the following years as a member of the European Union (EU). In fact, Ireland managed to embrace and, eventually, put into effect its aspiration of moving closer to Europe. In this regard, Laffan and O'Mahony comment that Ireland's involvement in the institutional bodies of the European region pushed the country closer to Europe (2008, 30). According to them, Ireland's "success" as an EU member state made it "a model" for other European and even non-European states (219).

First, it is important to contextualize and briefly refer to Ireland's official involvement in the institutional entities of the European region. Dublin's attempt to move closer to Europe was

concretized by signing Ireland's Treaty of Accession to the EC in 1972. Afterwards, the Treaty on European Union<sup>1</sup> (TEU) was highly supported in Ireland (The European Union 1992). The document included several ethos according to which the European Union would function. It called for economic balance and development in a harmonious region where internal borders between the involved member states would not exist (The European Union 1992). Consequently, Ireland's participation in the EU reflected its willingness to become more involved regionally and internationally. This section tackles the cooperative aspect of Ireland as a European member state. It also highlights the Irish presidencies of the Council of Europe.

### 3.1 *A Cooperative Irish Member State in the European Region*

It is significant to highlight the Irish-British relations as co-member states in the EC and, later, the EU, after their former conflictual disputes. In this context, Professor of Philosophy Richard Kearney argues that Ireland's involvement in the EC provided Dublin with a new "self-understanding" and more "international relations" (2010, 41). Therefore, Kearney asserts the British-Irish inclination to "reconciliation" catalysed by the process of integration in the European region (*ibidem*). In practice, signing the Good Friday Agreement<sup>2</sup> in 1998 reflected the settlement of the Irish-British violent dispute. Indeed, the "peace process", aimed by both governments, resulted in such a consensus (Ruane, Todd 2003, 121). The document legalized the "union" between Northern Ireland and Britain (*ibidem*) and enabled Northern Irish citizens to be "British or Irish or both" (Kearney 2010, 41). There was no imposition of one single identity; these citizens were instead allowed to choose. In his scrutiny, Kearney deduces that this Agreement suggested that the British and Irish nations were required to "redefine" themselves in such an integrated European context (49). Moreover, the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 proposed forming a British-Irish Council (BIC) to induce "cooperation" between both islands "in a transnational context" (41).

A BIC was advocated to consolidate as well as shape "harmonious and mutually beneficial" alliances between these islands and their peoples (The Northern Ireland Peace Agreement 1998, 16). A BIC was needed to stimulate "cooperation" and "consensus" on common issues and interests (*ibidem*). Thus, this BIC was suggested to harmonize and solidify the relations between the Irish and the British. Kearney puts emphasis on the inclusive nature of the proposed Council, indeed, its involved members were from "the British and Irish governments, the devolved assemblies of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland" (2010, 49). Therefore, it is vital to note that this Council sought to create cohesion between both islands and peoples through inclusion, mutual benefits and exchanges. The rationale behind Richard Kearney's analysis was to decipher the nature of "Hibernization", which entails Irish specificities and their potential influence, in dealing with "identity conflicts in Europe" (McCall, Wilson 2010, 34). As a result, Kearney's (2010) analysis suggests that the Irish strategy of solving such intense conflicts and disputes might be "an inspiration" or a model to other European states. Kearney (2010) contends that Ireland's way of dealing with its ethno-religious conflicts could embody an "inspiring" model for the Balkans and Cyprus. In this regard, Ireland's diplomacy as a member state of the European institutional bodies might also be a model. Indeed, its integration in the region entailed a serious sense of cooperation and pacifism.

<sup>1</sup> Also named the Maastricht Treaty which sought to build a coherent Union that would bring the member states of Europe and their peoples closer.

<sup>2</sup> Also known as the Belfast Agreement signed in 1998, after various negotiations and discussions between the governments of Northern Ireland, the UK, and the Republic of Ireland.

### 3.2 Ireland's Presidencies of the Council of Europe

Ireland's involvement and integration in the European region's institutional entities made Dublin more active in the regional and international spheres. In this context, Laffan and O'Mahony maintain that Irish participation in European matters developed the process of policymaking in Dublin (2008, 177). Ireland, in this international climate, especially during its economic success, known as the Celtic Tiger, was able to look for its interests outward. For instance, Laffan and O'Mahony highlight Ireland's attempts to establish economic relations with South-East Asia (*ibidem*). The contributions of Dublin as a member of the European institutional entities, particularly the EU, should be assessed.

Laffan and O'Mahony argue that Dublin was given the "opportunity" to preside over the Council of Europe six times (41-42). Indeed, that mission has inevitably impacted and changed the Irish national sphere (61). It is then necessary to precise the functions of the Council of Europe. According to the Maastricht Treaty, the role of the Council of Europe is to direct "the general political directions and priorities" of the Union (Official Journal of the European Union 2012). In practical terms, the Council of Europe has managed the "European integration process" and "cris[is]" (de Schoutheete 2017, 58). Former Belgian Diplomat Philippe de Schoutheete depicts the Council of Europe as a fundamental "locus of power" (65). Accordingly, it is crucial to tackle the Irish presidency of the Council of Europe, which represents the power of the EU. Laffan and O'Mahony argue that different EU analysts have positively approached most Irish presidencies on the European level (2008, 40). In this regard, they refer to Peter Ludlow's statement that the Irish managed to handle "successful" presidencies by prioritizing European interests instead of pursuing national ones (*ibidem*). The Fine Gael politician Garret FitzGerald<sup>3</sup> also highlights that the Irish presidencies, led by a "small country" and a new member of the EC, enhanced its image in the European region (2002, 131-132). Through presiding the Council of Europe, Dublin showed its commitment and competence to run "successful" presidencies over the European Community and the European Union. More precisely, Garret FitzGerald accentuates the "success" of the Irish presidencies on the European level in solving some challenges (132). For example, he alludes to Dublin's presidency in 1994, which managed to draft an EU Treaty that was later signed in Amsterdam (*ibidem*).

Moreover, Ireland showed its involvement in the European institutional bodies through joining the European Political Cooperation (EPC). Laffan and O'Mahony maintain that the EPC entailed more "coordination" between the member states' foreign policies (2008, 175). Dublin's involvement in the EPC necessitated a divergent approach to "international politics" (41). Ireland's integration into the EPC required less focus on national interests and more concentration on European ones. Nevertheless, participation in the EPC has impacted the Irish policymaking process and benefited the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs (183). The need to collectively work with other member states has inevitably influenced and enriched Irish foreign policymaking. As a result, the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs was required to deal with European and Irish matters. Laffan and O'Mahony emphasize the development of this Department to fulfill its new tasks that were demanded by its European membership (*ibidem*). More precisely, Irish policymakers needed to cooperate with Diplomats from other member states as they became more engaged in European international missions. Later, a more "ambitious" foreign policy suggestion called the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) was discussed at Maastricht (175). The European Union's "three pillars" encompassed this political proposition (Watts 2008a, 235), which

<sup>3</sup> He ran the Irish government twice from 1981 to 1982 and from 1982 to 1987.

mirrored the evolved political ambition of this European apparatus. This political development enabled Dublin to act in a “multilateral” way. It is important to note that Ireland’s participation in this diplomatic cooperation implied enhancing its status in the international sphere.

#### *4. The Diplomacy of Ireland from the Mid to the Late-Twentieth Century: A Model for Other Small States?*

As mentioned above, in the mid-twentieth century, Ireland moved beyond its past protectionist policy that isolated it regionally and globally. The change of approach that characterized Ireland in the mid-twentieth century pushed the country to concretize its aspiration to become more open. Indeed, the fact that Dublin managed to put its ambition into effect reflected its determination to move forward and keep up with the rest of the world. The outcomes of its changed international diplomacy became evident in the mid-twentieth century. In that context, characterized by post-World War II and the emergence of the Cold War, Ireland was willing to become more integrated into the European region and move closer to its Western European neighbours. Consequently, it joined the Council of Europe and adhered to its fundamental precepts. Besides the regional level, Dublin sought to further integrate itself into the international arena by participating in the UN. In both entities, the Council of Europe and the United Nations, Ireland exhibited the belief in and adherence to the principle of “multiculturalism”. The Political Scientist Antonio Franceschet (2016) maintains that “multilateralism” is a strategy that seeks to settle the issue of coercion. Indeed, Franceschet contends that the guidelines of multiculturalism have been shaped and further promoted by organizations such as the UN.

Accordingly, Ireland can possibly be considered a “model” for other small states due to its commitment to be an active member on the regional and international levels. Dublin’s decision to transcend its protectionism, a significant feature of its independence, was a positive initiative. Although insularity was a policy that reinforced the independent nature of the state, Irish policymakers were prompt to call for the need to change it. Despite its importance, protectionism’s lacunae blocked Ireland from moving forward. Indeed, that policy was not as rewarding as it used to be. More precisely, it made Ireland more isolated and alienated on different levels. Accordingly, insularity was no longer as adequate and efficient as before. It is possible to note that the inclination to change such a significant approach that helped normalize and assert the independent status of Ireland was a pragmatic move. It was necessary to leave protectionism behind for Ireland to keep up with the rest of the world. Consequently, the idea that Ireland did not radically hold onto its insularity can be a model for other small states. More specifically, it is essential to acknowledge the need for change to keep up with the new trends.

In the late-twentieth century, as an official member of the European region’s institutional bodies, Dublin displayed its possession of an active diplomatic role and position. According to Barrett, Laffan, Thom et al., in the early years of membership in the EC, Ireland aimed to economically “catch-up” with the other member states (2008, 5). On the economic level, participation in the EC pushed Dublin to opt for more openness and interdependence with its co-members. It is crucial to mention that Ireland managed to move from poverty to affluence as a member state of the EC and later the EU. After experiencing economic malaise in the 1980s, Ireland witnessed an unprecedented economic opulence, known as the Celtic Tiger, in the 1990s. The origins of this economic affluence were open to many interpretations, both internal and external factors were highlighted. For instance, former Prime Minister Garret FitzGerald argues that participating in the EC was economically rewarding for Ireland (2002, 125). Indeed, it provided Dublin with access to a wider “continental market” (*ibidem*). Besides,



it is essential to have recourse to the European Structural Funds given to Ireland, among the other peripheral member states, to help it economically “catch-up” with the others.

Among the endogenous factors that stimulated the Irish economic boom in the 1990s, it is necessary to note the domestic use of the European Funds. Laffan and O’Mahony contend that these Funds were spent to evolve the “physical infrastructure” (2008, 233). For example, they highlight the investment in “roads, telecommunications, public transport and ports” (*ibidem*). John Bradley and Eithne Murphy maintain that nearly 60 percent were dedicated to the implementation of infrastructural plans (1989, 282). The commitment to improving the state’s infrastructure was a pragmatic strategy that helped facilitate foreign investment afterwards. Also, Laffan and O’Mahony allude to the Irish investment to develop human capital with these Funds, like education (2008, 233). They argue that Dublin sought to improve education and professional training, particularly in electronics and software, due to their growing importance at that time (226). Investment in human capital was a pragmatic future-oriented strategy that would produce a well-prepared and skilled labor force in emerging fields like software. Thus, human investment was a strategic move that could lead to efficient economic results. Indeed, Laffan and O’Mahony argue that the existence of “skilled workers” in Ireland further encouraged foreign direct investment (232). In this context, John D. Fitz Gerald suggests that “lessons” could be extracted from the Irish use of these Funds (1998, 689). For instance, the Irish experience displayed the importance of developing human capital (*ibidem*). Such an investment helped Ireland reach the economic convergence that the EC required.

Moreover, in the late-twentieth century, Ireland was able to attract non-European investors by entering the EC (Buckley, Ruane 2006, 1614). Accordingly, the realization of a Single European Market further increased Dublin’s reception of inward investment. In this regard, Fagan contends that Ireland was seen as a convenient place in the European region where multinational American corporations could invest (2002, 138). As a result, various multilateral American firms among which Laffan and O’Mahony (2008) mention “Intel, Dell [and] Microsoft” opened in Ireland (232). The fact that such corporations chose to expand in Ireland showed the suitable and advantageous aspects of its domestic environment. Indeed, some endogenous motives had emerged in Ireland before its participation in the EC like the amendment of the Control of Manufactures Act in 1958 whose aim was to promote foreign investment. This measure reduced taxes and, ultimately, made Ireland a favorable place for investment. Laffan and O’Mahony refer to the use of English as an official spoken language (2008, 226).

Therefore, it is possible to maintain that Ireland’s diplomatic performance in the late-twentieth century can be seen as a model for other small states. Its closer move to Europe and the world helped develop the position of Ireland in the international arena. More importantly, such an integration allowed Ireland to witness an unprecedented economic opulence. However, it is crucial to contend that Dublin seized the different international opportunities and simultaneously worked on improving its domestic sphere. Consequently, it managed to create success and transcend the peripheral position. It is essential to acknowledge the importance of openness to the world. However, it is also necessary to carefully manage the domestic sphere and keep it in touch with the outer world.

To conclude, Ireland made an impressive move from insularity to openness. An amalgamation of domestic and external factors facilitated that shift. Most importantly, Dublin carefully seized the different opportunities and ensured a well-equipped domestic sphere compatible with the new international changes. Ireland can thus be a model for other small states. More specifically, its prompt acknowledgement of moving beyond its protectionism and international isolation to keep up with the world can be an example. Indeed, small states that radically hold

onto insularity can easily succumb to failure on various levels, especially if they have a shortage of material resources. Besides, one should acknowledge the need for domestic change. That was seen in the case of Ireland when it used European Funds to invest in its domestic arena to become an attractive locus for huge corporations later. More generally, Ireland's move from insularity to openness and from poverty to opulence, can make it a "model" for other small states.

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## Miscellanea





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# *Gulliver's Travels* e il conservatorismo sovversivo delle stampe satiriche ottocentesche

*Ilaria Natali*

Università degli Studi di Firenze (<[ilaria.natali@unifi.it](mailto:ilaria.natali@unifi.it)>)

## *Abstract:*

The visual quality of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, together with its popular and folkloric ingredients, has greatly contributed to the novel's immediate transmedial reception and was central to its success during the so-called "golden age" of visual satire in the British Isles. Starting with the end of the eighteenth century, caricaturists transformed Swift's work into a symbol of society's mechanisms and structures. Indeed, in its frequent nineteenth-century adaptations into graphic form, *Gulliver's Travels* has been exploited to identify social or political identity and otherness, to express suspicion against any form of authority, and to undermine monologic perspectives on current political events.

*Keywords:* Caricature, *Gulliver's Travels*, Satire, Transmediality, Visual Arts

"For men led by the colour, and the shape,  
Like Zeuxis' birds fly to the painted grape"  
Abraham Cowley, "Of Wit", vv. 11-12.

## *1. Trasgressioni di confine nella satira di Jonathan Swift*

È nota la posizione liminale occupata da Jonathan Swift rispetto alla propria identità nazionale che, dice Wolfgang Zach, si definisce solo negativamente, quale esempio eloquente della condizione spesso paradossale della *Anglo-Irish ascendancy* del tempo (2000, 38). Colonizzatore intriso di fervente anticolonialismo, sostenitore del partito *whig* convertito alla propaganda *tory*, esponente della classe dirigente britannica che ne percepisce e denuncia l'oppressione, Swift travalica i confini di qualsiasi definizione del sé, facendo della satira "the mode of his sovereignty and transgression and indeed [...] of his intelligible existence" (Said 1969, 65). Tale intreccio di appartenenze identitarie talvolta ferventi ma sempre multiple

e instabili trova riscontro nei meccanismi satirici dell'autore, entro i quali si sono ravvisate tendenze apparentemente inconciliabili e retaggi culturali ibridi<sup>1</sup>.

A insistere sulla presenza di una vena irlandese nella produzione di Swift è innanzi tutto Vivian Mercier, seguito da Jean-Paul Forster e Declan Kiberd. Mercier non solo ipotizza influssi indiretti dell'antica letteratura gaelica su *Gulliver's Travels*, con particolare riferimento a generi del viaggio favoloso quali *immrama* ed *echtraí* (1962, 188), ma individua anche una serie di analogie tra i viaggi a Lilliput e Brobdingnag e la fiaba popolare "Imtheachta Tuaithe Luchra", ovvero "Gli eventi del popolo di Luchra" (88). Forster, che rivolge l'attenzione alle forme letterarie più diffuse in Irlanda al tempo di Swift, riconosce elementi di parodia dell'*aisling* in *The Story of the Injured Lady*, dove la figura femminile è assai meno radiosa di quanto vorrebbe la convenzione (1991, 90). Sebbene la satira swiftiana presenti sfumati legami con fonti specifiche, secondo Kiberd, il complesso dei suoi eccessi grotteschi e macabri richiama spirito e temi del "Gaelic lore" (2000, 625).

Queste osservazioni, ritengo, sono suscettibili di ulteriori ampliamenti: anche la propensione di Swift per l'accumulazione, fonte di inesauribile comicità, potrebbe rappresentare un'eredità della tradizione irlandese. Sin dall'alto medioevo il racconto dell'isola verde è affollato di incoerenti liste, cataloghi e inventari, i quali, specie dopo l'avvento della prosa allitterante, seguono criteri fonostetici piuttosto che di senso. L'opera di Swift sfrutta di frequente l'eccesso di enumerazione e l'esuberanza delle associazioni tra elementi delle liste per sortire effetti carnevaleschi – si pensi alla designazione della linea di discendenza dei critici moderni in *A Tale of a Tub* (1999 [1704], 44), ai dettagli iperbolici, superflui e raccapriccianti in cui scende Gulliver parlando della polvere da sparo (1995 [1726], 123), o allo stravagante elenco di attività che consentono la sopravvivenza ai meno fortunati in Inghilterra (235)<sup>2</sup>. Tuttavia, la farragine enciclopedica mette in ridicolo non tanto (o non solo) le forme dell'antica letteratura gaelica quanto quelle della cultura inglese settecentesca, che pullula di "every kind of list, including catalogues, indexes, tables of contents, gazettes, glossaries, chronologies" (Walsh 2013, 106) e, con la sua tendenza tassonomica, appesantisce le pagine di specificazioni tediose e pedanti, addenda di vario tipo o monumentali apparati paratestuali.

Su qualsiasi tentativo di ricostruire le radici culturali di Swift pesano alcuni fatti incontrovertibili: l'autore non conosce affatto il gaelico, anzi ne auspica l'abbandono<sup>3</sup>, e adotta una satira di derivazione menippea che si distanzia dalle forme tradizionali irlandesi, tipicamente imperniate su attacchi *ad hominem*<sup>4</sup>. Pertanto, se "the tone of [Swift's] major work is profoundly un-English" (Carpenter 1991, 327), è al contempo altrettanto *un-Irish*, tanto da spingere il capofila della scuola critica irlandese a paventare che le relazioni con la tradizione gaelica non siano "more than coincidences" (Mercier 1962, 31). Difficili da districare, infatti, sono i nodi intertestuali determinati dalle originali strategie allusive di Swift, che concentra le proprie fonti creando cortocircuiti tra più antecedenti e discorsi diversi. La ripresa del preesistente non si rifa

<sup>1</sup> In queste pagine, ogni stampa menzionata è individuata dall'univoco *call number* o *museum number* tra parentesi, all'interno del testo; in nota, è indicato il link alle scansioni digitali online. Per le stampe riprodotte all'interno dell'articolo, la selezione ha dovuto essere circoscritta alle immagini rilasciate con licenza di libera distribuzione e, laddove necessario, sono specificate anche le diverse articolazioni dei diritti d'autore e di utilizzo. Ho visualizzato le riproduzioni del materiale visivo innanzi tutto in Welcher 1999; Donald 1996; Baker 2005, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> I successivi riferimenti al testo di *Gulliver's Travels* saranno indicati con le iniziali *GT* seguite dal numero di pagina.

<sup>3</sup> "It would be a noble achievement to abolish the Irish language in this kingdom, so far at least as to oblige all the natives to speak only English on every occasion of business, in shops, markets, fairs, and other places of dealing" (Swift 1905, 133).

<sup>4</sup> A questo proposito si veda Lanthers 2007, 477.

tanto ad autori precisi, quanto a codici di generi e tipologie discorsive, o meccanismi topici in ambito tematico e stilistico. Entro il polimorfico e polisemico *Gulliver's Travels* si riscontrano ingredienti della tradizione classica, folclorica e favolistica europea, nonché pattern ontologici derivati dai modelli medievali della letteratura geografica e di viaggio. Luciano, Esopo, Orazio, Rabelais e Thomas More sono spesso citati tra i possibili modelli di Swift, ma, anche in questi casi, “in spite of [the] parallels the direct influence [...] is not very clear” (Eddy 1921, 420).

L'attrito tra particolare e generale soggiace a più livelli delle costruzioni satiriche di Swift, che scrive di sé nel proprio beffardo epitaffio in versi: “He lash'd the vice but spared the Name”, così che “No individual could resent, / Where thousands equally were meant” (1983 [1739], 497; vv. 464-66). Comunque, *Gulliver's Travels* si spinge oltre l'atteggiamento giovenaliano di rappresentazione del vizio, poiché l'elaborata struttura dei commenti satirici su eventi e figure del microcosmo storico-sociale settecentesco è architettata in modo tale da rimanere valida anche se proiettata sul macrocosmo, vale a dire il piano storico dell'osservazione della natura umana, senza che nello spostamento si abbia perdita significativa di dettagli. Transcodificazione e traduzione sono processi costantemente in atto nel romanzo, dove il narratore e i mondi che descrive accolgono segni ingannevoli o ambigui, tra cui forma e dimensione fisica, come alterità suscettibili di inquadramenti morali, mentre l'immaginario ne semiotizza l'incontro “transforming the specific into the general” ma anche “by turning the literal into the metaphorical, the ironical into the literal [...] the organic into the mechanical, the symbolic into the physical, the cerebral into the abdominal, the genital, and the excretory” (Ellis 1981, 65).

Secondo John F. Sena, la prosa di Swift nel romanzo “lends itself to pictorial illustration” in quanto adotta una lingua “for the most part [...] nonmetaphoric” (1992, 101). D'altro canto, il tasso di metaforicità si impenna all'avvicinarsi della frontiera e della terra straniera, laddove le scelte stilistiche, per seguire la linea di pensiero di Francesco Orlando (1992 [1973], 65-66), sono agite dallo spazio dell'ignoto. Nell'altrove, la prospettiva di Gulliver è governata da trasposizioni e analogie innervate dal tentativo di codificare il diverso e l'alieno attraverso forme espressive e concetti noti e familiari. Così, a Brobdingnag vede mosche delle dimensioni di “*Dunstable Lark*” e vespe “as large as Partridges” che emettono il suono di “Drones of [...] Bagpipes” (GT 113). L'impatto visivo ne è tutt'altro che mitigato: le catene di similitudini create dal narratore solitamente associano tra loro entità concrete, incoraggiando una lettura sensoriale entro la quale convivono l'immediatezza dell'impressione e il conflitto dello straniamento.

Di conseguenza, l'immagine verbale acquisisce la facoltà di suscitare emozioni complesse nei lettori, come testimonia Samuel Johnson, secondo il quale la pubblicazione di *Gulliver's Travels* fu accolta con “a mingled emotion of merriment and amazement” mentre la critica rimaneva “for a while lost in wonder” (in Williams 1970, 202). Le fantasmagoriche distorsioni di Swift trovano radici profonde nello spettacolo e nel visivo, sfruttano la comicità popolare delle fiere, l'esperienza sbalorditiva e sconcertante, il divertimento tipico di un pubblico poco sofisticato o di forme d'intrattenimento pseudo-infantili. La prosa dipinge i vividi colori degli ingredienti favolistici o folclorici mentre al contempo si inoltra negli anfratti di un crudo realismo irto di elementi macabri o scatologici che dissipano l'illusione iniziale e propongono scenari tipici del comico popolare. Su entrambi i fronti, “Swift makes the most of the simple comic effects and common instances of ridicule that one associates with pictorial caricature” (Forster 1991, 216).

*Gulliver's Travels* travalica, così, anche i confini tra testo e immagine, che interagiscono già nelle tre edizioni di Motte (1726 e 1727) e la successiva di Faulkner (1735), i cui supplementi e paratesti complicano la relazione tra riferimenti al reale e all'immaginario. Infatti, Frederick Bracher (1944) dimostra che le mappe dei viaggi collocano le terre fantastiche all'interno dell'autentica cartografia settecentesca, mentre Janine Barchas (1998) discute di come i ritratti



di Gulliver e di Swift nei frontespizi siano giocosamente impiegati per minare tanto l'autorità del testo quanto la credibilità del narratore. Il romanzo, in seguito sempre più mediato da componenti visive, ha stimolato l'adattamento e risemantizzazione di varie scene ed episodi in forma di disegni, dipinti e incisioni, oggi minuziosamente documentati nelle circa trecento immagini raccolte da Jeanne Welcher per il settimo volume di *Gulliveriana* (1999).

Grazie a un patrimonio genetico popolare e folclorico, nonché a una tradizione di collaborazione tra parola e immagine avviata sin dalle prime edizioni, il romanzo di Swift ha trovato terreno fertile entro la dimensione extraletteraria, passando da contenitore ipertestuale di molteplici espressioni culturali a ipotesto versatile e flessibile<sup>5</sup>. In particolare, ha guadagnato un ruolo di spicco entro la cosiddetta "golden age" della satira visiva anglofona, periodo che va approssimativamente dalla fine del Settecento ai primi tre decenni dell'Ottocento, in cui le isole britanniche sono state inondate da almeno ventimila caricature politiche, ciascuna diffusa in centinaia di copie. Sebbene la presenza di *Gulliver's Travels* entro questa forma di satira sia stata già descritta, è rimasto parzialmente inesplorato il modo in cui il testo sia centrale nel forgiare un immaginario di identità e alterità sociopolitica, oltre che per dar voce ad un atteggiamento sovversivo che guarda con sospetto ogni forma di potere e ogni versione ufficiale degli eventi.

## 2. *L'età dell'oro della caricatura nelle isole britanniche*

La prima edizione del romanzo di Swift, comparsa il 28 ottobre 1726, incontra l'immediato favore di un pubblico molto ampio: secondo John Arbuthnot è "in every body's hands" ad una sola settimana dalla pubblicazione (Swift 1963, 180), e pochi giorni dopo Alexander Pope conferma che questo "wonderful book [...] is *publica trita manu* at present" (in Williams 1970, 62). Il 17 novembre anche John Gay scrive di "the Travels of one Gulliver, which hath been the conversation of the whole town" che "[f]rom the highest to the lowest it is universally read, from the Cabinet-council to the Nursery" (Swift 1963, 182). A testimoniare il grande successo dei *Travels* non sono solo i membri dello Scriblerus Club: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu ne parla come di "a book [...] that all our people of taste run mad about" (in Williams 1970, 65), mentre Samuel Johnson, pur non essendone un estimatore, sottolinea che "it was read by the high and the low, the learned and illiterate" (202). A esercitare grande attrattiva è soprattutto l'architettura fantastica del romanzo, apprezzata anche da quanti non sono in grado di andare oltre al messaggio letterale per cogliere allegorie, maschere ed altre sottigliezze. In modo simile, le stampe satiriche dell'età dell'oro propongono una struttura che può operare su più livelli di lettura e interpretazione.

La caricatura intesa come commento politico si afferma nelle isole britanniche dapprima a livello amatoriale, come passatempo di pittori, incisori e illustratori che distribuiscono le proprie creazioni a cerchie limitate di fruitori; già nel 1803, spiega Mary Dorothy George, è così di moda da entrare a far parte della routine quotidiana dei gentiluomini che frequentano la sala di scommesse Tattersall (1967, 57). I caricaturisti, ora professionisti del genere, si avvalgono di suggerimenti, idee, persino di bozze pervenute dal pubblico, il cui contributo è riconosciuto in calce alla pagina, solitamente introdotto dalle abbreviazioni "inv" ("invenit") o "des" ("designit"). Le stampe satiriche nascono, quindi, da un colloquio costante tra autore e destinatario,

<sup>5</sup> Per una discussione di imitatori ed "epigoni" di Gulliver nella pratica scrittoria si rimanda a Capoferro 2010, 188-195.

con partecipazione attiva soprattutto da parte delle classi sociali più alte.

In buona misura, il successo della satira visiva è dovuto a un'estetica figurativa d'impatto immediato, capace di suscitare il riso pur senza comprendere i giochi spesso complessi di allusioni e commenti, o persino senza saper leggere: dopotutto, le caricature politiche anglofone sono diffuse e vendute anche all'estero, in Francia, Germania e Olanda. Gli artisti cercano di dialogare con un pubblico diversificato coniugando o intrecciando modelli culturali di diversa ascendenza, e occasionalmente proclamano la trasversalità delle loro creazioni attraverso la meta-rappresentazione. È questo il caso dell'anonima stampa *Caricature Shop*, datata 1801 (The Lewis Walpole Library, 801.09.00.01), dove si mostrano le vetrine del negozio di Piercy Roberts: la folla che si ammassa divertita sulla strada include anziani e bambini, gentiluomini, signore, mendicanti e addirittura animali<sup>6</sup>. Analogamente, nel 1808, *Very Slippery-weather* di James Gillray (National Portrait Gallery, D12901) mostra l'esterno del negozio di Hannah Humphrey, dove le caricature allora più note attraggono lo sguardo di passanti di varie estrazioni sociali<sup>7</sup>.

Allo stesso tempo, le opere di satira visiva sono cariche di una complessità semantica che si realizza attraverso intricate reti di allusioni storico-letterarie, cenni alla tradizione popolare o favolistica e riferimenti agli eventi politici più recenti, tutti elementi che l'artista amalgama in una sorta di rebus – o di geroglifico, per usare un termine amato da Swift – di componenti verbali e visive. A volte la parola scritta ha efficacia chiarificatrice, a volte è elemento di ulteriore disorientamento, ma si fa sempre forza vitale nelle stampe satiriche, che pervade in ogni parte: costituisce titoli, sottotitoli e didascalie, fa il suo ingresso all'interno del disegno in cartelli, etichette, sulle raffigurazioni di documenti e nelle nuvolette di parole pronunciate dai personaggi. L'elemento verbale, come prevedibile, può variare quantitativamente in modo vistoso a seconda degli artisti o delle singole opere, ma non è mai del tutto assente, poiché a partire dal cosiddetto "Hogarth's Act" o *Engravings Act* del 1736, gli incisori specificano il proprio nome e la data in calce ad ogni opera a tutela del diritto d'autore. La contaminazione di elementi da mezzi di comunicazione diversi invita a concepire le stampe satiriche come un'espressione culturale intermediale e polisemica; Mary Dorothy George le definisce "graphic pamphlets" (1959, 3), Peter Wagner mette in rilievo la composita struttura verbo-visiva con il termine "iconotext" (1995) e David Francis Taylor ne parla come di un'ibridazione culturale di forte matrice letteraria e di impianto intertestuale che va decifrata in una vera e propria "lettura" (2018, 3-5).

La stampa *Ah! sure such a pair was never seen so justly form'd to meet by nature* (Figura 1; British Museum Collection 1859, 0316.160), realizzata da George Cruikshank il 23 giugno 1820, ben esemplifica la stratificazione semantica della caricatura politica, che invita a rintracciare un significato narrativo pure a fronte di un impiego parsimonioso dell'elemento verbale<sup>8</sup>. Nell'immagine sono raffigurati re George IV e la regina Caroline di Brunswick, dei quali è visibile soltanto la testa, poiché il corpo – informe – è interamente avvolto in sacchi verdi. Il sovrano appare disgustato e irritato, la consorte compiaciuta e ammiccante. Il contesto è quello, piuttosto noto, delle turbolente vicende matrimoniali dei reali: nel giugno 1820 George IV presenta al Parlamento due tipiche borse verdi usate per le carte legali ricolme di prove della

<sup>6</sup> Si veda <<https://hdl.handle.net/10079/digcoll/951539>> (05/2023).

<sup>7</sup> Si veda <<https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw62990/Very-slippery-weather>> (05/2023). Nelle citazioni successive, National Portrait Gallery sarà abbreviato in NPG.

<sup>8</sup> Si veda <[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_1859-0316-160](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1859-0316-160)> (05/2023). Nelle citazioni successive, British Museum Collection sarà abbreviato in BMC.

presunta condotta immorale della regina, dalla quale intende ottenere un divorzio non consensuale. L'avvocato di Caroline, Henry Peter Brougham, avrebbe annunciato che “if the King had a Green Bag the Queen might have one too” (in Vogler 1979, 135), commento che gli vale una f



Figura 1 – George Cruikshank, 23 giugno 1820<sup>9</sup>

Le caricature e la didascalia, una citazione di *The Duenna* di Richard Sheridan (anch'egli confidenzialmente menzionato con un soprannome, “Sherry”), concorrono a suggerire che i contendenti siano colpevoli in ugual misura e che gli illeciti costituiscano la loro sostanza. In questa luce, il motto dell'ordine della Giarrettiera, “Dieu est mon droit, Honi soit qui mal y pense”, riportato (con abbreviazioni) sulla fascia blu attorno al corpo della regina, è dissacrato e rivestito di un significato tutto nuovo; altrettanto dissacrata è la convenzione di stilare dediche a personaggi politicamente influenti su dipinti e incisioni, poiché qui l'opera è provocatoriamente “Dedicated to Old Bags”. Infine, i corpi sovrappeso dei sovrani, segno di viziosa ingordigia, richiamano la forma di pere mature, come suggerisce l'omofono “pair” nella citazione da Sheridan<sup>10</sup>; il biglietto sito sul tavolo a fianco del re ne accenna i motivi, accusandolo di mentire e di oziare.

I tribunali suscitano acceso interesse nei caricaturisti ottocenteschi, specie dopo che nel

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<sup>10</sup>La stampa di George Cruikshank anticipa la nota caricatura di Luigi Filippo d'Orleans trasformato in una pera per mano prima di Charles Philipon, che disegna un bozzetto durante un processo nel 1831, e successivamente di Honoré Daumier, che pubblica *La Métamorphose du roi Louis-Philippe en poire* su *Le Charivari* del 17 gennaio 1834. Per i disegni di Philipon si veda BMC 1886, 1012.343 <[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_1886-1012-343](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1886-1012-343)> (05/2023).

dicembre 1817 lo stampatore radicale William Hone, noto punto di riferimento per la satira politica, è portato a processo con accuse di diffamazione e poi assolto<sup>11</sup>. Tra i motivi del successo della satira visiva, nota Andrew B. Bricker, figura sì la diffusione di nuove e più economiche tecniche di incisione, ma anche il funzionamento delle corti di giustizia: all'epoca, la diffamazione *verbis tantum* ha contorni più netti rispetto a quella a mezzo d'immagine, mentre è ancora complesso dimostrare o "tradurre" in linguaggio legale una calunnia che nasce dalla compenetrazione di contenuti grafici e verbali (2018, 320). Non è secondario, poi, il fatto che avviare controversie su materiale visivo significa darne maggiore diffusione, attirando l'attenzione del pubblico sull'opera incriminata. La caricatura offre, quindi, più libertà d'espressione rispetto alla parola stampata e permette di sferrare attacchi nei confronti di figure pubbliche senza menzionarle apertamente: bastano pochi dettagli a renderle immediatamente riconoscibili. Il giudizio sul carattere o sulla morale della persona procede in modo altrettanto implicito, selezionando ed esasperando quelle peculiarità fisiche che hanno valore simbolico o allusivo.

Come si è visto, l'elemento verbale non manca nelle stampe satiriche, ma raramente risulta tanto provocatorio quanto quello grafico, entro il quale si concentra il messaggio potenzialmente diffamatorio. Anzi, in genere il testo consta soprattutto di citazioni da opere ben note, a ulteriore tutela legale del caricaturista e dello stampatore, secondo uno stratagemma di reimpieghi mirati della tradizione culturale e letteraria che già da anni era ampiamente in uso per evitare di incorrere nella censura. Tra i testi canonici più di frequente rilette nelle stampe satiriche figurano le tragedie di Shakespeare, *Paradise Lost* di Milton e – il più recente – *Gulliver's Travels*, unica opera della letteratura settecentesca a esercitare un impatto immediato e continuativo sulla satira visiva<sup>12</sup>.

Gli adattamenti satirici del romanzo, in realtà, iniziano ancor prima della "golden age" della caricatura, quando il 26 dicembre 1726, a soli due mesi dalla pubblicazione del libro, William Hogarth realizza l'incisione *The Punishment Inflicted on Lemuel Gulliver* (Figura 2; BMC 1861, 0413.502)<sup>13</sup>. L'opera rappresenta una scena che non è narrata da Swift ma ne costituisce, secondo le categorie individuate da Gérard Genette, una "continuation *elliptique*" (1982, 198) e, nei più recenti termini di Wolfgang Müller, un'estensione intermedia (1995, 317), ma in ambito transfunzionale: l'ingenuo Gulliver (o almeno parte del suo corpo) è ritratto mentre i lillipuziani lo sottopongono ad un'umiliante punizione, conseguenza di "his Urinal Profanation of the Royal Pallace [*sic*] at Mildendo", come spiega la didascalia. Il rappresentante dell'uomo medio del Settecento si lascia strumentalizzare e oltraggiare da una popolazione che, per via delle irrisorie dimensioni fisiche, non dovrebbe esercitare su di lui alcun potere; analogamente, il comune cittadino accetta la propria subordinazione al regno Hannover e al governo Walpole, cui permette di sfruttarlo e umiliarlo perché inconsapevole della propria capacità e forza di ribellarsi. L'immaginario del rapporto medico-paziente è una metafora molto comune per parlare dell'organismo politico e un contesto gravido di simbologie morali: la terapia settecentesca era spesso concepita come punizione per presunte mancanze, correzione a una condotta anticonvenzionale, o purificazione a seguito di una trasgressione. Nella stampa non manca, in effetti, una componente peccaminosa, evidenziata dalla presenza del dio Pan sulla destra, tra vari altri

<sup>11</sup> Per approfondimenti, si veda Haywood 2013, 1-4.

<sup>12</sup> Per il reimpiego di Shakespeare e Milton si vedano, ad esempio, *The Cauldron – or Shakespeare Travestie* (1820) di John Fairburn (BMC 1948,0214.817) e *Sin, Death, and the Devil. Vide Milton* (1792) di James Gillray (BMC 1851,0901.610). Le riproduzioni digitali sono disponibili rispettivamente ai link <[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_1948-0214-817](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1948-0214-817)> e <[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_1851-0901-610](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1851-0901-610)> (05/2023).

<sup>13</sup> Si veda <[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_1861-0413-502](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1861-0413-502)> (05/2023).

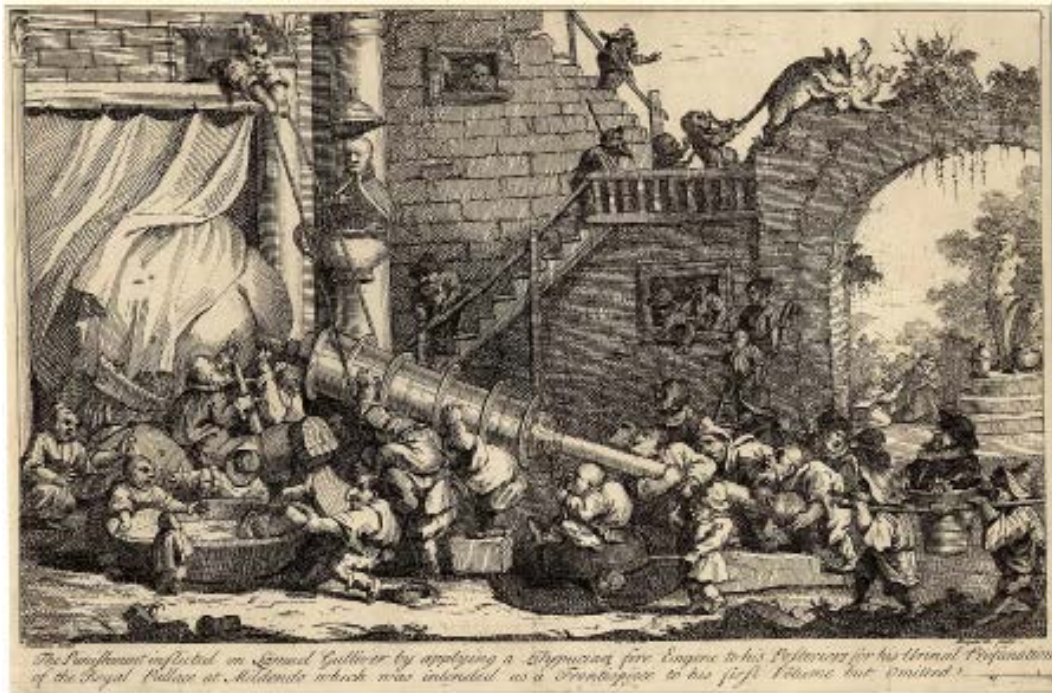


Figura 2 – William Hogarth, 26 dicembre 1726<sup>14</sup>

Nel corso delle loro carriere, spiega Ronald Paulson, Swift e Hogarth si influenzano reciprocamente in altre occasioni: Hogarth trae ispirazione da *A Tale of a Tub* per la visione di Bedlam in *Rake's Progress*, serie di incisioni cui lo scrittore, a sua volta, rende omaggio in “The Legion Club” attraverso un appello diretto (2003, 70). Nonostante lo scambio costante, il pittore prende le distanze dalle modalità satiriche care a Swift nel definirsi un caratterista anziché caricaturista. La sua stampa *Characters and Caricatures* (1743; BMC 1868,0822.1559) mira proprio a distinguere la tecnica realistica dell'autore, visivamente affine a quella di Raffaello, dalle deformazioni grottesche proposte da Leonardo da Vinci, Annibale Carracci e Pier Leone Ghezzi<sup>15</sup>. In breve, per prendere in prestito le categorie individuate da Jean Hagstrum (1972, 178-193), Hogarth sostiene di non dedicarsi alla *emblematic caricature* ma alla *portrait caricature*, nella quale è l'espressione dei personaggi a costituire l'elemento comico. In calce a *Characters and Caricatures*, Hogarth invita a consultare la prefazione a *Joseph Andrews* dell'amico Henry Fielding, riferendosi alla nota distinzione qui operata tra “comic” e “burlesque” (1977 [1742], 25-31). Con Fielding, il pittore condivide la preoccupazione per l'autorevolezza e lo status delle proprie opere, oltre all'intento di consolidare un canone letterario e artistico britannico che rifugga ovvie artificiosità e l'eccentricità tipica del carnevalesco.

I caricaturisti della “golden age” non cercano questo tipo di legittimazione: le immagini

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<sup>15</sup> Si veda <[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_1868-0822-1559](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1868-0822-1559)> (05/2023).

giocano sfacciatamente con una espressività visiva trasfigurante, stravagante, volutamente provocatoria e irriverente. In linea con le tendenze culturali del primo Ottocento, si assiste al manifestarsi di pulsioni spontanee e improvvise, di istinti anticonformisti che trasformano “the cumbersome allegorical habit of Hogarth’s imagination to lively visual metaphor” (Harvey 1970, 2). Secondo il liberalissimo *Examiner* di Leigh Hunt, la satira visiva del tempo permette persino di “‘move the heart in the cause of liberty’” (1820; in Haywood 2013, 5) perché sfida ogni forma di potere trasformando la rigida formalità del mondo politico in uno spettacolo grottesco e ridicolo. È in questa temperie destabilizzante che l’opera di Swift trova pieno accoglimento, grazie soprattutto alle analogie che legano le sue strategie di rappresentazione a quelle della caricatura; tra queste, l’uso di iperbole e distorsione quali modi privilegiati di espressione, l’individuazione immediata del simile nel dissimile, l’esasperazione di peculiarità fisiognomiche, il gioco di prospettiva e di percezione visiva in genere.

### 3. *Gulliver’s Travels* re-immaginato dalla satira visiva

Nelle stampe satiriche prodotte dagli ultimi anni del Settecento ai primi decenni dell’Ottocento, *Gulliver’s Travels* si fa icona dell’immaginario; il suo recupero mostra come l’originale investimento semantico sia trasferibile al contesto politico per mediare concetti di identità o alterità, conflitti di classe e valori collettivi. In genere, i richiami visivi o testuali al romanzo sono tasselli di un mosaico più complesso di riferimenti sia alla tradizione culturale sia alla situazione sociopolitica contingente; poi, questi tasselli sono innestati singolarmente in nuove composizioni all’interno di stampe successive, creando serie tematiche o reti di interconnessioni complesse. Nel concentrare l’attenzione esclusivamente su reimpieghi e adattamenti del romanzo di Swift, pertanto, mi sarà necessario trascurare molte di queste relazioni trasversali e spezzare evidenti “catene” stabilite tra caricature.

Dopo *The Punishment Inflicted on Lemuel Gulliver* di Hogarth, escludendo la riproposizione di questa stessa opera da parte di Robert Sayer in *The Political Clyster* nel 1757 (BMC Y,4.143), per incontrare nuovamente tracce del romanzo entro la satira visiva si deve attendere il 1786, che inaugura la prima di tre principali serie dedicate a temi di scottante attualità. Si discosta da queste serie solo *I. Frith the unfortunate stone-thrower, or a foolish throw for full pay* di William Dent (Figura 3; BMC 1868,0808.5810)<sup>16</sup>.



Figura 3 – William Dent, 1790<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Si veda <[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_1868-0808-5810](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1868-0808-5810)> (05/2023).

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L'incisione mette a confronto due “lanciatori di pietre”: a sinistra, lo “sfortunato” luogotenente John Frith, che scaglia una pietra contro la carrozza del re per protestare contro un ingiusto salario, è definito “Gulliver the little in Brobdingnag”; sulla destra, il “fortunato” Warren Hastings, che getta pietre preziose alla regina Charlotte e alla sua corte, è “Gulliver the great in Lilliput”. Hastings, governatore generale delle Indie orientali, è accusato di corruzione nel 1787 e sottoposto a un lungo processo che terminerà solo nel 1795 con la sua assoluzione – ma Dent già anticipa che egli si stia comprando la libertà. Per Frith, socialmente insignificante, si prevede, invece, un infausto destino, suggerito dal patibolo che si staglia in lontananza.

Il gioco delle proporzioni nei primi due libri di *Gulliver's Travels* è qui ripreso in modo quasi letterale per mettere in rilievo le iniquità sociali ed economiche, problematizzare gli ordini gerarchici e attaccare i meccanismi di giustizia. Da notare che la regina e le altre figure altolocate che si ammassano al suolo per raccogliere ingordamente le gemme richiamano gli Yahoos, “violently fond”, secondo Gulliver, di “certain *shining Stones*” che scavano dalla terra con cupidigia (GT 236). La condotta di Frith è repressibile e forse frutto di disturbo mentale, come suggerisce la mezzaluna che reca la scritta “Bedlam”, ma l'idea di alterità nell'opera non è associata alla sua follia, quanto piuttosto ai vizi animaleschi e alle storture morali dei regnanti e della loro corte.

Nel 1786, *Gulliver casting a Damper upon the royal Fireworks at Lilliput* di James Sayers (NPG D9692) ritrae il dirompente effetto del voto di Charles Cornwall, che spegne ogni entusiasmo del Parlamento sull'eventualità di costruire nuove fortificazioni allo stesso modo in cui Gulliver seda l'incendio a Mildendo<sup>18</sup>. Questa stampa inaugura un filone molto produttivo per la satira visiva, che si potrebbe definire il topos dell'*extinguisher* e che richiama, in varie forme, lo stesso episodio che già aveva alimentato l'immaginazione di Hogarth. In *The Royal Extinguisher or Gulliver Putting out the Patriots of Lilliput!!!* del 1795 (BMC 1868,0808.6487), Isaac Cruikshank rappresenta un gigantesco Pitt in divisa da guardia notturna che, a seguito dei “Gagging Acts”, soffoca la rivolta di una folla lillipuziana di sediziosi gesticolanti – mancano, però, riferimenti iconografici al sistema rabelaisiano descritto da Swift per spegnere il fuoco<sup>19</sup>. La frontiera da affrontare per questo Gulliver è quella tra schieramenti politici, che rappresentano una forma di alterità interna; le diverse proporzioni fisiche contrassegnano, anche in questo caso, le dinamiche di potere e i rapporti di forza. La legittimità delle azioni di governo non pare messa in discussione se non per la menzione del gesto profanatore di Gulliver, che lascia trapelare dubbi sulla natura “lordante” dell'operato di Pitt.

Nel 1819, il figlio di Isaac, George Cruikshank, tratta ancora il problema dei focolai di rivolta reimpiegando l'immaginario swiftiano, con il quale elabora un messaggio molto più instabile e contraddittorio. In *Smoak Jack the Alarmist, Extinguishing the Second Great Fire of London (a la Gulliver)!!!* (Figura 4; BMC 1868,0808.12908) ritrae un terrorizzato Atkins che, indossando un cappello da buffone, grida scompostamente mentre cerca di domare un incendio appiccato da minuscoli radicali con cartelli inneggianti al suffragio universale.<sup>20</sup> Il sindaco di Londra è definito un allarmista e schernito in quanto troppo pavido, come Gulliver a Lilliput, ma tra parola e immagine si avverte un parziale scollamento. Quello rappresentato visivamente,

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<sup>18</sup> Si veda <<https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw43213/Charles-Wolfran-Cornwall-Gulliver-casting-a-damper-upon-the-royal-fireworks-at-Lilliput>> (05/2023).

<sup>19</sup> Si veda <[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_1868-0808-6487](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1868-0808-6487)> (05/2023).

<sup>20</sup> Si veda <[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_1868-0808-12908](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1868-0808-12908)> (05/2023).

infatti, non è un pericolo immaginario: Atkins si trova solo davanti alla città in fiamme e provvisto di mezzi del tutto inadeguati a reprimere il fuoco dirompente, specie il debole getto del sottile idrante che stringe fra le ginocchia. Il riferimento a *Gulliver's Travels* rafforza l'allusione alle parti virili e, simbolicamente, indica mancanza di forza, potere e coraggio: Atkins non è in grado di tenere sotto controllo una folla che, dopotutto, potrebbe apparire piccola solo perché distante. George Cruikshank, quindi, introduce ampi margini di ambiguità interpretativa, perché, mentre ridicolizza l'eccesso di preoccupazione del sindaco, suggerisce che possa solo essere la peggior cosa contro una rivolta incontenibile.



Figura 4 – George Cruikshank, 12 ottobre 1819<sup>21</sup>

In *The Royal Extinguisher, or the King of Brobdingnag & the Lilliputians* (Figura 5; BMC 1862,1217.303), pubblicata nel 1821, sempre George Cruikshank reinterpreta la caricatura proposta dal padre ventisei anni prima mostrando, questa volta, un imponente e scultoreo George IV che affronta con uno spegnetto la folla di litigiosi lillipuziani, tra cui la regina Caroline.<sup>22</sup> All'apparente celebrazione dell'autorità reale è sottesa, di nuovo, una crisi dell'interpretazione, poiché tra i riottosi che si disperdono nella fuga disordinata si distingue un piccolo Don Chisciotte in armatura. Pochi personaggi sono in grado di catturare l'empatia del pubblico quanto quello di Cervantes, portatore di nobili valori in un mondo che gli è epistemologicamente ostile

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<sup>22</sup> Si veda <[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_1862-1217-303](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1862-1217-303)> (05/2023).



e martire nella vana lotta contro il nascente capitalismo.<sup>23</sup> Per usare le parole di Ronald Paulson, “Don Quixote uniquely presented a story in which Quixote is mad but the world that punishes him is bad” (1998, 21), e quest’ultimo aspetto è percepibile, nella stampa di Cruikshank, tanto nei sorrisi malefici dei ministri quanto nell’ostentazione di alterigia del re.



Figura 5 – George Cruikshank, 7 aprile 1821<sup>24</sup>

È utile ricordare che Isaac Cruikshank aveva ritratto Pitt nel ruolo di Gulliver, associandolo così alla “norma” attorno alla quale il resto del mondo subisce una deformazione prospettica e sulla cui base vengono definite le altre identità. Qui, invece, il sovrano inglese è il re di Brobdingnag, che denota sì una figura illuminata, patriottica e benevolmente paternalista, ma rappresenta anche l’alterità e la distorsione straniante; regna, inoltre, sul paese che nel romanzo di Swift meglio mostra come l’essere umano sia per natura “un amalgama insolubile di [...] bene e male” (Brilli 1985, 124). Così, caratterizzazione positiva e negativa sfumano e, mentre risulta chiaro che il sovrano e i suoi ministri abbiano la forza di prevalere nel conflitto, è meno evidente dove risiedano i giusti valori.

Il re di Brobdingnag è protagonista indiscusso di un secondo filone tematico di stampe satiriche dedicato alla rappresentazione dello straniero per eccellenza rispetto alla Gran Bretagna, la nazione francese. Ad anticipare alcuni elementi di questa serie è nuovamente Isaac

<sup>23</sup> Sin dalla Restaurazione l’opera di Cervantes è stata variamente reimpiegata dagli autori di satira, inclusi Hogarth e lo stesso Swift in *A Tale of a Tub*, per indicare errate convinzioni politiche, come mostra Ardila 2009, 9.

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Cruikshank, nel 1799, con *Genl. Swallow Destroying the French Army*, la cui didascalia specifica: “talk of Gullivers carrying off fifty ships at once, why it was nothing to him!” (BMC J,4.199)<sup>25</sup>. Del romanzo di Swift, oltre al richiamo nel titolo, si coglie solo il gioco di prospettive: un gigantesco e terrificante Aleksandr Suvorov domina le campagne militari contro i francesi calpestando soldati e infilzandoli con due enormi forchette per cibarsene. Il successo degli schieramenti russi in Italia e Svizzera è trasformato così in una brutale manifestazione di forza di una creatura mostruosa, vorace e ripugnante, che quasi invita a simpatizzare per l'esercito francese. Si fa strada l'idea che Cruikshank definisca l'identità nazionale in contrapposizione non solo ai nemici, ma anche ai suoi alleati, qui caratterizzati da un'accentuata alterità figurale.

Il maggio 1803 pone fine all'inquieta tregua sancita dal Trattato di Amiens e desta diffusi timori di un'invasione della Francia, che sta ora mobilitando ingenti flotte. Da queste tensioni scaturisce un'ondata di caricature antinapoleoniche che si riversa nella stampa satirica, a partire dalla notissima *The King of Brobdingnag and Gulliver* di James Gillray, datata 26 giugno 1803 (Figura 6; BMC 1861,1012.46), in cui George III ispeziona con il cannocchiale un minuscolo Bonaparte che si agita spavaldo sul palmo della sua mano<sup>26</sup>. David Francis Taylor ritiene che questa caricatura operi “pressing into patriotic service a fiction [*Gulliver's Travels*] that we are accustomed to thinking of resisting as allegory and denying readers the comfort of stable meaning” (2018, 189); mi pare, invece, che l'instabilità di significato sia ben presente nell'opera di Gillray, che non è univocamente patriottica. Certo, Napoleone è poco più di un fastidioso insetto tra le mani del sovrano inglese, a suggerire che non rappresenti un vero pericolo data la sua inferiorità militare e morale, ma è anche vero che la sua baldanza contrasta in modo poco rassicurante con l'immagine scarsamente energica e assertiva, o perfino gloriosamente ottusa di George III. Come per l'*extinguisher* di Cruikshank, inoltre, la forza antagonista che minaccia ordine e stabilità del paese è associata al protagonista dell'opera di Swift: anche a chi abbia meno familiarità con il romanzo risulta ovvio che Gulliver non solo riveste il ruolo più rilevante, ma è anche il rappresentante dell'identità nazionale della Gran Bretagna. Quindi, Gillray opera un'inversione del centro prospettico spostandolo sull'“altro”, la bellicista Francia, forse per avvicinare ciò che è lontano, addomesticare il diverso e rendere il potenziale pericolo una mera “Curiosity” (GT 95), come nel romanzo di Swift, o, più probabilmente, per lasciar intravedere un'identificazione estremamente problematica del proprio paese con il sovrano e con gli organi di potere.

Napoleone è di nuovo Gulliver a Brobdingnag in una miriade di stampe derivative che si diffondono nei mesi successivi alla caricatura di Gillray, ora di fatto nuovo ipotesto oggetto di imitazione. Lo stesso caricaturista propone una nuova versione di *The King of Brobdingnag and Gulliver* nel 1804, ritraendo i regnanti e la loro corte mentre osservano divertiti un minuscolo Bonaparte che manovra una barchetta all'interno di una vasca (BMC 1851,0901.1149)<sup>27</sup>; anche qui, come nota John Moores, i giganteschi sovrani “are not representative of the majority looking down upon Napoleon, rather Napoleon-cum-Gulliver represents the majority looking up to them” (2018, 260).

<sup>25</sup> Si veda <[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_J-4-199](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_J-4-199)> (05/2023).

<sup>26</sup> Si veda <[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_1861-1012-46](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1861-1012-46)> (05/2023).

<sup>27</sup> Si veda <[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_1851-0901-1149](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1851-0901-1149)> (05/2023).



Figura 6 – James Gillray, 26 giugno 1803<sup>28</sup>

Nell'agosto 1803, *Gulliver and his Guide. Or a Check String to the Corsican* di William Charles (BMC 1868,0808.7187) reimpiega vari elementi della stampa originale di Gillray, cui aggiunge un marinaio, simbolo della potenza navale inglese, che tiene al guinzaglio il piccolo Napoleone<sup>29</sup>. A citare Gillray è anche Isaac Cruikshank, nella stampa del 1807 *Gulliver towing the Fleet into Lilliput!* (BMC 1868,0808.7593), dove la Danimarca è biasimata per l'appoggio garantito alla Francia; qui, il ruolo di Gulliver è affidato all'ammiraglio James Gambier, mentre re George e Napoleone sono i meschini imperatori di Lilliput e Blefuscu<sup>30</sup>. In genere, quindi, anche quando sono inserite variazioni sul tema di Gillray, la satira corre su un doppio binario e colpisce entrambi i contendenti dal basso. Ad esempio, *The King's Dwarf Plays Gulliver a Trick* dello stesso Charles (BMC 1868,0808.7205) rappresenta Lord Kirkcudbright nei panni del

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<sup>29</sup> Si veda <[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_1868-0808-7187](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1868-0808-7187)> (05/2023).

<sup>30</sup> Si veda <[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_1868-0808-7593](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1868-0808-7593)> (05/2023).

dispettoso e insolente *Queen's dwarf* di Brobdingnag e denigra, così, tanto la minaccia napoleonica quanto la statura fisica e morale del Lord<sup>31</sup>.

Più originale è *The Little Princess and Gulliver* di Charles Williams, datata 21 ottobre 1803 (BMC 1868,0808.7206), dove è una gigantesca principessa Charlotte (Glumdalclitch) a misurarsi con Napoleone (Gulliver)<sup>32</sup>. Il francese, indifeso, si dibatte in una ciotola d'acqua ricordando il protagonista di Swift che rischia di annegare in una "Silver Bowl of Cream" dopo l'ennesima burla del nano di corte (*GT* 112); in quel caso, Glumdalclitch lo salva provvidenzialmente, mentre qui la bambina gli inveisce contro. Quando, però, quest'ultima sottolinea che "the Spirit and Indignation of every Girl in the Kingdom is roused at your Insolence", non si può fare a meno di pensare al disgusto provocato in Gulliver dalle donne di Brobdingnag e alla sua riflessione su "the fair Skins of our *English* Ladies, who appear so beautiful to us, only because they are of our own Size, and their Defects not to be seen but through a magnifying Glass" (*GT* 98-99). Williams, quindi, sembra invitare la nazione a riconoscere e non trascurare i propri difetti pure a fronte di un pericolo straniero.

Punto d'incontro dei filoni tematici sinora descritti è *Rainy Weather Master Noah* di Isaac Cruikshank, datata 28 luglio 1804 (BMC 1868,0808.7281), dove la personificazione di Britannia estingue i fuochi di guerra francesi tramite mezzi fisiologici.<sup>33</sup> Che l'associazione tra Gulliver e Britannia sia prevedibile non rende la stampa meno irriverente: di norma, questa figura femminile simboleggia il nobile e solenne spirito della nazione piuttosto che il suo popolo, connesso invece alla figura più prosaica di John Bull. Per auspicare il successo contro la Francia, dunque, Cruikshank fa confluire l'elemento popolare in quello elevato, scegliendo un'immagine che è demistificante e irriverente nei confronti del proprio paese prima ancora che verso i francesi.

La terza e ultima serie di stampe satiriche ottocentesche a reimpiegare elementi di *Gulliver's Travels*, che consta di sue sole opere, gioca sulla *Irishness* di Swift e si concentra sui rapporti tra Irlanda e Inghilterra. In *The Modern Gulliver Removing the P-rl-t of Lilliput* del 1800 (Figura 7; BMC 1868,0808.6848), James Aitkin (o Aitken) immagina comiche conseguenze dell'*Act of Union* ancora in via di approvazione ritraendo William Pitt come un esile Gulliver che trasporta a fatica il Parlamento irlandese da Dublino a Londra.<sup>34</sup> Mentre posa un piede (opportunisticamente?) su entrambe le terre, è incalzato dal basso da Henry Dundas, del quale sembra essere al comando. Sebbene l'intrico di riferimenti sia di difficile interpretazione, in questa immagine non pare di poter leggere, come nota Taylor, "both the considerable personal authority wielded by the prime minister and the ungainly size and seemingly insuperable power of the British state" (2018, 192).

<sup>31</sup> Si veda <[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_1868-0808-7205](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1868-0808-7205)> (05/2023). "Little Boney" era un epiteto per Napoleone introdotto da Gillray nel 1802, che ebbe ampissimo seguito nella stampa satirica.

<sup>32</sup> Si veda <[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_1868-0808-7206](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1868-0808-7206)> (05/2023).

<sup>33</sup> Si veda <[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_1868-0808-7281](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1868-0808-7281)> (05/2023).

<sup>34</sup> Si veda <[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_1868-0808-6848](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1868-0808-6848)> (05/2023).

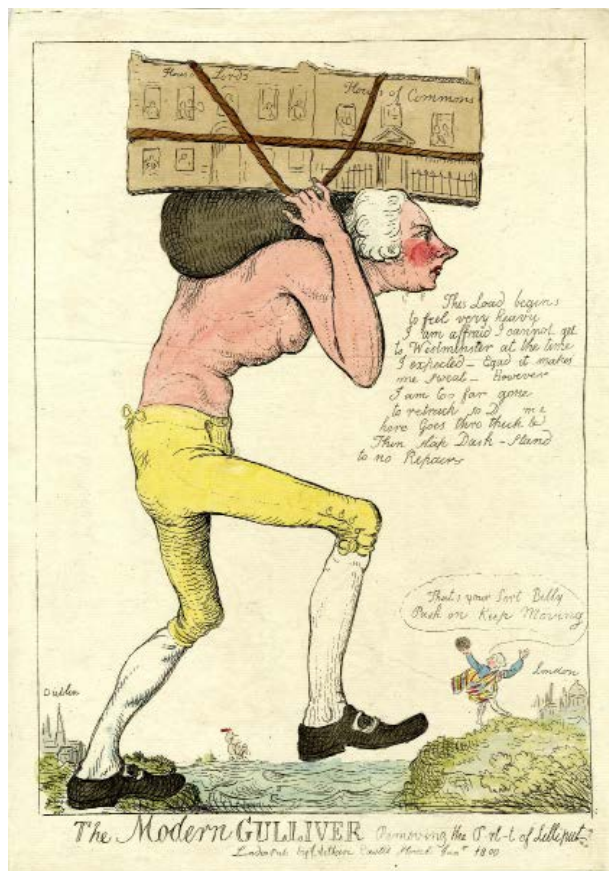


Figura 7 – James Aitkin (o Aitken), gennaio 1800<sup>35</sup>

Se l'Irlanda è Lilliput, la parimenti minuscola Inghilterra potrebbe essere Blefuscu, in un'inversione di ruoli tra colonizzatori e colonizzati: è, infatti, l'imperatore di Lilliput che contempla "reducing the whole Empire of *Blefuscu* into a Province, and governing it by a Viceroy" (*GT* 67), come da costume inglese. Forse, il riferimento va alla critica del colonialismo che chiude il romanzo di Swift; qui Gulliver, che già in precedenza aveva dichiarato "I would never be an Instrument of bringing a free and brave People into Slavery" (*ibidem*), scopre che "whatever Lands are discovered by a Subject, belong to the Crown", ma aggiunge, "[t]he *Lilliputians* [...] are hardly worth the Charge of a Fleet and Army to reduce them" (*GT* 263-264). Lo stesso sembra pensare l'esausto Pitt-Gulliver quando è oramai troppo tardi e rimpiange di essere "too far gone to retrach".

La seconda e ultima stampa della serie compare quando l'età dell'oro della caricatura è oramai al termine e ben rappresenta il declino dei suoi toni più provocatori e trasgressivi. L'11 marzo 1833, l'irlandese John Doyle ("H.B.") dà alle stampe una litografia che ritrae Daniel O'Connell nei panni di Gulliver al suo risveglio nella terra di Lilliput, *Gulliver in the toils of*

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*the Lilliputians* (NPG D41182)<sup>36</sup>. Il braccio sinistro di O'Connell è bersagliato da minuscole frecce come nel romanzo (*GT* 42), ma qui stringe anche in mano un documento intitolato "Repeal", la richiesta di abrogazione dell'*Act of Union*. L'aderenza all'immaginario e al testo originale di Swift è inedita e perseguita con tale accuratezza che, con l'esclusione di pochi dettagli, l'opera di Doyle potrebbe essere annoverata tra i suoi paratesti illustrativi. Lo stile del disegno si allontana significativamente da quello delle stampe sinora analizzate: non presenta elementi di deformazione o di grottesco, anzi, accentua le sfumature realistiche e la registrazione del dettaglio, concede poco all'invettiva caricaturale, al tratto pulsionale e istintivo – in linea con quanto Hogarth teorizza in *The Analysis of Beauty* (1753) ma mette in atto solo in parte. In effetti, è proprio a *The Punishment Inflicted on Lemuel Gulliver* che sembra riportarci questa immagine, in cui si incoraggia l'Irlanda a prendere coscienza della propria forza e non lasciarsi intimidire dalla violenta Inghilterra.

#### 4. *Il conservatorismo sovversivo delle stampe satiriche*

La caricatura dell'età dell'oro si compiace di una "intricacy" che travalica il concetto hogarthiano di linea serpentina (1955 [1753], 45) e richiede sia l'impegno percettivo di seguire le forme grafiche sia quello intellettuale di sciogliere una trama di simboli e significati che si fa quasi *plot* narrativo. Per denunciare l'ordine iniquo e l'ipocrisia morale della società coeva, inoltre, la satira visiva mobilita risorse espressive disparate, compresa la tradizione letteraria, a volte rievocata in nome di una "donchisciottesca" nostalgia di valori e modelli che sono oramai patrimonio del passato. In questo ambito, dato il suo impasto di codici linguistici e narrativi, *Gulliver's Travels* serve innanzi tutto da esempio di come la costruzione formale possa infrangere gli automatismi della comunicazione tramite la risemantizzazione e rifunzionalizzazione di un variegato serbatoio culturale e, quindi, farsi di per sé strumento corrosivo.

Le stampe satiriche accolgono come modello anche quella che Maristella Trulli definisce "l'ambiguità intrinseca della maschera, del *disguise*, la sua capacità di nascondere temporaneamente ciò che si vuole poi rivelare" (1990, 38). Il linguaggio delle maschere, infatti, è polisemico ed esposto alla fuga di senso, come si è visto nelle incisioni che dissimulano delle pulsioni sovvertitrici sotto il velame di un discorso apparentemente patriottico o conservatore. Lo statuto delle stampe satiriche, come del resto quello del romanzo di Swift, è nel suo complesso profondamente antiautoritario, poiché manifesta la propria dissidenza rispetto a uno scenario istituzionale per sua natura corrotto dall'arbitrarietà del potere; su questa base, poi, i caricaturisti articolano solitamente ulteriori e più specifiche finalità sociopolitiche, quali il commento rispetto a imminenti minacce di guerra, al mantenimento dell'ordine in caso di agitazioni interne o alle pratiche di dominazione.

A favorire la deriva di significato degli adattamenti grafici rispetto alla fonte sono anche le frequenti sequenze di rielaborazioni multiple, in cui il dialogo con *Gulliver's Travels* prende forma attraverso la mediazione di altri caricaturisti e delle loro reinterpretazioni. Che il processo di derivazione sia diretto o indiretto, tuttavia, gli artisti adottano sempre la forma della menzione esplicita, talvolta con citazione di brani del romanzo; la menzione, poi, può essere sviluppata attraverso un evidente duplice riferimento, testuale e visivo, oppure mantenere preminenza nel testo e mostrare un più vago riscontro nell'immagine. Degno di nota è, quindi, che il debito a

<sup>36</sup> Si veda <<https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw209952/Gulliver-in-the-Toils-of-the-Lilliputians>> (05/2023).

*Gulliver's Travels* venga di rado taciuto nelle componenti verbali delle stampe, forse per assicurarsi che il pubblico colga le allusioni, forse per giocare con significati nuovi senza dimenticare quelli che si nascondono dietro di essi. In ogni caso, il reimpiego della fonte letteraria è sempre parziale, perché seleziona gli elementi che più si prestano sul profilo iconografico e tende a trasporne solo talune dimensioni semantiche.

Mi pare, a questo proposito, che la precedente analisi lasci trasparire una netta predilezione dei caricaturisti per i primi due libri di *Gulliver's Travels*; il terzo non è mai preso in considerazione, il quarto solo in modo molto marginale. Vengono reimpiegati, inoltre, gli elementi del contenuto che meglio si prestano a una riproposizione iconografica, nonché quelle figure (attori e azioni) che nell'economia di senso della narrazione acquisiscono l'investimento semiotico più importante o esercitano l'impatto più immediato sul pubblico. Le diverse proporzioni dei personaggi nei primi due libri del romanzo, ad esempio, si fanno rappresentazione di variabile peso sociale, pericolosità militare, statura morale e così via, in un procedimento di riduzione e semplificazione della fonte che nasce da una *misreading* intenzionale e che procede per via analogica. Il meccanismo adottato dalla satira visiva, in effetti, è inverso rispetto a quello dell'interpretazione ermeneutica, rivolta ad applicare al testo delle strutture concettuali come strumento chiarificatore; qui, è il romanzo che viene impiegato per illustrare e spiegare delle strutture concettuali, per richiamare l'attenzione su meccanismi di pensiero o di relazione oramai normalizzati e fossilizzati.

La satira visiva della "golden age", pertanto, non solo recepisce l'opera di Swift come aperta a costante riattualizzazione, ma vi individua anche delle coordinate ideologiche e iconografiche utili a definire i meccanismi culturali che generano condizioni di alterità e di disparità. *Gulliver's Travels* assurge, così, a testo socialmente simbolico perché alcuni dei suoi procedimenti di inversione e distorsione si fanno modelli universali delle dinamiche di potere e della loro insensatezza. Il romanzo è una base allegorica ideale per parlare di una società formulata in modo gerarchico, secondo principi di "dimensione" e "statura" che stravolgono la figura umana, alterando la percezione del sé e degli altri – perché il potere non è una forza esterna agli individui, ma li permea. Già nel rappresentare in questi termini la struttura tassonomica della cultura, le stampe satiriche mostrano il proprio potenziale decostruttivo.

Tornando ai meccanismi comunicativi, anche in questo ambito i caricaturisti ottocenteschi mettono in crisi o persino abbattano varie convenzioni consolidate. Come già nota Werner Hofmann rispetto all'opera di Daumier, quando la stampa satirica dipinge l'antagonismo di "buoni" verso "cattivi" ci si attenderebbe di riscontrare chiari segnali, fisiognomici o altrimenti, ad indicare un contrasto convincente, ma spesso tratti dignitosi e ridicoli sono distribuiti in modo equo, a confondere il pubblico piuttosto che a guidarlo (1983, 362). Questo avviene, a mio avviso, perché la satira visiva invita ad assumere una prospettiva multipla, vale a dire ad osservare contemporaneamente l'altro dal proprio punto di vista e se stessi dalla posizione dell'altro. La compresenza di più prospettive entro la stessa opera caldeggia un atteggiamento di dubbio sistematico verso il pensiero dicotomico o la verità ontologica, e rimane inconciliabile con qualsiasi spirito di orgoglio nazionalistico. È secondo tale principio che Napoleone si trasforma in Gulliver, e particolarmente in quel Gulliver che, nel romanzo di Swift, non riesce a contenere la repulsione davanti alla mostruosità e alla mancanza di decoro dei giganteschi abitanti di Brobdingnag.

Buona parte delle stampe satiriche analizzate in queste pagine vibrano sferzate simultaneamente da tutti i lati, criticando l'esterno e l'interno del paese, gli agitatori e l'ordine costituito, i contestatori e i contestati. Sono in grado di farlo perché "i vecchi segni non scompaiono: sdoppiano il proprio senso, lo tradiscono, lo deformano – ma non se ne vanno" (Moretti 2003,

83), o in altre parole, perché il bagaglio di implicazioni del romanzo di Swift, rimanendo ancorato ai suoi adattamenti iconografici, apre il segno alla pluralità interpretativa. Paradigmatiche di questa idea mi sembrano le azioni intraprese da Gulliver per salvare il palazzo di Mildendo, forse l'episodio che più spesso ispira la satira visiva. Nel romanzo, il gesto mette in luce una frizione tra i valori del protagonista e quelli della popolazione che lo ospita: con il suo senso pratico e utilitaristico, Gulliver sente di aver efficacemente risolto una situazione critica, eppure è un profanatore per i lillipuziani, secondo i quali, nonostante le sue buone intenzioni, ha contaminato qualcosa di inviolabile.

In un certo senso, i caricaturisti dell'età dell'oro si pongono in una condizione analoga, pur senza l'ingenuità di Gulliver; a prima vista appoggiano il sovrano e gli organi di governo nella politica interna ed estera, mentre al contempo li dissacrano e sollevano dubbi sulla legittimità della loro condotta. I riferimenti alla contaminazione si rivelano particolarmente utili ad esprimere sospetto su un contesto politico guasto e pervaso di duplicità dietro la facciata rispettabile. Nella maggior parte delle stampe sul tema dell'*extinguisher* è percepibile, infatti, una sfiducia di base nei confronti di un sistema che "sporca" nell'esercizio del potere, sebbene le sue azioni siano presentate come valorosa difesa mirata al mantenimento della stabilità e delle istituzioni.

A prendere il posto di Gulliver, in definitiva, è il pubblico della satira visiva, che con il personaggio condivide la stessa ammirevole incapacità di comprendere e giudicare quello che ha davanti agli occhi nonostante lo misuri, pesi e quantifichi con tanta diligenza. L'incertezza dell'osservatore è alimentata dall'intersezione di significati contrastanti e di prospettive discordi, un incontro che produce l'ignoto – uno spazio che, come si suggeriva in precedenza, è provvisto di regole proprie e libero da qualsiasi autorità.

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## Yeats as a Folklorist: *The Celtic Twilight* and Irish Folklore

Vito Carrassi

Independent Scholar (<[vito1976@interfree.it](mailto:vito1976@interfree.it)>)

### *Abstract:*

W.B. Yeats was one of the greatest Irish poets and dramatist, but he also had a key role in Irish folklore. What is more, most of his works are significant and original examples of a fruitful “encounter” between folklore and literature. The young Yeats was directly concerned with the collection and the publication of folklore. Initially he worked as an editor (*Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* [1888], *Irish Fairy Tales* [1892]), drawing his material from authors who had collected the oral Irish tradition throughout the nineteenth century; yet his approach was very critical, and was meant to fashion his personal idea of Ireland’s folklore. With *The Celtic Twilight* (1893), Yeats became a noticeable folklorist, who addressed his material according to views and goals that were quite distant from the objective and detached methods of the ethnographic research of his times. Hence, are we legitimized to regard Yeats as a folklorist, despite his imaginative and “creative” use of folklore? How can his methodology be evaluated?

*Keywords:* Fieldwork, Folklore, Oral Tradition, Storytelling, W.B. Yeats

According to *Greenwood Encyclopedia* “ ‘Folklore’ refers to the academic study of folklore, also known as folkloristics, as well as to certain types of expressive culture” (Lau 2008, 359). Hence, folklore is meant both as a specific form of culture and as the discipline devoted to its study<sup>1</sup>. Coined by William Thoms in 1846, this term literally denotes “ ‘the lore of the people’ ”, and it includes “ ‘the manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs, etc., of the olden times’ ” (Lau 2008, 359; see also Ó Giolláin 2000, 46-48). However, Lau clarifies that “to date, there has been no consensus as to how ‘folklore’ should be defined” (2008, 359)<sup>2</sup>. On the other

<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive history of the concept and methodology of folklore see Dundes 1999.

<sup>2</sup> For a critical and postmodernist discussion about folklore – an approach perhaps more fitting for understanding Yeats as a folklorist – see, for instance,

hand, if one traces back the roots of folklore as an academic discipline in the Romantic era, and especially in J.G. Herder's theories about *das Volk* (2020), a key role in defining its nature and function necessarily pertains to its social and subjective component – the “folk” (Dundes 1980) –, namely, the lower classes of society. These are seen as the main bearers of the “lore”, which is intended as a traditional, alternative, usually underestimated and overlooked culture – at least until the Romantic era – compared to the modern, learned, official culture of the elites and ruling classes. Accordingly, folklore can be seen as a specific cultural heritage, that establishes a sort of subaltern and dialectical pole<sup>3</sup> within the broader cultural heritage making up a nation or a national identity under construction<sup>4</sup>. Since the Romantic period, this cultural heritage has been seen, as something both so precious – notably from a nationalist perspective (cf. Ó Giolláin 2000, 63-93; Anttonen 2005, 79-94) – and precarious – as it was handed down by oral tradition – to require learned people entrusted with discovering, collecting and adequately enhancing it. These people would be called folklorists, that is, students of folklore, although a number of them were artists, writers, intellectuals, even politicians who worked *also* as folklorists, especially in the nineteenth century. In other words, folklore was – and in part it still is – often practiced and used as a complementary and ideologically oriented subject matter (Anttonen 2005, 95-113).

Based on these theoretical premises, what kind of relationship, if any, can be recognized between folklore as a (scientific) discipline and a writer like W.B. Yeats? Is there anything connecting him to the study of folklore, or more precisely, the study of the oral traditions of his country? In a sense, W.B. Yeats was not a folklorist, or better, his work as a researcher, collector and editor of Irish folklore was not exactly what we would expect from a folklorist. Björn Sundmark stresses how some prominent folklorists, such as Andrew Lang and Alfred Nutt, criticized Yeats and his *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* for their lack of scientificity and objectivity and for preferring a subjective aestheticism over... (2006, 102). In Kevin Danaher's opinion, “it is hard to find anything Irish in Mr. Yeats, or anything of the ordinary people with whom, indeed, he had sympathy, but whom he never understood” (Dundes 1999, 50). According to Neil Grobman:

[...] his own activities in the field [of folklore] had artistic creation, not scientific scholarship or authenticity, as their main goal. [...] From a modern point of view [...] the greatest weakness in Yeats' collecting was the relative absence of ethnographic detail. Yeats rarely identified the names of informants<sup>5</sup> or localities from which he had gathered material, and rarely gave us a feeling for the lives of his informants, the kinds of situations in which stories are told, or the different ways individuals used traditional material. (1974, 117-118)

Clemente, Mugnaini 2001, in particular R. Schenda's contribution (73-88), R. Bauman (99-109), H. Bausinger (145-158), K. Köstlin (167-186). See also Anttonen 2005; Bausinger 2008.

<sup>3</sup> As famously stated by Antonio Gramsci, folklore should be studied as a “ ‘concept of the world and life’ largely implied in defined layers of the society, in contraposition [...] to the ‘official’ world concepts (or, in a larger sense, of the cultured parts of historically defined societies) which have happened through the history” (1950, 215; unless otherwise stated all translations are mine).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Ó Giolláin: “ ‘Folk’ was a projection of an idealized peasant society onto the nation. [...] The opposition of tradition to modernity led to the Romantic idea of the ‘folk’, contrasted to cosmopolitan groups and with the modern urban proletariat in national society” (2000, 58-59).

<sup>5</sup> As regards this lack of data about informants, Björn Sundmark argues: “Yeats has been criticised by earlier folklorists, Richard Dorson, for example, for not always identifying his informants, but the reason is that as a believer himself, or at any rate as someone with great respect for fairy belief (and their believers), Yeats considered it harmful to reveal the true names of his informants” (2006, 104).

And yet, in a different sense, Yeats was indeed a folklorist, or better, his work in the field of folklore had a key, invaluable impact on the history of Irish folklore, as well as on the rise and the dissemination of folklore in Irish society, culture, and above all literature – as exemplified by his contribution to the Irish Literary Revival (O'Connor 1999; Mathews 2003). Diarmuid Ó Giolláin includes Yeats among the “Irish Pioneers” of folklore, together with T.C. Croker, D. Hyde, Lady Gregory and J.M. Synge (2000, 104-106). Grobman himself notes that “W.B. Yeats’ interest in folklore played an important part in the development of folklore studies in Ireland. As a man of great personal energy and charisma, he was certainly capable of stimulating and supporting others to carry out systematic folklore research” (1974, 117).

Surely, Yeats did not tackle with the issue of Irish folklore through an objective, scientific perspective. His views and purposes were definitely at odds with those of a (theoretically) faithful and neutral ethnographic account<sup>6</sup>. First of all, he was a poet, an artist, an occultist, and a cultural activist; as such, he addressed his own field of research. On the other hand, and as argued by John W. Foster: “The scientific method was more offensive to Yeats than literary appropriation, perhaps because that method suggested to him a skepticism, at best neutrality, towards supernaturalism. Belief and poetry were to Yeats inseparable [...]” (1987, 208).

It could be argued that Yeats was a folklorist *de facto*, more than a folklorist *de iure*. In other words, his approach to Irish folklore was quite different from that of a *disinterested* and *orthodox* scholar of folklore, due to cultural, literary, and political reasons. However, this divergence from a positivist and objective paradigm makes his ideas and practices so interesting from an epistemological and methodological point of view. I would argue that it allows us to critically and productively review our assumptions about what folklore is and how a folklorist should deal with it and its bearers. Through his empathetic proximity – actual or ideal – to the world of peasants and their traditions, along with his more or less subjective and creative editing and use of Irish folklore, Yeats makes us reflect on the relationships a folklorist should have with his/her informants and their living context, as well as on the distance from which he/she should observe the folk traditions. These are usually collected to be *merely* recorded and preserved within learned books or institutional archives, where they are turned into fixed and unalterable items, which are then classified according to the paradigms of their “external discoverers” (Honko 2003 [1991], 34), thus ceasing to exist as performable and variable events framed in a living context<sup>7</sup>. As argued in an earlier work, from a “connected” or “re-connected” thing, folklore is made an “isolated” one (Carrassi 2017, 7).

However, what if a folklorist would look upon his material as an event to perform anew, rather than as an item to classify and to archive? What if he/she would consider that material not just as something *definitive* to be collected and taken away from its context in its *authentic* and *untouched* form, but rather as something *provisional* to be collected and, nonetheless, liable to be *subjectively* appropriated and potentially modified, perhaps through a *creative* blending of his/her own beliefs, ideas, stories with those found on the field? In other words, what kind of approach would be more suitable and useful to achieve a full and truthful understanding

<sup>6</sup> According to Nitai Saha: “Yeats despised traditional ethnographic practice and is thus better classified as a mystic rather than as a folklorist” (2014, 102). On the other hand, Yeats regarded folklore as a precious source of mysticism, of supernatural figures, events and beliefs, therefore he contended that “the folklorist should not be alone in interpreting peasant supernatural beliefs, but that the occultist was as well qualified to do so”; in his opinion, “the occult was ‘an enlargement of the folklore of the villages’ ” (Ó Giolláin 2000, 104).

<sup>7</sup> As pointed out by Mary H. Thuente: “[Yeats] railed against scientific folk-lore which treated what he considered living things as specimens not to be felt or allowed to penetrate the present” (1981, 71).

of the historical nature and cultural function of folklore, not simply of its incidental forms and verbatim expressions? These are burning issues for folklore scholars, and for a folklorist *sui generis* as the young Yeats was. As noted by Mary H. Thuente:

Yeats's own work as a folklorist illustrates [...] conflict in Irish folklore between *scholarly accuracy and poetic imagination*. His *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* [...] reflects his search for an *imaginative yet authentic depiction* of Irish folklore which avoided the extremes of a ponderous scientific air on the one hand, and a bogus stage-Irish charm on the other. (1977, 71, my emphasis)

“Scholarly accuracy” vs. “poetic imagination”, “authentic vs. imaginative”: between these opposite poles Yeats was one of the first intellectuals who looked for a sort of liminal (maybe utopian) middle-ground, where two different perspectives on folklore (scholarly and poetic) and two different ways of collecting, archiving and using it (authenticity<sup>8</sup> and (re)creativity) may coexist (Dundes 1999, 47).

As an editor of two major folk narrative anthologies early in his career – *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (1888) and *Irish Fairy Tales* (1892) – Yeats provided a critical overview of the main Irish collectors and collections of nineteenth century, while trying to find his own way and to sketch his own idea of folklore<sup>9</sup>. Having “decided to make himself an ‘Irish’ writer” (Thuente 1977, 64), he turned to Irish folklore, thus discovering “a rich, eclectic literary tradition which he could and did use for his own purposes” (78). In his view, folklore was already literature, though “the literature of a class [...] who have steeped everything in the heart: to whom everything is a symbol”, as he writes in the introduction to his first anthology. Accordingly, it became essential to take the beliefs and narratives collected among the Irish peasants seriously and carefully, for they provided much more than “light entertainment or [...] antiquarian curiosity” (76), as can be grasped from many of the pre-Yeatsian collections. The young Yeats, instead, looked at Irish folklore as a really valuable and promising *other world* – especially if compared to the modern, “realist” and “naturalist” world of the end of the nineteenth century<sup>10</sup>. This different world deserves to be kept alive and meaningful, also through its creative reworking, all the more if similarities and correspondences emerge, or seem to emerge, between the folklorist and his field of research.

In this respect, we need to turn to the first work of Yeats as a firsthand collector, *The Celtic Twilight*, whose first edition was published in 1893, with the subtitle *Men and Women, Dhoulas and Fairies* (a second, expanded and revised edition was published in 1902). Indeed, this is a quintessentially hybrid work, a *sui generis* blending of firsthand fieldwork (legends, folktales, anecdotes, life stories) and autobiographical memories, talks, spiritual experiences, commentaries, essays, poems<sup>11</sup>. A wide variety of textual materials (43 chapters) was organized accord-

<sup>8</sup> Can authenticity and folklore properly co-exist? “If we take it that folklore is deeply characterised by processes of diachronic mutation and synchronic multiplicity, then nobody and nothing is able, and allowed, to state what is authentic and what is not: all cultural items, phenomena, practices are equally legitimated by the sheer fact of existing” (Carrassi 2018, 174). For a comprehensive and critical analysis of this ambivalent and controversial concept see Bendix 1997.

<sup>9</sup> For a specific and in-depth analysis of these two works let me refer to a specific article published in this same journal: Carrassi 2014.

<sup>10</sup> “Let us listen humbly to the old people telling their stories, and perhaps God will send the primitive excellent imagination into the midst of us again. Why should we be either ‘naturalists’ or ‘realists?’” (Yeats 1893, 189).

<sup>11</sup> As brilliantly summarized by J.W. Foster, *The Celtic Twilight* “gives us what Yeats has heard (folk testimonies and traditions), what he has seen (firsthand experiences and visions), and what he thinks (commentary and speculation)” (1987, 236).

ing to deeply personal and subjective criteria, where one can hardly discern a unity (Kinahan 1983), but which vividly suggests the author's intolerance of all sorts of boundaries, outlines, taxonomies, for fear that they could embalm and wither Irish traditions and their bearers. As mentioned previously, Yeats strives to keep folklore a living and meaningful stuff.

Not surprisingly, therefore, "[he] was the first major talent of the Irish revival to contemplate fiction's respectful emulation and appropriation of folklore, to let art vie with science and popularization in recognition of the productions of the peasantry" (Foster 1987, 236). In his search for a third way<sup>12</sup>, which would be different both from a strictly scientific approach as well as from a simple-minded and irresponsible divulgation, Yeats was able to give folklore its right and legitimate value. In a letter of 1890 sent to the editor of the journal *The Academy*, Yeats seemed to reject, or more precisely, to lessen the importance and the usefulness of a meticulous, "honest" scholarly work; but he also suggested a concrete and contemporary role model embodying his ideal of folklorist, which would show the actual viability of a different kind of science:

I deeply regret when I find that some folk-lorist is merely scientific, and lacks the needful subtle imaginative sympathy to tell his stories well. [...] The man of science is too often a person who has exchanged his soul for a formula; and when he captures a folk-tale, nothing remains with him for all his trouble but a wretched lifeless thing [...]. *I object to the 'honest folk-lorist', not because his versions are accurate, but because they are inaccurate, or rather incomplete.* [...] To me, the ideal folklorist is Mr. Douglas Hyde. A tale told by him is quite as accurate as any 'scientific' person's rendering; but in dialect and so forth he is careful to give us the most quaint, or poetical, or humorous version he has heard. (Qtd. in Dundes 1999, 48, my emphasis)

Ultimately, Yeats believed that folklorists, are just as fallible as any other scholars and researchers<sup>13</sup>. This is because their work is incomplete, as they are unable to reveal the deep soul, the inner truth of a folk narrative, as well as its imaginative, spiritual and living power. In other words, Yeats claimed that a folklorist should not be merely an observer, or taxonomist of the phenomena discovered on the field, but rather, someone who is able to recognize the hidden and deeper meanings thereby becoming part of the field itself. This also involves attuning his/her own mind to that of his/her informants to interpret these meanings. Yeats was somehow anticipating the so-called "interpretive turn" in postmodern anthropology (Bachmann-Medick 2016, 39-72) as well as the realed paradigm of "thick description" (Geertz 1973).

In the introductory chapter to *The Celtic Twilight*, entitled "This book", Yeats explains the ideas and goals of his work as folklorist, elucidating his personal attempt to embody a different kind of folklorist – then to suggest, from his point of view, a less fallible approach to folklore. More precisely, he defines himself as an "artist" wishing "to create a little world out of the beautiful, pleasant, and significant things of this *marred and clumsy world*, and to show *in a vision something of the face of Ireland to any of my own people* who would look where I bid them" (Yeats 1902, 1, my emphasis, hereafter *CT*). It is made immediately clear that Ireland, or better Irish folklore, which is made up of "beautiful, pleasant and significant things", is the

<sup>12</sup>About the encounter between orality and literature made possible by the medium of folklore collections, John D. Niles argues for a "Third" realm of literature – that is, the category that is neither oral nor written in nature, but that exists in a half-understood, betwixt-and-between zone that is bordered on one side by oral performance *per se* and on the other by elite literature" (2013, 234).

<sup>13</sup>I borrow the concept of fallibility of folklorists from a conference I attended in 2017 at the university of Tartu, entitled "Folklorists are fallible".

core of the book, and that its audience are the Irish people (“my own people”) who need to be led to discover an unknown world. In addition, Yeats aims at creating another world out of that world, a little and distinctive world which is offered not as a general, common collection of folk traditions, but rather, which stands out as a personal, significant “vision”, where folklore is seen through the more or less distorting eyes of a visionary.

In the following lines Yeats clarifies his aims and his methods:

I have therefore *written down accurately and candidly much that I have heard and seen*, and, except by way of commentary, *nothing that I have merely imagined*. I have, however, been at no pains to *separate my own beliefs from those of the peasantry*<sup>14</sup>, but have rather let my men and women, dhoul and faeries, go their way *unoffended or defended by any argument of mine*. The things a man has heard and seen are threads of life, and if he pull them carefully from the confused distaff of memory, any who will *can weave them into whatever garments of belief please them best*. (*Ibidem*, my emphasis)

Here, we are introduced to three major features of the book:

1) Yeats’s work on Irish folklore resembles that of an accurate and faithful collector, who has recorded first hand experiences neutrally, and not through his individual imagination;

2) this work is still different from what a scholar (safely) distant from his informants, and who has been able to separate his learned, rational thinking from the traditional, superstitious beliefs of the peasantry would do. As an artist more than a scholar, as an occultist more than a folklorist, Yeats recognizes his closeness to that magic and mysterious world which has been disclosed, before him by the “lore” of the “folk” he met on the field. Accordingly, not only the men and women, but also supernatural beings evoked by their stories are given full freedom of expressing themselves, with no intellectual commentary;

3) Once stored in our own memories, all the things we have seen, heard, known, lived – hence all the beliefs, experiences and stories a folklorist has collected during his fieldwork – become, consciously or unconsciously, available to be re-fashioned, re-created, re-lived according to our own values, needs, aims, so as we may “weave” something more or less different from the original ones, yet fitting with the new and changing contexts where we happen to operate.

These are the key principles Yeats conformed to, or claims to have conformed to, in his work as a folklorist. Right or wrong, suitable or unsuitable, reliable or unreliable as they could seem, what really counts is how they are applied throughout the book. To this end, I have selected just a few excerpts from *The Celtic Twilight* which, in my opinion, can help us to exemplify and understand the *modus operandi* of Yeats on the field and in collecting and transcribing his ethnographic records.

In the chapter “A Teller of Tales” we read:

Many of the tales in this book were told me by one Paddy Flynn, a little bright-eyed old man, who lived in a leaky and one-roomed cabin in the village of Ballisodare, which is, he was wont to say, ‘the most gentle’ – whereby he meant faery – ‘place in the whole of County Sligo’. [...] He was indeed always cheerful, though I thought I could see in his eyes [...] a melancholy which was well-nigh a portion of his joy; *the visionary melancholy of purely instinctive natures and of all animals*. (*CT*, 4, my emphasis)

This is the first chapter that Yeats devotes to describing and contestualizing one of his informants, just like a scholarly folklorist, though his style is more sketchy and poetic, while distancing

<sup>14</sup> On this point cf. Sundmark: “[t]his anticipates the kind of self-reflexive and autobiographical ethnographic writing that has emerged in the field of ethnography and social anthropology since the 1980s” (2006, 106).

himself from an ethnographic approach. Yeats is not a scholarly folklorist. For him, it is fundamentele to view the storyteller as a visionary, the bearer of a higher knowledge, thereby to suggest a profound affinity between the informant and the peculiar type of folklorist he ultimately is.

In the second chapter, “Belief and Unbelief”, Yeats writes:

One woman told me last Christmas that she did not believe either in hell or in ghosts. [...] ‘but there are faeries’, she added, ‘and little leprechauns, and water-horses, and fallen angels’. [...] No matter what one doubts one never doubts the faeries, for, as the man with the mohawk Indian on his arm said to me, ‘they stand to reason’. (CT, 8)

Through the views expressed on the field by his informants, Yeats aims at establishing the folk paradigm upon which his “little world” will take shape. This leaves no doubt, therefore, about the consistency and even the rationality of the existence of fairies, as well as the legitimacy of believing in them – unlike, significantly, the beliefs related to the religious sphere – simply because this is what the folklorist has picked from the people met on the field. Fairies and fairylore are thus depicted not as issues to be objectively address and and question, but as crucial beliefs of an imaginative, visionary worldview, which must be accepted in itself, though it may seem distant from the folklorist and the paradigms he has learned<sup>15</sup>.

Yeats, however, is a different kind of folklorist. His beliefs are not so distant from those of his informants. His faith in the imaginative and visionary worldview expressed by the Irish folklore is further confirmed and deepened in the following lines, taken from the chapter “Enchanted Woods”. Here, Yeats highlights the radical distance between ourselves, the modern and enlightened men, from the simple and wise people, with their ancient and different worldviews:

I say to myself, when I am well out of that thicket of argument, that they are surely there, the divine people, for only we who have neither simplicity nor wisdom have denied them, and the simple of all times and the wise men of ancient times have seen them and spoken to them. (CT, 108)

In “Dust Hath Closed Helen’s Eye”, again, we find a remark with an ethnographic flavour. Although conscious of the limitations and deficiencies of his memory, Yeats stresses the importance of collecting oral narratives on the field. More importantly, he stresses the key role of an accurate transcription through which we can get a faithful and effective preservation of the oral tradition:

When I was in a northern town awhile ago I had a long talk with a man who had lived in a neighbouring country district when he was a boy. [...] *I wish I had written out his words at the time, for they were more picturesque than my memory of them.* (CT, 48-49, my emphasis)

The accuracy in transcribing the oral narratives is an issue further emphasized when it concerns a second-hand fieldwork. In “The Friends of the People of Faery”, Yeats gets an account from a friend, who asks the informant to repeat her oral performance, just to provide a faithful and reliable transcription of a story previously heard. Later on in the book, this is turned into a written record:

A friend has sent me from Ulster an account of one who was on terms of true friendship with the people of faery. It has been taken down accurately, for my friend, who had heard the old woman’s story some time before I heard of it, got her to tell it over again, and wrote it out at once. (CT, 198)

<sup>15</sup> As argued by Kathleen Raine in her introduction to *The Celtic Twilight*, “there is, in these gleanings and reflections of the young poet a quality of simplicity, of innocence. There is in them nothing of the amused detachment of the collector of ‘folklore’, still less of the unamused detachment of the anthropologist” (Yeats 1981, 19).



Interestingly, on the field, one may find evidence of a sort of “literary awareness” by the folklore bearers. They seem to recognize, in their oral traditions, an aesthetical value that only a poet such as Yeats could turn into a literary work, so as to highlight the artistic potential implied in folklore. In other words, Yeats is legitimizing his own work as a request coming from below: “[w]hen the old man had finished the story, he said, ‘Tell that to Mr. Yeats, he will make a poem about it, perhaps’ ” (*CT*, 60). Paradoxically, Yeats himself declines such an explicit request, recognizing that both his poetry and his mind are not always able to conceive a work that expresses the beauty and the significance of an oral narrative:

Alas! I have never made the poem, perhaps because my own heart, which has loved Helen and all the lovely and fickle women of the world, would be too sore. There are things it is well not to ponder over too much, things that bare words are the best suited for. (*Ibidem*)

In the chapter “The Old Town”, like elsewhere in the book, Yeats describes what he actually does and has to do as a field researcher, including his long walks across the countryside and the villages in search of people with stories to tell. Nevertheless, his focus quickly shifts toward the consequences of the collected stories on his mind and imagination. He therefore emphasizes a subjective involvement in his field of research while rejecting the objective distance of a scholarly folklorist. His field is not merely observed but also personally lived, something that speaks directly to him as a man:

I fell, one night some fifteen years ago, into what seemed the power of faery.

I had gone with a young man and his sister [...] *to pick stories out of an old countryman*; and we were coming home talking over what he had told us. It was dark and our imaginations were excited by his stories of apparitions, and this may have brought us, unknown to us, to the *threshold, between sleeping and waking*, where Sphinxes and Chimaeras sit open-eyed and where there are always murmurings and whisperings. (*CT*, 137, my emphasis)

On the other hand, it is not always necessary to leave home to be able to find what Yeats as a folklorist expects from his fieldwork. For instance, in the chapter “Drumcliff and Rosses”, he writes that these lands “were, are, and ever shall be, please Heaven! *places of unearthly resort*” (*CT*, 148, my emphasis). That is to say, in Yeats’ view, that these are the most promising and productive contexts for a researcher in the field of folklore, or better, in the “unearthly” and visionary side of the Irish folklore, namely the only genre of folklore Yeats really takes into account: needless to say, he deliberately and programmatically acts as a selective folklorist<sup>16</sup>. In fact, having “lived near by them and in them” (*ibidem*), and because his “forebears and relations have lived near Rosses and Drumcliff” (*CT*, 158), he acknowledges having “gathered thus many a crumb of faery lore” (*CT*, 148). Later on in the chapter, he provides further details about his fieldwork, describing, for instance, a concrete and direct experience as a listener in a storytelling session. He focuses clearly on one of the countless and endlessly repeated stories of the “good people”, but also on the role played by the storytellers and the oral transmission in preserving and keeping alive the narrative tradition:

One night I sat eating Mrs. H — ’s soda-bread, her husband told me a longish story, much the best of all I heard in Rosses. Many a poor man from Finn M’Cool to our own days has had some such adventure to tell of, for those creatures, the ‘good people’, love to repeat themselves. At any rate the story-tellers do. (*CT*, 152)

<sup>16</sup> Admittedly, all the scholars working on the field, including the folklorists, whether consciously or not, act as selective collectors, according to the principles, paradigms, goals, values and so on guiding their researches.

Perhaps in the last chapter, “By the Roadside” Yeats is able to better summarize his ideas about folklore, oral traditions, popular worldview and, consequently, to explain his interest in this field. They are certainly more the ideas of an artist than those of a folklorist, as shown when he refers to “folk art” as “the oldest of the aristocracies of thought”. Nevertheless, he is an artist who, for better or worse, has left one of the most intense and significant testimonies of concern and involvement in folklore. The following is a remarkable reenactment and evaluation, though idealized and romanticized<sup>17</sup>, of folklore as a complex historical and cultural phenomenon:

There is no song or story handed down among the cottages that has not words and thoughts to carry one as far, for though one can know but a little of their ascent, one knows that they ascend like medieval genealogies through unbroken dignities to the beginning of the world. Folk art is, indeed, the oldest of the aristocracies of thought, and because it refuses what is passing and trivial, the merely clever and pretty, as certainly as the vulgar and insincere, and because it has gathered into itself the simplest and unforgettable thoughts of the generations, it is the soil where all great art is rooted. (*CT*, 232-233)

In order to try to formulate a conclusive interpretation of Yeats as a folklorist, I find the following opinion by Björn Sundmark quite illuminating:

I would say that Yeats’s methods and editorial practices appear groundbreakingly modern today. Thus, by contextualizing his material to the point of including himself (as in *The Celtic Twilight*) he anticipates anthropological practices of fieldwork and observation-participation that are common today. He ‘[writes] the self into the ethnographic process’ as Amanda Coffey calls it. And by paying close attention to the storytelling moment itself, Yeats creates an acute sense of place, history and identity. (2006, 107)

Through his subjective and participant methodology, his all-encompassing contextualization, as well as his biased yet dynamic approach to the field of research and to the informants, Yeats distanced himself from the role-model of a classic folklorist of his age. However, though this distance, he reveals and anticipates a new kind of scholar, the kind of scholar we recognize today – since the so-called “reflexive or literary turn” (Bachmann-Medick 2016, 103-130) – as more suitable for the specificity and the inherent limitations of the social sciences. In so doing, he emphasizes the actual processes – usually concealed by Romantic and positivist folklorists – implied in the collecting of folklore on the field. Nowadays, we know that a really objective distance from the field is impossible, because the researcher affects his/her field of research, as well as the context, and the people met on the field affect the researcher. Between the folklorist and the informants there is an exchange and a sharing of ideas, spaces, and experiences, which all contribute to a piece of folklore. This applies to all types of folklore, whether scholarly or literary, learned or popular, verbatim or creatively transcribed. The result is always unique and complex, subject to ever shifting historical, social, cultural, ethical, and political conditions. In my view, in *The Celtic Twilight* – a work that a hybrid kind of writer/folklorist has produced within a hybrid set of contexts and situations – Yeats makes us aware of the intrinsic fallibility of any of the methods employed to investigate the human and cultural phenomena, but even more of the vital, perhaps questionable, productivity of this same fallibility.

<sup>17</sup> “For Herder, the *Volksgeist*, or ‘spirit of the people’, was best captured in the oral traditions of the peasant classes, whose cultural traditions were not mediated by education, industrialization, or the general trends toward modernity” (Lau 2008, 359).

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## An Activist's Spiritual Experience: Maud Gonne's "Spirit World" in her Autobiography and Letters to Yeats

*Samanta Trivellini*

Independent Scholar (<[strivellini83@gmail.com](mailto:strivellini83@gmail.com)>)

### *Abstract:*

Spirituality and the occult represent important aspects of Maud Gonne's life and writings, and their investigation offers an unusual perspective on this famous icon of revolutionary Ireland. Her memoir and letters to Yeats testify to a lasting relationship with "the spirit world" in as diverse forms as Celtic mysticism, occult practices, psychic phenomena, and the Catholic faith. By investigating her syncretic spirituality and the role this dimension played in her political activism, this contribution intends to expand our understanding of Gonne as an autobiographer; while the written self could "lose all sense of proportion" (Gonne, Yeats 1993, 238) the writer of the self carefully arranged episodes and memories into a plot, the story of a *Bildung* and of a life's mission.

**Keywords:** Golden Dawn, Maud Gonne, Occult, Political Autobiography, Spirituality

### *1. Beginning in medias res: Visionary Experience and the Construction of a Life's Mission*

In *A Servant of the Queen* Gonne writes that "[t]he spirit world never seemed far from me" (1995, 209, hereafter *SQ*). It is apparent even from a cursory look at the table of contents that the spiritual dimension has indeed a definite place in her memoir. Out of twenty-seven chapters three bear titles that point to otherworldly experiences: "The Woman of the Sidhe" (Chapter 9), "Occult Experiences" (Chapter 15), and "The Inevitability of the Church" (Chapter 26). However, the brief opening section, entitled "I Saw the Queen", is pivotal to start exploring how Gonne chose to deal with this dimension. "I Saw the Queen" precedes a very concise "Foreword" and the actual beginning of her memoir and provides the first instance of how she carefully selected episodes and anecdotes – including visions, dreams, voices from another level of reality – and wove them into the narration of her eventful life.

“I Saw the Queen” deserves our attention for several reasons. In it, Gonne recollects a vision of Cathleen ni Houlihan, the legendary icon of Irish nationalism, that took place on her return journey from County Mayo, after one of her visits to villages hit by poverty and famine. From her letters we know that these journeys occurred between February and March 1898, about ten years after she had started to work for the cause of Irish independence. The young Gonne, “[t]ired but glowing”, saw, from the train window, a beautiful woman heading towards the hills, and heard a voice addressing her: “‘[y]ou are one of the little stones on which the feet of the Queen have rested on her way to Freedom’ ” (SQ, 9). Gonne casts herself as a humble servant and an instrument chosen for this arduous task, a role that was bestowed upon her directly by the legendary woman. “I Saw the Queen” is a spectacular opening *in medias res*, and its prominent position in the book places the account of Gonne’s life and her fight for Irish independence under a supernatural aura. In the last lines, the older Gonne concludes that “[b]eing old now and not triumphant I know the blessedness of having been ‘one of those little stones’ on the path to Freedom” (*ibidem*). These words mark a transition from the narrated self – the younger Gonne who saw the Queen – to the writing and wiser self of the “Foreword” that follows the first page. The juxtaposition with the “Foreword” heightens the dramatic effect of “I Saw the Queen”.

In telling the readers what her memoir sets out to do, the brief second section has a more pragmatic dimension: “[b]y the time that I [...] had arrived at the age of reason and was a free agent I had determined that [the British Empire] was not worth the price. How I arrived at this determination and how it affected my life is the story I have tried to tell” (SQ, 10). In the “Foreword” a change of style occurs: from the narrative and visionary tone of “I Saw the Queen”, to the declaratory and dry sentences of those few lines. The miniature *aisling* of Cathleen in “I Saw the Queen” gives way to the story of a *Bildung*, of a (self-) education that was acquired through determination and direct participation in the battle. Whereas “I Saw the Queen” rests on the assumption of Gonne’s visionary gift and implicitly asks the readers to trust her as the witness of an extraordinary event, the “Foreword” asks them to align on a different argument. Here the narrator anticipates how she came to oppose the immoral “‘conditions *sine qua non*’ ” (Mitchell qtd. in SQ, 10) the British Empire could not have thrived: “famine in Ireland, opium in China, torture in India, pauperism in England, disturbance and disorder in Europe and robbery everywhere” (SQ, 10). Ultimately these two sections reflect their author’s posture towards her mission: as Karen Steele noted in her analysis of Gonne’s journalism, she was “both reporter and lyrical writer, a social activist and allegorist (2022, 114). They reinforce each other in constructing the picture of a life’s mission, one in which inspiration from above and self-determination played equally crucial roles.

These initial sections serve this purpose in other ways. Contemporaries and later critics have often noted her tendency to self-aggrandizement and to “cast a halo about her activities” (Donoghue 1986, 223). Even recently, for instance, *A Servant of the Queen* has been described as the “ebullient, if somewhat egomaniacal” account of the challenge to find a place “in an overwhelmingly male tradition of revolutionary endeavour” in Ireland (Kelly 2018, 111). Gonne’s memoir can be read as a woman activist’s attempt to carve a space within the genre of political autobiography, which had indeed been shaped by illustrious male names. In this respect, it seems that both her detractors and more impartial scholars have sometimes overlooked the closing statements of the “Foreword”:

In telling it I may seem to ignore events and people deserving to be mentioned. In a fight one sees only the corner of the field in which one stands. That is my excuse to those other soldiers in the fight for freedom whom I have not mentioned and who have made as great efforts and perhaps greater sacrifices. (SQ, 10)

The autobiographer does not hide the subjective perspective of her memoir. Gonne is not just apologizing with those who have been “forgotten”; this statement can be read as the assertion of her right to tell the events from her own unique perspective. Recently Gonne’s memoir has been discussed in terms of “political autobiographics” situated between life-writing and historical record, where “‘the contingency and freedom that characterize the realm of the *vita active*’” take centre-stage (Guaraldo 2001, qtd. in Tamboukou 2018, 249). *A Servant of the Queen* is alive with accounts of travels, adventures, plans, meetings, anecdotes, which are made more vivid by her gift for dramatic dialogue. The combination of narration, dialogues and straightforward tone, coupled with the adventurous atmosphere surrounding the life of the young Gonne, is anticipated in “I Saw the Queen”. One among several autobiographical fragments that make up the memoir, this episode stands out as a defining moment of her career, to the point that she had originally wanted Cathleen ni Houlihan’s words “one of those little stones” to be the title of her book<sup>1</sup>. These words reappear in the closing lines of *A Servant of the Queen*, where once again the older Gonne humbly considers her role in the Queen’s journey as a blessing (cf. *SQ*, 350). Their importance makes them the textual equivalent of an epiphany; just as the episode of the vision represents Gonne’s formal “investiture”, so Cathleen’s words, being repeated at the end, seal the convergence between personal and national destiny. As an activist writer Gonne seems to be fully aware of a biographeme that is well-rooted in the writings of male activists since the early nineteenth century, “the master trope of the Irish autobiographical tradition”, namely “[t]he rhetorical fusion of individual identity and collective destiny” (Harte 2007, 3). Following her predecessors, but at the same time subverting the gendered narrative that matched political activism with masculinity, the convergence of personal and national mission is manifest in several *loci* of *A Servant of the Queen*, specifically in the image of a woman who renounces her private life and devotes all her energies to the Irish cause. One of the most explicit passages in this respect is the following:

I had long ago chosen to devote my life to the one objective of freeing Ireland, and since then I had invariably found that anything I undertook for myself personally never succeeded, and so I had given up trying. So long as I was working for Ireland I felt safe and protected. (*SQ*, 328-329)

Statements such as this, along with the omission of several private facts, make her personal life appear unimportant in comparison to her political activities. Whereas for male autobiographers the neglect of the domestic life was part of a national narrative rooted in notions of masculinity and rebellious heroism, for Gonne leaving out biographical facts reflected in part her and her son Sean’s wish to protect their privacy<sup>2</sup>. Self-censorship, however, built on a much

<sup>1</sup> The correspondence between Maud Gonne and the publisher Victor Gollancz shows that the title “One of those Little Stones” was kept until the end of July 1938, although she had been asked to change it since March of the same year. Both the publisher and L.A.G. Strong deemed it inadequate, the latter describing it as “inept” (see “Correspondence and documents relating to the publication of Maud Gonne’s memoir ‘A servant of the Queen’ by Victor Gollancz, 1936-1992”, MS 50,700/10/5 (9) quoted with the kind permission of the National Library of Ireland). Alternative titles suggested by Gonne were “Let Erin Remember”, “Laughing and Fighting” and “One Thought and Many Deeds”; a title suggested by the publisher was “The Battles I Fought”, an adaptation of her line “the battles we fight here have perhaps been already fought out on another plane” (*SQ*, 336). This title was rejected by Gonne because perceived as “presumptuous” and “pretentious” (cf. MS 50,700/2/2; MS 50,700/3/6 (2)). They finally settled on “A Servant of the Queen”, which was proposed by Gonne on 10 July 1938 (cf. MS 50,700/3/6).

<sup>2</sup> Gonne’s elder child, Iseult, was officially her adopted child. Seán, her son by John MacBride, was a leading member of the IRA; in 1937 (one year before *A Servant of the Queen* came out in print) he became a barrister specialized in defending IRA members and later a prominent politician on the Irish and European stage (cf. Jeffares,



earlier image of Gonne as a spokesperson for the rural dispossessed and political prisoners, completely devoted to Ireland, an image that she and her collaborators had cultivated in the Irish radical press; both then and in the memoir, the image of an Irish Joan of Arc contributed to shape a self-propagandistic discourse that revolved around her public achievements (cf. Steele 2001, 142).

Among the contradictions of Gonne's life, that could not find a place in her memoir, were not only an extra-marital relationship and two children, but also an intimate connection with the "spirit world", especially at those junctures when it could veer towards eccentric dealings with the occult and magic. For instance, the solo and collaborative visions with Yeats, in which she was engaged for reviving Celtic rituals, were utterly left out; other aspects that involved her own psychic powers and her affiliation to occult societies show the narrator's ambivalence towards this dimension. In the chapter "Occult Experiences" her experiments with second sight and bilocation are hastily described as dangerous and potentially out of her control. Since those experiments demanded intense concentration, already by the time of the events, the young Gonne considered them a distraction from her political work. As I will discuss more in depth later, the account of her involvement with Theosophy and the society of the Golden Dawn betrays similar contradictions. "Both consciously and unconsciously the author reveals herself, presenting a personality which would be phenomenal in any nation and at any time": these were the words of L.A.G. Strong, the first professional reader of Gonne's memoir who recommended it for publication (MS 50,700/10/5 (7)). His remarks give a fairly accurate idea of Gonne's narratorial posture: *A Servant of the Queen* successfully manages to keep the reader's attention on her "one-idea'd" personality and her public achievements (*SQ*, 124), and the tension and "fissures" in the narrative add to the complexity of the narrated self.

"I Saw the Queen" is not just rhetorically effective but also anticipates several elements that make up Gonne's spirituality as they emerge in the autobiography. One is Celtic mysticism, which for Gonne meant first and foremost the trust in the spirit of the land and its people, seen as sources of energy and protection for herself and the nation-to-be: "I had stopped a famine and saved many lives by making the people share my own belief that courage and will are unconquerable and, where allied to *the mysterious forces of the land*, can accomplish anything" (*SQ*, 9, my emphasis). Mythology, popular lore and legends are intimately connected with this dimension. From her first meeting with John O'Leary, her early attempts at organizing Irish-themed concerts in Dublin with her childhood friend Ida Jameson, to her occult work with Yeats and the Order of the Golden Dawn, and the foundation of the Inghinidhe na hÉireann, Gonne had gained considerable knowledge about Irish history and mythology, folk music and tales. This knowledge in turn made her attachment to the Irish land and its people stronger, and significantly contributed to her *Bildung* and self-styling as a promoter of Irish nationalism when she toured as a lecturer in public talks and fund-raising events, and especially in her prolific journalistic production<sup>3</sup>. On a more personal level, Gonne was fascinated by the peasants' belief in ancient legends and considered it an integral part of that protective aura that came from the land. One passing example of the attention she devoted to popular lore is found in "I Saw the Queen". On the same day in which she saw Cathleen ni Houlihan, Gonne spotted a magical fish that brought good luck:

MacBride White (1995), x-xii).

<sup>3</sup> The invaluable work of Karen Steele on Gonne's journalistic writings provides examples of her use and subversion of female icons from Irish mythology and legends (see Steele 1999; 2022).

That afternoon, at the Wishing Well in Ballina [...] I had seen the fish which they said none of our generation had seen; it had darted across the clear water which bubbles up unceasingly at the foot of a green mound where legend says a queen lies buried. I had wished the wish of all our hearts – a Free Republic. (*Ibidem*)

In this and the previous excerpt cited above, Gonne, who portrays herself as the saviour of many lives and the witness to an extraordinary event, also implicitly represents her work for Ireland as inspired by and placed under the protection of the ancient spiritual forces of Ireland.

This episode anticipates two longer ones that are found in the chapters “The Woman of the Sidhe” and “Famine”, which show Gonne’s sense of having achieved a quasi-mystical connection with the Irish people. During a journey to County Donegal she became the object of rumours among villagers: they saw her as a benevolent fairy creature who had come to help a local priest give assistance to the evicted tenants in defiance of the police (cf. *SQ*, 134-135). Later, in County Mayo, she was regarded as the mysterious woman dressed in green from a prophecy of a legendary local seer. This woman would come in a time of famine and “preach the revolt” (*SQ*, 252), as she indeed started doing in 1898 once she had arrived in those lands, heavily damaged by a potato blight and endemic poverty. Just as in “I Saw the Queen”, where Gonne caught sight of something exceptional – the fish at the Wishing Well – thus becoming herself a token of good luck, in those two episodes she performed something exceptional: she materially assisted families, reinstated them to their houses, and persuaded the British authorities to consent her requests to raise the local people’s pay in the Relief Works, so as to prevent more deaths from starvation. In her account she explains that her bravery owed to the simple faith of the local people in her person as a larger-than-life figure. As in “I Saw the Queen”, Gonne’s special status – in this case her “transformation” into a supernatural creature – is communicated once again through direct speech, namely the words of two local priests. The strategy of acknowledging her supernatural investiture through the words of others puts her figure and her actions in the spotlight and reflects the typical combination of humility and pride of Gonne’s narrator. Pratt noted that in relating these events the narrator “obviously takes pleasure in the supernatural flavor of the legend” (1983, 193). Gonne’s awareness of the effect her physical presence could have on others – her stature, her charm, her fashionable clothes – emerges in several passages of her autobiography; here the magical aura, bestowed upon her, lends an element of theatricality to her appearance to the police and the villagers. What is more, Gonne explicitly parallels the two episodes and, by mentioning her impulse to write an article at the time of the second event, she portrays herself in the multiple roles of the fairy, the fighter and the journalist who was conscious of the writerly potential of those stories on her readership. The power that came from the land – the superstition of the villagers – encouraged her to fight, both on the “battlefield” and with the pen:

In Donegal, being the woman of the Sidhe had helped me to put evicted families back in their homes and release prisoners. I hoped that being the woman of the prophecies in Mayo would help me to stop the famine. I went to my hotel and wrote an article on the Relief Works for the *Freeman’s Journal*. (*SQ*, 253)

Overall, these scenes give us an insight into the extent to which she came to regard herself as the human and rhetorical instrument of those local battles – her speeches are often reported in detail – and, through them, of the larger battle that would lead Ireland to freedom. “I Saw the Queen” introduces one further element, which often resurfaces in the autobiography

and the letters, and that is crucial for understanding Gonne's attitude towards her political work: the combination of "courage and will" (*SQ*, 9). In the first chapter courage and will are intimately connected with the memory of Gonne's beloved father and with his teachings, and they are among the "Words Remembered" – this is the title of the chapter – that would guide her in her life. As I will discuss later, the cultivation of will power was also one of the guiding principles of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, of which she was an adept for a few years.

Finally, the element on which the entire episode of "I Saw the Queen" is premised is Gonne's natural receptivity to otherworldly visions. The narrator does not give the reader any clue as to how the momentous epiphany of Cathleen was formed, nor her younger self wondered about it. This gift was channeled into elaborate self-guided visions in the years in which she experimented with the occult and was not lost when she converted to Catholicism, but it was well alive also outside her formal engagement with the occult, and could take on both a playful and a deeply disturbing dimension. "I Saw the Queen" is the formal beginning of Gonne's autobiography and synthesizes all the salient elements that mark her complex, at times troubled, relationship with spiritual things. Three other "beginnings" are disseminated in *A Servant of the Queen* and will be discussed in the next section.

## 2. *Multiple Beginnings: Encounters with the Spirit World and the Syncretic Imagination*

Gonne's proximity to the spirit world can be traced to her childhood. The narrator portrays herself as a restless girl who used to see "strange shapes moving in the dim gleam of night-light, creeping under the bed, and a veiled woman with dark sad eyes" (*SQ*, 14). These phenomena are told in the first chapter, where she recollects her mother's death. In this account the attentive reader will not miss a striking coincidence between the sad eyes of this mysterious woman and Edith Cook's sad look when she appeared to her daughter in "a cruel little memory" (*SQ*, 13). Psychoanalysis would probably interpret the woman as the projection of the child's distress over her mother's death. This figure would haunt the adult Gonne, and her presence seems to be connected with moments of strain and loss in her life. The letters and the autobiography record several instances of Gonne's spontaneous receptivity: visions, voices and premonitory dreams, which at times prompted her to alert her friends against imminent dangers. Her attitude towards her gift was ambiguous: whereas she cultivated it during her affiliation to the Society of the Golden Dawn and when she worked with Yeats at his project of creating a Celtic Mystical Order between the late 1890s and early 1900s, it also brought about disturbing experiences.

A second beginning in her relationship with the supernatural was her formal introduction into occult things through Yeats, who first introduced her to Mme Helena Blavatsky, the founder of Theosophy, and in November 1891 initiated her into the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. These were the two major branches of the mystical revival of the *fin de siècle* and they would have a lasting influence on twentieth-century occultism. The Theosophical Society and the Golden Dawn radically departed from mid-century spiritualism and mediumship: they were established as circles with a strong intellectual basis and internal hierarchy; they were organized into stages of study and initiation ceremonies; they claimed ancient lineages, reaching back to both Eastern and Western sources; finally, they rejected the figure of the medium, its centrality in the communication with the otherworld, and instead awarded primacy to the empowerment

of the Will as opposed to trance possession<sup>4</sup>. Since the first extant Gonne-Yeats letters date back to 1893, neither her encounter with Blavatsky nor her first initiation into the Golden Dawn are recorded<sup>5</sup>. Both events are mentioned in the chapter “Occult Experiences”, where Gonne only touches on the eccentricity of Blavatsky and on the exterior aspects of the Order that most annoyed her, such as the ceremonial clothes the adepts used, “the English love of play-acting” and the “mysterious” and “grand-sounding titles” (*SQ*, 211). Her suspicions about possible connections between the Order and Freemasonry eventually persuaded her to leave it in 1894. During the three years in which she was an adept she completed all four stages of the Outer Order. Her account, however, gives the impression that her connection with the Golden Dawn was rather brief and superficial, Yeats’s idea rather than her own’s, and she dismisses it in only one sentence: “I passed four initiations and learned a number of Hebrew words” (*SQ*, 210)<sup>6</sup>.

In fact, Gonne had started experimenting with the occult and magic just before joining Theosophy and the Order, hoping “[to gain] power to use for the great objective of my life” (*SQ*, 209). This interest and her involvement with the two societies came during a period of personal loss, which is not recorded in *A Servant of the Queen*. In August 1891 the death of her son – Georges Silvère, who was born from her relationship with a married man, the French journalist and right-wing politician Lucien Millevoye – pushed her to find spiritual consolation in Yeats and the mystic poet and painter George Russell. Gonne’s wish to establish a contact with her dead child pushed her farther: she sought consolation in a form of spirituality that offered a ritualized journey towards personal development and promised the adepts that they would be able to cultivate their inner force and achieve rebirth. What the autobiography records, instead, is the reappearance of the veiled woman, an event which the narrator describes as one among other “strange unaccountable things” (*SQ*, 207) that had happened at that time. An uncanny double, this time the woman did not look like her mother: “[s]he was rather like me, but smaller and darker. A portrait of me, painted by Kreder [...] I thought resembled her more than it resembled me” (*ibidem*). These remarks, including the sudden deflection of the resemblance on her portrait, are perhaps the closest Gonne came to recognize the woman as her darkest side. It is revealing of her ambiguous attitude that, when she mentions this hypothesis, she ascribes it to Yeats and MacGregor Mathers, the founder of the Golden Dawn, who “evolved the theory that she was what, in old Egyptian magic, was called the Ka. As far as I could understand them, a part of my personality had survived death in a former incarnation” (*ibidem*). The narrator seems to distance herself from the sinister prospect that this evil presence was part of her personality, and yet she encrypts that disturbing idea in the language of occultism. Despite the bad omens hovering around this woman, Gonne initially took advantage of the latent potential of her presence by “using” her to “influence people’s minds and get them

<sup>4</sup> About the departure of Theosophy and the Golden Dawn from previous spiritualism, see Owen 2004, Chapters 1; 2.

<sup>5</sup> The only letter mentioning the Golden Dawn while Gonne was still a member of the order is dated 13 October 1893: “[i]f you are not in London perhaps Mrs Emery would kindly examine me for my 3°=8°” (Gonne, Yeats 1993, 51, hereafter *GYL*). The reference is to the third grade of the First Order, called “Practicus”; Mrs Emery is the actress and occultist Florence Farr, who, as an expert adept, would examine new members.

<sup>6</sup> This remark, neutral as it may appear, masks in fact Gonne’s antisemitic aversion, which is also present in her journalistic contributions. The elaborate Kabbalistic symbolism in the teachings of the Golden Dawn must have made her impatient with its doctrine. A clue about her attitude is in a letter dated September 1900 in which she writes of her cousin’s May similar aversion to this aspect of the Order: “[s]he is not altogether satisfied by the G.D. She, like myself, was rather repelled by the Semitic tendency of the teaching” (*GYL*, 134). On Gonne’s anti-Dreyfusard and antisemitic comments, see Frazier 2016, 170-171; 186.

to do things” (*ibidem*), but she soon came to realize that she was growing stronger and more independent from her will through repeated invocations. At a closer look at the text a detail regarding the woman reveals that her presence was linked to the death of Gonne’s baby son: in a séance where she was summoned “she had confessed to having killed a child” (SQ, 208). At that point Gonne tried with great difficulty to chase her away. As at the time of her mother’s death, it is possible that she was once again deflecting her distress and her repressed guilt over her child’s death towards this eerie figure (cf. Pratt 1983; Greer 1995, 103-106; 120-121)<sup>7</sup>.

Whereas her involvement with the Golden Dawn was short-lived, her interest in magic and occult practices did not wane after she left it in 1894 and was especially connected with Yeats’s Celtic mystical order. In her collaboration with him she used her visionary gift and some of the visualization techniques she had learnt in the Golden Dawn to project herself on the astral planes where she and the poet would see the ancient Celtic gods and druids. On these journeys they identified symbols that they would use for the iconography of the ceremonies of the envisioned Celtic Order. As a member of the Outer or First Order of the Golden Dawn Gonne had not been formally initiated into the techniques known as skrying in the spirit vision and astral projection, which were taught to the adepts of the Second Order. The members of the First Order, however, were taught the techniques to achieve tattwa vision – self-guided visions prompted by the use of the five tattwa symbols representing Spirit, Air, Fire, Water and Earth<sup>8</sup>. As explained by Israel Regardie, tattwa vision trained the use of the imagination, which in turn was a prerequisite for learning and mastering advanced techniques later on in the adepts’ magical curriculum<sup>9</sup>. Several letters to Yeats, as well as his notebook entitled *Visions of Old Irish Mythology* dated December 1898<sup>10</sup>, testify the exuberance of her visions. They clearly show that not only was she familiar with tattwic visualization techniques, but also that, with the poet or alone, she successfully attempted astral projections. Without fully mastering them, she nonetheless became capable of achieving highly sophisticated visions in terms of sensuousness and detail<sup>11</sup>. An example of this occultist effort can be found in a letter dated late December 1898, which contains the ritual for the

<sup>7</sup> The most recent biographer of Gonne also mentions the complex relationship between her interest in occult magic and her tragic loss, and notes how she used “her growing familiarity with the occult [...] [for] constructing a unique antidote for grief” (Bendheim 2021, 54).

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed explanation of the techniques taught in the Golden Dawn to reach that level of focus and imagination, see King 1987, 65-66.

<sup>9</sup> According to Regardie, tattwa vision was a method “to which most members of the Order devoted the greatest attention [...] [It taught] the necessity of an imaginative formation of an intellectual or astral form [...] for the purpose of exploring [...] the several strata of one’s own psychic make-up” ([1937-1940] 1989, 41). Regardie also explained that “[t]he simpler aspects of this investigation are taught just after the grade of Philosophus [the last grade of the First Order], though naturally the full possibilities of this method and the complete details of the technical side do not reveal themselves until the teaching of the Second Order has been received” (*ibidem*). On the use of tattwa symbols, see also Greer 1995, 58, 62, 64; Owen 2004, 148-153.

<sup>10</sup> This manuscript, as yet unpublished, can be consulted at the National Library of Ireland and is filed in the collection “W.B. Yeats Occult Papers, ca. 1890-1937” (MS 36,261/1). It was transcribed and commented by Lucy Shepard Kalogera in her 1977 dissertation thesis (139-155).

<sup>11</sup> On the importance of the sensory component of the visions, Moina Mathers, wife of the Order’s founder, wrote: “[y]ou must be prepared to receive impressions of scenes, forms and sounds as vivid thought forms. ‘Thought forms’ I use for want of a better word. There are distinctly in these experiences, things heard, things felt as well as things seen, which would prove that the qualities that we are here using are really the sublimated senses. [...] [R]emember, that though the material in magical working is the least important of the planes in one sense, yet in another it is of the utmost importance for it crystallises the astral plane and completes it.” (“Of Skrying & Travelling in the Spirit Vision”, in Regardie, 467-468).

Initiation of the Spear that Gonne had already received in a previous self-guided vision. In the elaborate “choreography” of the vision she encountered druids, Brigid and finally the sun god Lugh who performed the ceremony<sup>12</sup>.

A further reason that may have pushed Gonne to experiment with the occult within an organized society arguably lies in the prominent role attributed to volition. The training of the will was a central stage of the adepts' curriculum, resulting in the sharpening of their psychic faculties. Gonne was “initiated” into the notion that the will could attain anything as a child. As already noted, not only did Thomas Gonne encourage her daughter to be brave, but he also insisted on the importance of exerting her will, a teaching that in *A Servant of the Queen* sounds as the spiritual testament he left to her (“[s]ome other words of Tommy's I record here because they also influenced my life”, *SQ*, 15). In addition to the sinister appearances of the veiled woman, in the autobiography the preoccupation with the subjugation of the will resurfaces in connection with the use of sleeping drugs and other psychic phenomena, such as episodes of unintentional bilocation. After Gonne managed to banish the woman, and after she had fought against her addiction, she became resolute in preventing any external power from subduing her: “I refused to let any will, human or disincarnate, overpower my own” (*SQ*, 209). These words recall a teaching of the Golden Dawn. In a lecture delivered by Florence Farr entitled “Three Suggestions on Will Power” she cautioned the adepts against “the danger [that] arises from attempting to exercise this will power, before we have purged ourselves of ignorance and darkness” (MacGreogor Mathers, Gilbert 1987, 59); the risk was serious for the initiates because they only had superficial knowledge of magic and could endanger themselves. Farr also explained that “once done the force you have set in motion becomes almost uncontrollable” (*ibidem*). Gonne had realized indeed “the danger of playing with forces without sufficient knowledge” (*SQ*, 336) when she had experimented with the powers of the veiled woman. Long after her first son's death (1891) and the end of her involvement with the Golden Dawn (1894), she continued considering the risk that some external evil force might temporarily numb her will as a real one, with consequences on her work for Ireland. In November 1898 she wrote to Yeats that she had been unable to do any occult work for a month because each time she tried “something seemed to stop me” and “my mind was blank and stupid” (*GYZ*, 96). To explain this impediment, she concluded that “it must be some of the forces that work for England that were paralysing my will” (*ibidem*).

Gonne eventually embraced Catholicism in February 1903 at 38, before marrying Major John MacBride. This decision marked a new phase in her relationship with spirituality and the supernatural. The chapter entitled “The Inevitability of the Church” charts her old resistance to the Catholic faith and her final decision to be received into the Roman Church. Just as in the chapter devoted to her occult experiences, her account revolves around single episodes and anecdotes that show once again how personal relationships, intuition and instinct, at this crucial turn in her life, mattered much more than any inner theological debate with her Anglican faith. Interestingly, in “The Inevitability of the Church” numerous references to Celticism stand out, showing how Gonne's religious faith never excluded, on the contrary, could always embrace her Celtic beliefs. If she was predestined to become a Catholic, as the

<sup>12</sup> The letter is in *GYZ*, 99-100. On this ritual, see Shepard Kalogera 1997, 144; Owen 2004, 168-169. Yeats and Gonne scholars and biographers have often dwelt on this letter since, in addition to the information on the Celtic Mysteries it contains, it was written shortly after a turning point in their relationship: Gonne had told the poet about her liaison with Millevoeye and the two children she had had from him, Iseult and Georges Silvère. For example, see Toomey 1992, 98; Greer 1995, 218-219; Frazier 2016, 181-182.

title suggests, it was because her belief in the spiritual force of the land persuaded her of the necessity to be closer to Ireland and the Irish. This conviction was explicitly espoused in a letter to Yeats dated 7 May 1903: “I followed as usual inspiration, [the great reason] was that I felt for my work it was necessary for me to become more completely united to the soul of my people so that I could more completely understand their thoughts & help them better” (*GYL*, 170).

One more element that played a role in her conversion is briefly mentioned in the autobiography: it lay in her need to find a stable and protective guidance in the Catholic Church in reaction to occult and dangerous practices:

I knew it was possible to break the dividing barrier which separates us from this world and once had been eager to do so in the hope of gaining power to further the cause to which I had devoted my life. Then I had realised the danger of playing with forces without sufficient knowledge, – danger to one’s own sanity and still more danger to those one loves and may be unable to protect. I looked on the Catholic Church as the repository of spiritual knowledge and sometimes I longed for its protection and guidance (*SQ*, 336).

Gonne saw the Church as a source of “spiritual knowledge” and explicitly contrasted it with the occult. One of the principles underlying Golden Dawn doctrine was the ancient “Know Thyself”, coupled with a questioning attitude towards the invisible forces in the universe and within oneself: its teachings stressed intense introspection and guided the adepts through a journey of self-discovery. As Gonne confessed, she was rather reluctant to self-scrutiny: “I never indulged in self-analysis” (*SQ*, 287). The emphasis on the self as a site of incessant exploration and the ultimate bridge to divinity had brought about dangerous experiences, while the Church could provide safer guidance. Unlike the two editions of the autobiography published during Gonne’s lifetime (Victor Gollancz 1938 and Eagle Books 1950), the 1995 and now standard edition fails to catch a pattern of conversion from unorthodox spirituality to institutional religion that can be inferred from the position of the chapter “The Inevitability of the Church”, which Gonne placed immediately after “Occult Experiences”. On the other hand, after her conversion she developed a strongly syncretic vision of spiritual things. In the aforementioned letter of 7 May 1903, where she reproaches Yeats for his irritation over her conversion, in order to reassure him that her faith would not prevent her from taking part in Celtic ritualism, she explains that Catholic and Celtic symbolism can fully coexist:

[T]o me it seems the spear of the soldier piercing the side of Christ & letting the essence of God flow into the Graal cup is the same symbolism as the spear of Lug piercing the night & letting the essence of God the spark of fire of the soul flow down into the Cauldron of regeneration & rebirth, & the font of baptism & the holy water seem to me the same as the purifying Cauldron of Dana which begins initiation, or the deep well by the tree of knowledge! [...] What do I care if the Great Mother is called Mary or Dana or Bridget or the Captain of Armies of Heaven is called Lug or Michael. (*GYL*, 169-170)

The belief in the sacredness of the land and its people was another element of her syncretic spirituality; central to the mysticism of the Celtic Revival, for Gonne it was also of special personal significance, as it came from the bond with Ireland that she had developed in her childhood. Vivid and fond descriptions of landscapes, especially of the nature in the peninsula of Howth where she had lived as a child, are found in the autobiography and the letters. Gonne made Ireland the place of her affective belonging, almost an imaginary womb in which, as Anne Magny has suggested, she might have sublimated the maternal figure she had lost when

she was only five (2014, 56). Unlike her practices of Celtic occultism, this attachment was not mediated by any intellectual source; it was turned into a devotion of the land, reflecting Gonne's personal territorialisation of Ireland<sup>13</sup>.

The sketch of Gonne's eclectic spirituality in the preceding paragraphs is fundamental to grasp the importance she attributed to the existence of a dialectic between the spiritual and the material planes and the role this connection played in her incessant work for Ireland.

### 3. "As Above so Below": *Occult-political Visions*

In "I Saw the Queen" Gonne transfers onto the level of inspired vision her belief in being predestined for the nationalist mission; seen walking on the earth and then fading away in the distance Cathleen ni Houlihan represents a link between the material and the spiritual world. The idea of a close connection between the two worlds resurfaces several times in the memoir and the letters. In "The Inevitability of the Church" she explicitly affirms this conviction:

I believe every political movement on earth has its counterpart in the spirit world and the battles we fight here have perhaps been already fought out on another plane and great leaders draw their often unexplained power from this. I cannot conceive a material movement which has not a spiritual basis. It was this that drew me so powerfully towards the Catholic Church. (SQ, 336)

The last line shows that Gonne considered the dialectic between the political and the spiritual the main reason of her religious conversion. In fact, the profound belief in this connection can be traced to an earlier stage of her political activity. In a letter to Yeats dated 6 September 1897 – the period in which the poet was starting to lay down his project of creating a Celtic mystical cult – she noted:

[L]ately I seem to have made a step in advance on the spiritual plane. I seem now to be able to put my soul in communication with the souls of those great & strong heroes who lived only for their ideal & to whom the material things of life count for naught. I get strength therefrom to go on with my work. (GYL, 77)

Her progress on the spiritual plane – her astral journeys that put her in communication with Celtic gods and heroes – sustained her work for the Irish cause. The support given by the occult work to her political activities is confirmed in the autobiography: even though grief and trauma played a significant role in sparking Gonne's interest in the occult, the official reason given in the memoir is her wish to gain power for her battles.

Once again occult doctrine can throw light on Gonne's conviction that different planes of existence could influence each other. This idea originates in the ancient postulate of alchemic correspondences between microcosmic and macrocosmic forces. The first formulation of a mutual relation between earth and sky, human and celestial, is found in the so-called *tabula smaragdina* or "Emerald Tablet", which dates to the eighth century and which, together with the writings of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, represents one of the most influential sources on the Western esoteric tradition. The second of the thirteen maxims engraved on the tablet reads: "[w]hat is below is

<sup>13</sup> I borrow the notion of "territorialisation" from sociology, specifically from Anthony Smith, who uses it in relation to communities and the formation of a collective national identity: this process involves the creation of "an ethno-scape in which a people and its homeland become increasingly symbiotic" through shared historical memories of places and personages (2009, 50).



like that which is above, and what is above is similar to that which is below to accomplish the wonders of one thing' ” (Blavatsky 1877, 507). Hermeticism as an anti-materialistic body of knowledge came to influence the spiritual revival of the late nineteenth century and to shape the core doctrine of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn through the mediation of seveneenth-century German Rosicrucianism and occult Freemasonry. Escorted with the principle of the correspondences formulated in the Emerald Tablet, the Greek precept “know thyself”, the Paracelsian doctrine of alchemical transmutation and Kabbalistic magic – now all more or less symbolically and psychologically oriented –, the occult adepts of the late Victorian and Edwardian eras believed they could apprehend the complex layers of the universal unity by intellectual and imaginative investigation<sup>14</sup>. For Yeats ritual magic promoted action: the poet wrote that in the gradual achievement of wisdom that the adept experienced by performing the rituals “there [is] [...] no abstraction to deaden the nerves of the soul”, and recalled how the rituals aroused in him “plans for deeds of all kinds” that made him wish “to return to Ireland to find there some public work” (Yeats 1972, 27). Likewise, Gonne’s work for Ireland gained strength from her occult work and later her Catholic faith. As we have seen, unlike the former, the Church represented a more solid spiritual source, with less emphasis on sheer introspection. Whereas Yeats had found in occult doctrine and magic the seeds of that splitting of the subject that would lead him and his wife to regard the deepest truths as incessantly dialogical and relational, Gonne had experienced the doubling of the will as a dangerous fragmentation of the self<sup>15</sup>. Gonne, however, seemed to retain the fundamental teaching of occult doctrine: she did not abandon the idea that different existential layers were closely linked and that the forces that presided over one also guided the other. The political could thus only be rooted in a non-material plane and “the great leaders” could only be successful if they drew their strength from there.

This organicist view of all things was also attuned to a historical period – the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Gonne became politically active – in which social utopianism and unorthodox spirituality often shared goals of collective regeneration. In the same letter in which Gonne mentions the heroes of the past “who lived only for their ideal & to whom the material things of life count for naught”, she expresses “a horror of all the little things & the materialities of life” and continues: “[o]ne would be much stronger if one had no ties, no belongings, no possessions even. Every now & then I have a feeling that I should get rid of every thing & live as though I were quite poor” (*GYL*, 77). Anti-materialist ideals were not uncommon both among political radicals and exponents of spiritualism and occult societies of the *fin de siècle*. For some of them the mutual relationships between the spiritual and the material plane explicitly took on progressivist and socialist contours, originating what Beaumont calls “positivistic mysticism” (2012, 166). Theosophy counted among its ideals chastity and selflessness and the Golden Dawn condemned greediness and squandering. In her doctrinal writing on her conversion, the theosophist Annie Besant, who already was a prominent Fabian, a socialist; and a campaigner for birth control, stressed the importance to strive for a universal brotherhood, an egalitarian society that would contribute to social betterment. If we look at members of Gonne’s upper-class *milieu*, Constance and Eva Goore-Booth were also interested in Theosophy and occultism and later turned to radical socialism, Bolshevism; and to campaigning for women’s suffrage. Like Gonne, Constance eventually turned to Catholicism; in her biography, Lauren

<sup>14</sup> For a comprehensive history of Hermeticism, see Ebeling 2007. On the nineteenth-century tendency to psychologizing the hermetic and alchemic traditions, see Owen 2004, 13; 148-185.

<sup>15</sup> For the significance of the double will, assumed personalities and the multiple self for Yeats and George Hyde-Lees the reference text is Harper 2006, in particular 164; 223; 225.

Arrington notes that what drew her to it was “the antimaterialist focus of Catholic doctrine” as well as a “newfound spiritualism [that] revived the mysticism that she had exercised at the turn of the century” (2016, 207).

Three letters provide case studies for the dialogue in Gonne's writings between the political and the visionary dimensions. After months of tireless work for the 1798 Centenary celebrations commemorating Wolfe Tone's failed revolution, which also coincided with a period of intense collaborative and individual occult work for the Celtic Mysteries, Gonne had a “strange dream” in which “[i]t seemed as if I was awakened by a loud deafening cry, ‘The Lion of the West is rising’, ‘The Lion is awake’ ” (*GYL*, 96). This dream speaks the mysteric language she and Yeats were in the process of creating. Its account is preceded by the description of a curious phenomenon she had seen a few nights before: bright rays of light across the sky had turned from white to blood red. Gonne came to believe that these mysterious rays were a forewarning of “some terrible upheaval in Europe” and rejected the explanation she had heard, namely that “in Paris people were making experiments with electric light projections, but of course this was nonsense” (*GYL*, 95). At this point she reports that “the papers say it was an Aurora Borealis” (*ibidem*), a natural phenomenon which, unlike the other possible explanation, is not dismissed and is read instead as a cataclysmic presage. In the light of the political unrest of those years Gonne interpreted her dream and the rays of light as omens of an imminent revolution in Ireland.

Two visions Gonne had in Paris during the First World War represent a similar but more layered occult interpretation of the fearful period she was living through. In November 1915 she describes a vision she had had at mass of thousand spirits of men killed in the war, among whom stood Irish soldiers. The description has strong religious undertones but the experience was occasioned by an Irish reel Gonne had been hearing for days. At mass she suddenly remembered where she had heard it: it was in Slieve Gullion, Northern Ireland, where the music seemed “to come out of the heart of the mountain” (*GYL*, 362). In her vision, soundscape and choreography blend into an image of spiritual completeness. The spirits of the Irish soldiers who were killed

are being marshalled & drawn together by waves of rhythmic music [...] into dances of strange patterns. [They] are being drawn together in this wild reel tune [...]. They are dancing to it, some with almost frenzied intensity & enthusiasm while others seem to be drawn in unwillingly not knowing why, but the rhythm is so strong & compelling they have to dance. It is leading them back to the spiritual Ireland from which they have wandered & where they would find their self realisation & perfectionment & to whom they would bring their strength. (*GYL*, 363)

The vision ended with a triumphant image: the Irish soldiers danced on “stronger & deeper Rhythms” and were led “to a deeper peace, the peace of the Crucified which is above the currents of nationalities & storms” (*ibidem*); yet, Gonne added, “for all that they will not be separated from Ireland for as an entity she has followed the path of Sacrifice & has tasted of the Grail & the strength they will bring her is greater” (*ibidem*). Ireland is seen as a spiritual womb from which the soldiers were separated and to which the tune was now leading them back. While the language is permeated by the vocabulary of Catholic redemption and resurrection, the vision is rooted in the land, literally in the soil – the music coming out of the mountain –, and in the soldiers: now all cleansed and blessed, they would not just resurrect, they would empower their motherland. Gonne's syncretic imagination merges the animism of the Irish land – the magic of its nature and the reel – with an ecstatic vision of Christ, his sacrifice with the sacrifice of the soldiers. The aural element in this vision is

especially evocative. An interesting coda to this letter found on a scrap of paper shows how lasting the memory of that music had been for Gonne and how strong its symbolism was. The nativist myth of a pure and noble Irish nation shines through the tune: “some day out of their [the Irish rhythms’] freshness, their primitiveness and their inconsequence a great deep power may be revealed or evolved” (*ibidem*).

At the beginning of the war Gonne had another vision, which she described in a letter to Yeats only in May 1916, a few days after she had got news of the Easter Rising in Dublin. In the first lines Gonne pays tribute to the men and women who took part in the armed occupation of the General Post Office. Despite their defeat “[t]hey have raised the Irish cause again to a position of tragic dignity” (*GYL*, 372). Towards the end of her letter she recalls a vision that had made her prescient of a tragedy that would happen in Dublin:

At the beginning of the war I had a horrible vision which affected me for days. I saw Dublin, in darkness & figures lying on the quays by O’Connell Bridge, they were either wounded or dying of hunger – It was so terribly clear it has haunted me ever since. There must have been scenes like that in the streets of Dublin the last days. (*GYL*, 373)

Her vision anticipated scenes that Gonne in fact would see in person later, in France, when she volunteered as a nurse in military hospitals. Whereas in the first part of the letter the political is sublimated through the mythology of sacrifice and the rhetoric of spiritual ennoblement, the vision is an example of “how the occult generates a commentary on the political trauma of Ireland” (Nally 2010, 3): it bears no traces of triumph, it reveals instead the anxiety over the Anglo-Irish war and the all too real consequences for her beloved Dublin.

One last, rather sinister, instance of the connection between the spiritual and the material dimension appears in the last chapter of the autobiography, and comes from a comparison drawn from sacred history, which is used to legitimate direct intervention in the Anglo-Irish situation. Gonne and MacBride shared similar ideas regarding the use of radical tactics to destabilise the English. While relating rumours of attempts on the part of the American Fenian Clan-na-Gael to sink English ships, she reports a dialogue with a reference to the story of Moses and the ten plagues; the story was meant to back her opinion that a more active campaign of bombings should have been pursued to make the Irish cause more visible to the world:

‘Such acts as those of Captain Mackey should be successive and continuous,’ I said. ‘It was the plagues of Egypt, successive and continuous and well advertised by Moses, that brought the Pharaoh [*sic*] to his senses, to let the Israelites escape, and broke the morale of the Egyptian people so much that they all lent money to the Israelites to clear out [...]. There is a lot to be learnt from that old story, but in our war we have no Moses’. (*SQ*, 346-347)

The Biblical precedent was invoked to legitimate past and prospective plans of dynamite attacks that would shake the English establishment, their “happy sense of security” (*SQ*, 346) and the moderate Irish parliamentarians. Unlike the visions that have been previously discussed, in which the dialectic between the two spheres results from Gonne’s direct experience as occultist, believer, dreamer and (self-)interpreter, here the spiritual plane is frozen into a paradigmatic story, removed from time and history, to serve the purpose of justifying violence. Joining forces with MacBride, the sacred mission to deliver Ireland from her oppressor was turned into a “divinely” inspired murderous project.

#### 4. Conclusion

The textualization of the otherworldly dimension in Gonne's memoir and letters shows the layered nature of her "spirit world" and the complex relationship she had with it. In this respect this lens contributes to a composite image of Maud Gonne and enriches the more familiar one of a woman blinded by her battles, an image that both the poetic tradition and *A Servant of the Queen* helped to forge. Through this prism we see the humble servant of the Irish cause and the writer fascinated "with the symbolic power of a woman leading men to freedom" (Steele 2007, 89), who prides herself on being turned by popular imagination into one of those legendary women. As an activist, Gonne drew inspiration and support from her Celtic and Catholic spirituality. The supernatural could represent a channel of communication with her chosen country, its past and its people; conversely, in her private life it could manifest itself as a dark force alienating the self. Although Gonne's professed disinclination to examine herself is evident in the letters, which plunge the reader into her busy everyday routine, they leave space for brief reflective moments. Among them Gonne's thoughts regarding her conversion to Catholicism and her syncretic faith stand out, and *A Servant of the Queen* elaborates and expands them. In the latter text the first section shows careful writerly premeditation: in it all the threads that make up Gonne's composite faith are anticipated and the autobiography's central theme – her life's mission – thus proves to be inextricably linked with the supernatural from the beginning.

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## Fog-Clearing and the “Irish Dimension” in Oscar Wilde’s Three Society Plays

*Richard Haslam*

Saint Joseph’s University (<[rhaslam@sju.edu](mailto:rhaslam@sju.edu)>)

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### *Abstract:*

Despite growing scholarly interest in how Oscar Wilde’s Irish heritage shaped the form and content of his creative works, critics exploring this area have paid less attention to his three society plays than to his fiction and his final play *The Importance of Being Earnest*. In seeking to rectify that imbalance, this essay first addresses the analytical implications of Wilde’s suggestion in 1893 that his own performed and planned society plays, along with certain works by his countryman George Bernard Shaw, constituted an “Hibernian” or “Celtic School”, whose key goals were to celebrate Henrik Ibsen, to deprecate theatrical censorship, and to extirpate the English “intellectual fogs” of Puritanism and Philistinism. Examining Wilde’s depictions of Puritanism, London society, and English national character in the three plays, the essay argues that their Irish facets turn out to be relatively modest in scale, consisting not of the allegorically encoded political commentaries previous critics claimed to discover in Wilde’s fiction and *The Importance of Being Earnest*, but instead strategies of plot, characterization, and dialogue designed to alert England to the urgent need “to clear” away its “intellectual fogs”.

**Keywords:** English National Character, English Puritanism, Ireland, Oscar Wilde, Society Plays

Over the past three decades, academic attention to Oscar Wilde’s nationality and its influence on his creativity has steadily grown<sup>1</sup>. This increasing interest includes scholarly debate concerning how best to identify “Irish dimensions” in Wilde’s creative works<sup>2</sup>. In his essays and speeches, letters and lectures, reviews and interviews, Wilde explicitly addressed Irish affairs, but in his poetry, drama and fiction he did not. Consequently, one technique for disclosing allegedly hidden “Irish dimen-

<sup>1</sup> For discussions of key criticism about Wilde and Irishness from the 1980s to the mid-2010s, see Haslam 2014a, Markey 2014, Killeen 2015. On more recent criticism, see Haslam 2020.

<sup>2</sup> For both the term “Irish dimension” and a skeptical perspective on the critical methods employed to identify it, see Small 2000, 67.

sion[s]” in Wilde’s creative pieces became popular: treating the works as if they were intentionally constructed allegories, whose supposedly encoded content the ingenious critic decoded<sup>3</sup>. The most frequent candidates for this millennia-old methodology (formerly called *hyponoia*, more recently termed ‘allegoresis’) have been *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), *The Happy Prince* (1888), *A House of Pomegranates* (1891) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895)<sup>4</sup>. In the latter, Gwendolen begs Jack to stop mentioning “the weather” because “[w]henver people” bring it up, she is sure “they mean something else,” which causes her to feel “so nervous”; Jack replies, “I do mean something else” (Wilde 2019, 776). For critics in search of an “Irish dimension” in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and the short stories, the “something else” usually means concealed political commentary. Nonetheless, recent Hibernicizing-via-allegorizing critics have paid surprisingly little attention to Wilde’s society plays, *Lady Windermere’s Fan* (1892), *A Woman of No Importance* (1893) and *An Ideal Husband* (1895), perhaps because their comparative realism (in plot, setting, and characterization, if not dialogue) affords greater resistance to allegoresis than the fairy tale and Gothic milieu of much of his fiction<sup>5</sup>. Responding to the imbalance in critical attention, this essay seeks to answer several questions. Do the society plays possess a distinctive and substantive “Irish dimension”? If so, where can it be found, and how extensive is it?

A useful starting-point for addressing these issues is W.B. Yeats’s review in *United Ireland* of Wilde’s *Lord Arthur Savile’s Crime and Other Stories* (1891). Yeats cites Wilde’s claim (from the revised, expanded *The Picture of Dorian Gray*) that “[b]eer, [the B]ible, and the seven deadly virtues have made [our] England what she is” (Yeats 1970, 110-111, citing with errors Wilde 2005, 335). In words that anticipate fellow countryman George Bernard Shaw’s 1895 review of *An Ideal Husband*, Yeats claims that “part of the Nemesis that has fallen upon” England “is a complete inability to understand anything” Wilde states, but “[w]e [in Ireland] should not find him so unintelligible – for much about him is Irish of the Irish” (1970, 111). As Shaw does later, Yeats sees in Wilde’s “life and works an extravagant Celtic crusade against Anglo-Saxon stupidity”, in which he “peppers John Bull with his peashooter of wit” (*ibidem*). Commenting on the title story of Wilde’s volume, Yeats finds in it “something of the same spirit that filled Ireland once with gallant, irresponsible ill-doing, but now it is in its right place making merry among the things of the mind, and laughing gaily at our most firm fixed convictions” – and Yeats locates this same “spirit” in Shaw (110-111)<sup>6</sup>.

Yeats’s recognition of affinities between Wilde and Shaw is prophetic: two years later, when sending Shaw a published copy of *Lady Windermere’s Fan*, Wilde inscribed the volume “‘Op. 1 of the Hibernian School, London ’93’”, and Hesketh Pearson subsequently identified the succeeding works of what Wilde elsewhere called “the great Celtic School” as Shaw’s *Widowers’ Houses* (1892), *A Woman of No Importance*, Shaw’s *The Philanderer* (1893) and *An Ideal Hus-*

<sup>3</sup> For critiques of allegoresis in Wilde studies, see Haslam 2014a; 2020; for the endorsement of a modified form of allegoresis, see Killeen 2015.

<sup>4</sup> On allegoresis and *hyponoia*, see Grondin 1994, 17-44.

<sup>5</sup> For example, Killeen (2005) ignores the three society plays; Ó Donghaile (2020) ignores *A Woman of No Importance* and allocates two sentences to *An Ideal Husband* and two pages to *Lady Windermere’s Fan*. Regarding the latter, Ó Donghaile misattributes a reference Lord Darlington makes about Lady Windermere as being about Mrs. Erlynne (2020, 228) (see Wilde 1999, 65).

<sup>6</sup> On Yeats’s observation, see also Jerusha McCormack, who argues that Wilde’s “use of English was not about power but about power plays” (2015, 26). For a detailed and insightful analysis of Wilde’s artistic influence on Yeats, see Doody 2018.

*band* (2000, 563)<sup>7</sup>. Given these plays’ thematic and stylistic differences, what might unify them sufficiently for Wilde to believe they formed a national “School”? Wilde’s letter to Shaw three months earlier provides a possible answer: “we are both Celtic, and I like to think that we are friends” (554)<sup>8</sup>. After praising Shaw’s *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (1891) (“such a delight to me that I constantly take it up, and always find it stimulating and refreshing”) and saluting Shaw’s critique of “the ridiculous institution of a stage-censorship” (from which Wilde had suffered the previous year, with the banning of performances of *Salomé*), he declared, “England is the land of intellectual fogs but you have done much to clear the air” (*ibidem*)<sup>9</sup>. For Wilde, then, key goals of the “Celtic” or “Hibernian” (but, interestingly, not Irish) “School” included celebrating Ibsen, deprecating “stage-censorship”, and extirpating the English “intellectual fogs” of Philistinism and Puritanism<sup>10</sup>. Building on Wilde’s implicit mission statement, this essay argues that the “Irish dimension” in his society plays turns out to be relatively modest in scale and consists not of the allegorically encoded political commentaries previous critics claimed to discover in Wilde’s fiction and *The Importance of Being Earnest* but instead strategies of plot, characterization, and dialogue designed to alert England to the urgent need “to clear” away its “intellectual fogs”.

### 1. Lady Windermere’s Fan: “*London is too full of fogs*”

The letter to Shaw was far from Wilde’s first reprimand of English attitudes and practices. On several occasions during his 1882 North American tour, he condemned England’s Philistinism, Puritanism, and political oppression of Ireland, and he maintained these stances in a number of book reviews and by joining the Liberal and pro-Home-Rule Eighty Club in 1887<sup>11</sup>. Wilde’s censuring of England (and, especially, its newspapers) intensified rapidly in response to the harsh reviews *The Picture of Dorian Gray* received after its June 1890 publication. Over the next eleven months, he criticized England’s national character, its journalism, and its Philistinism and Puritanism in letters to the *St. James’s Gazette*, *Daily Chronicle* and *Scots Observer*; in the essay “The Soul of Man Under Socialism” (1891) and in revisions to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and to his essays in dialogue “The Decay of Lying” (1889; 1891) and “The Critic as Artist” (1890; 1891)<sup>12</sup>. Since “The Soul” appeared in February 1891, the revised *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in April, and the revised “The Decay of Lying” and “The Critic as Artist” in May (as part of *Intentions*), *The Picture of Dorian Gray* controversy was still relatively fresh for Wilde during the summer of 1891, when he wrote *Lady Windermere’s Fan*. The play’s primary satirical targets are Puritans and “London Society”, which the play treats as two avatars of English national character (Small 1999, xix)<sup>13</sup>. Yet, whereas Lady Windermere’s ethical

<sup>7</sup> On Pearson’s identification of the plays, see note 2 in Wilde 2000, 563.

<sup>8</sup> On Wilde and Shaw’s interactions, see Weintraub 1993; Roche 2013; Cavendish-Jones 2019. Grene (2020) examines Wilde’s and Shaw’s interactions with Yeats. On Wilde’s use of the term “Celtic”, both in his epistolary exchange with Shaw and on other occasions, see Doody 2018, 83-86.

<sup>9</sup> On the banning of *Salomé*, see Ellmann 1988, 372-374; Sturgis 2018, 454-456.

<sup>10</sup> On Wilde’s admiration of Ibsen, see Powell 1990, 73-89.

<sup>11</sup> For his interviews during the American tour, see Wilde 2010; 2022. On the Eighty Club, see Wright, Kinsella 2015.

<sup>12</sup> For Wilde’s epistolary protests at reviews of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*’s first edition, see Wilde 2000, 428-449. On his subsequent revisions to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, see Haslam 2014b. For the subsequent revisions to “The Decay of Lying” and “The Critic as Artist”, see Wilde 2007, 78, 189-190, 192-193.

<sup>13</sup> Ian Small defines “London Society” as “an élite” marked “by political, social and cultural fame, but first and foremost by birth” (1999, xix). For a fuller discussion, see Small 1999, xix-xxxiii.



reeducation constitutes a rebuke to Puritanism's prioritization of medieval morals over modern manners, London Society's deceitful values prove more impervious to change, as revealed when Mrs Erlynne decides to return abroad, after ensnaring her new husband, Lord Augustus Lorton (Small 1999, xxxii-xxxiii).

To reproach Puritanism, the play shows how Lady Windermere's close-call in avoiding an adulterous elopement with Lord Darlington catalyzes a character change: she transforms from someone possessing "something of the Puritan", who permits "no compromise" "between what is right and what is wrong", into someone who no longer believes "people can be divided into the good and the bad, as though they were two separate races or creations" (Wilde 1999, 9, 73-74)<sup>14</sup>. Nevertheless, she still prefers to venerate certain "ideals" (including her herhagiographic recollection of the mother she believes dead) rather than to embrace fully the "[r]ealities" that Erlynne (her disguised – and distinctly unsaintly – mother) recommends (83). After Lady Windermere declares, "[i]f I lost my ideals, I should lose everything", Erlynne decides to let her daughter retain those necessary "illusions" (84, 80)<sup>15</sup>. This decision lends dramatic irony to one of Lady Windermere's renunciations of Puritanism. When Windermere tells her that "you and she [Erlynne] belong to different worlds", since "[i]nto your world evil has never entered", Lady Windermere replies, "[t]here is the same world for all of us, and good and evil, sin and innocence, go through it hand in hand" (87-88). But it is not quite "the same [epistemic] world for all" (*ibidem*), since Lady Windermere never learns that her mother abandoned her, Windermere never learns that his wife (temporarily) abandoned him, Augustus never learns that Erlynne manipulated him, and Darlington never learns that Lady Windermere visited him<sup>16</sup>. Erlynne alone knows all of the secrets.

The implication that keeping certain secrets is vital to London Society's smooth functioning (and that revealing them is dangerous) forms a key part of the play's satire of the dominating social order. "I don't know what society is coming to", the Duchess of Berwick tells Lady Windermere, since "[t]he most dreadful people seem to go everywhere" (14). She then reveals the secret "[t]he whole of London" and "everyone in London" knows: Windermere has been visiting the notorious Erlynne frequently and protractedly (8, 22). When Windermere subsequently pressures his wife to invite Erlynne to her twenty-first birthday party, he emphasizes that she "wants to get back into society" and this requires invitations "to houses where women who are in what is called Society nowadays do go" (24). Still in Puritan mode at this point, Lady Windermere retorts that "[i]f a woman really repents, she never wishes to return to the society that has *made or seen* her ruin" (25; my emphasis). At this early stage in her ethical journey, the potential irony of the phrase "made or seen" escapes her.

In Act II, the infatuated Augustus asks Windermere to help Erlynne enter "this demmed thing called Society" (33). Later, when Darlington begs Lady Windermere to run away with him, since she now knows of her husband's apparent infidelity, he does not pretend that "the world matters nothing, or the world's voice, or the voice of society", since "[t]hey matter a great deal" – in fact, "far too much" (42). Similarly, although Erlynne is initially

<sup>14</sup> Concerning Lady Windermere's ultimate rejection of binary moral dichotomies, compare Shaw's conclusion to the book Wilde praised so highly: to "those who may think that I have forgotten to reduce Ibsenism to a formula for them [...] its quintessence is that there is no formula" (1891, 134).

<sup>15</sup> On Ibsen's persistent critique of illusions, see Shaw 1891. For an insightful analysis of the interrogation of idealism in *Lady Windermere's Fan* and other works by Wilde, see Eltis 2017, 277-278.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Ellmann mentions the first three secrets but overlooks the Darlington one (1988, 364). On the function of lies in the play, see Small 1999, xxix-xxxii.

happy to "see that there are just as many fools in society as there used to be", she is surprised and chastened by the sudden maternal feeling that compels her to protect her daughter's reputation at the risk of her own recently reclaimed one (47). Consequently, she tells Lady Windermere that she plans "to live abroad again" because "[t]he English climate doesn't suit" her and her "heart is affected here" (75). She prefers "living in the south" because "London is too full of fogs and – and serious people"; she is unsure "[w]hether the fogs produce the serious people or whether the serious people produce the fogs", "but the whole thing rather gets on my nerves" (76)<sup>17</sup>.

Erlynn's indictments of "the English climate" and London's "fogs" and "serious people" anticipate Wilde's claim to Shaw that "England is the land of intellectual fogs" (2000, 554), but the play's satire of London Society nevertheless constitutes a much milder critique of the reigning social order than either the more direct (and less commercially successful) denunciations of Shaw and Ibsen, or the critiques contained in several of Wilde's 1890-1891 publications (see Small 1999, xxiv, xxvii-xxix, xxxii-xxxiii)<sup>18</sup>. Whereas Wilde's "Soul of Man" calls for English society's complete restructuring, *Lady Windermere's Fan* advocates for significant ethical change not in the larger system but only in the lives of specific individuals (xxxii-xxxiii). Thus, if we treat Wilde's critique of England as a valid "Irish dimension" in his work (as his invocation of an "Hibernian School" and a "Celtic School" suggests we should), then it operates at a scale that is much smaller in *Lady Windermere's Fan* than in Wilde's book reviews and essays and in the revised *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. This reduced scale (along with the play's resistance to allegoresis) may explain why Wilde's recent Hibernicizing critics have shown less interest in analyzing the society plays<sup>19</sup>.

In ironic contrast, however, an "Irish dimension" more specific than anything in *Lady Windermere's Fan* emerges in Charles Brookfield and Jimmy Glover's *The Poet and the Puppets: A Travesty Suggested by "Lady Windermere's Fan"*, which premiered in May 1892, three months after Wilde's play (Ellmann 1988, 369-370; Sturgis 2018, 447-448). In addition to burlesquing his career, his literary creations, his alleged plagiarism, and his supposed condescension to actors and audience, the travesty sought to sink Wilde's social status by restoring to him the Irish accent he said he had lost at Oxford (Ellmann 1988, 38). Brookfield and Glover's parody opens with "[m]ysterious music which gradually resolves itself into an Irish jig" (2003, 217), and the Poet (Wilde) then sings, to the tune of "Saint Patrick's Day":

When first I was hurled on the face of this world  
 People thought 'twas a thunderbolt fallen.  
 But when they found who had arrived a Hurroo!  
 Rent the air - faith 'twas something appalling!  
 Then a crowd came along many thousand men strong  
 To gaze on this wonderful child.

<sup>17</sup> Lord Augustus, happy to accompany Mrs Erlynn abroad, also decries the "demmed climate", along with "[d]emmed clubs", "demmed cooks", and "demmed everything" (Wilde 1999, 88).

<sup>18</sup> As Matthew Sturgis argues, the play's "distinction was not just its scintillating dialogue but also its blithe dissection (*and acceptance*) of society's convenient hypocrisies and double standards" (2018, 424; my emphasis). See also Williams 2020, 103-104.

<sup>19</sup> Noreen Doody sees in the Act Two exchange between the Duchess of Berwick and the Australian Mr. Hopper "a double laugh for the colonized listener at the grand dismissiveness and disregard of the imperialist for a whole continent and its people" (2018, 76). However, as Josephine Guy notes in her "Commentary" on *Lady Windermere's Fan*, Wilde included a "pejorative representation of Australia" in several of his works, so the humor here is more likely to be at Australia's expense rather than in its defense (2021, 546).

For they knew by his cry and the fire in his eye  
It was neighbour O'Flaherty's child. (Brookfield, Glover 2003, 217; Ellmann 1988, 369-370)

After Brookfield and Glover read Wilde the script (at his request), he displayed patronizing indulgence, but he felt considerably less tolerant a few weeks after the travesty's premiere, when England's play licenser E.F.S. Pigott banned performances of *Salomé* (Ellmann 1988, 372-373; Sturgis 2018, 454-456). In an interview with *The Pall Mall Budget* to protest this "most contemptible" act, Wilde indignantly compared Pigott's consent for "the personality of an artist to be presented in a caricature on the stage [the travesty]" with his refusal to "allow the work of that artist to be shown under very rare and very beautiful conditions" (Wilde 1979d, 188). When writing to William Rothenstein about the ban, Wilde was sufficiently incensed to insert three exclamation marks: "at the same moment when he [Pigott] prohibited *Salomé*, he licenced a burlesque of *Lady Windermere's Fan* in which an actor dressed up like me and imitated my voice and manner!!!" (Wilde 2000, 531-532). He also lamented the absence of protest against such "censorship" by any actors or theater critics except William Archer: "[t]his shows how bad our stage must be, and also shows how Philistine the English journalists are" (533)<sup>20</sup>.

In *The Pall Mall Budget* interview, Wilde sounded a similarly anti-English note, declaring that he did not wish to call himself "a citizen of a country that shows such narrowness in its artistic judgement" and that he was "not English" but "Irish – which is quite another thing" (1979d, 188). To a French interviewer, he stated that English "people are essentially anti-artistic and narrow-minded"; that he has "English friends to whom [...] he is] attached[,] but [he does] not love [...] the English" people as a whole; that "[t]here is a great deal of hypocrisy in England"; and that "[t]he typical Briton is Tartuffe seated in his shop behind the counter" (190). *Lady Windermere's Fan* lacks this kind of explicit anti-English hostility, but Wilde had voiced similar sentiments in the expanded *Dorian Gray*, so it is unsurprising that *A Woman of No Importance*, begun a few weeks after the *Salomé* ban, draws heavily upon dialogue from *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Small 1993, xxix-xxx; Ellmann 1988, 381).

## 2. A Woman of No Importance: "like a dead thing smeared with gold"

Wilde's anger at caricature and censorship fueled this most anti-English of his society plays, yet its harshest critique is voiced not by the English dandy Lord Illingworth (a variation on *Dorian Gray's* Sir Henry Wotton) but the American Puritan Hester Worsley. After overhearing what Wilde's draft notes call a "fin de siècle conversation on marriage" among Lady Hunstanton's female guests, Hester expresses disapproval and distinguishes between English society and "true American society", which "consists simply of all the good women and good men we have in our country" (Small 1993, xxxvi; Wilde 1993, 43). Seeking to smooth things over, Hunstanton concedes that "in England we have too many artificial social barriers", but Hester remains unmollified:

You rich people in England, you don't know how you are living. How could you know? You shut out from your society the gentle and the good. You laugh at the simple and the pure. Living, as you all do, on others and by them, you sneer at self-sacrifice, and if you throw bread to the poor, it is merely to keep them quiet for a season. With all your pomp and wealth and art you don't know how to live – you don't even know that. You love the beauty that you can see and touch and handle, the beauty that you

<sup>20</sup> See also Wilde's letter to William Archer (2000, 534).

can destroy, and do destroy, but of the unseen beauty of life, of the unseen beauty of a higher life, you know nothing. You have lost life's secret. Oh, your English society seems to me shallow, selfish, foolish. It has blinded its eyes, and stopped its ears. It lies like a leper in purple. It sits like a dead thing smeared with gold. It is all wrong, all wrong. (Wilde 1993, 44)<sup>21</sup>

The first-night audience subjected to this reproof included Arthur Balfour, Chief Secretary of Ireland, and the Liberal Unionist MP Joseph Chamberlain, but the lines were cut from later performances, perhaps in response to some jeers accompanying the applause at the final curtain (Ellmann 1988, 381; Sturgis 2018, 478). Wilde retained Illingworth's censure of "the British intellect", which echoes passages in "The Decay of Lying" and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, but Hester's and Illingworth's critiques of English society and national character are ultimately weakened because Hester (like Mrs Erlynne) plans to depart England at the play's end (accompanied by her fiancé Gerald Arbuthnot and his mother Mrs. Arbuthnot) and also because Illingworth is finally portrayed as a callous, controlling "man of no importance" (Wilde 1993, 20, 112; 2005, 320; 2007, 101)<sup>22</sup>. In addition, as with *Lady Windermere's Fan*, at the play's close the established social order dominates still<sup>23</sup>.

Nonetheless, like the earlier play, *A Woman of No Importance* includes a sustained repudiation of Puritanism, both English and American. With respect to the English brand, *A Woman of No Importance* mocks the pompous M.P. Mr Kelvil, who spends the mornings during his stay at Hunstanton Chase "writing" on "Purity", his "usual subject", since he believes "the poorer classes of this country display a marked desire for a higher ethical standard" (Wilde 1993, 13-14). Kelvil laments that Illingworth appears "lacking in that fine faith in the nobility and purity of life which is so important in this century" and "does not appreciate the beauty of our English home-life", "the mainstay of our moral system in England" (Wilde 1993, 21-22). Unsurprisingly, the play's two dandies, Illingworth and Mrs Allonby, scorn Hester as a Puritan, and Allonby's dare to Illingworth to kiss Hester sets in motion the climax of Act III, in which Mrs Arbuthnot, to prevent Gerald from striking Illingworth (for assaulting Hester), reveals to Gerald that Illingworth is his father (27-29, 87-88).

Yet, by forcing himself on Hester in Act III, Illingworth wrong-foots the play's previous pro-dandy and anti-Puritan stance, and this may explain why Wilde removed from an earlier draft Illingworth's shrill and extended condemnation of English Puritanism, which had been originally placed in the same act (119-20)<sup>24</sup>. In contrast, Hester's reeducation constitutes a more successful critique of Puritanism: like *Lady Windermere*, Hester switches from maintaining that "the sins of the parents" being "visited on the children" represents "a just law" and "God's law", to admitting that she "was wrong" and that "God's law is only Love" (80, 102). Her new perspective explains why, a little earlier, she defies her fiancé Gerald and encourages Mrs Arbuthnot not to marry Illingworth, since "[t]hat would be real dishonour" and "real disgrace" (100). The scale of her peripeteia is highlighted when Illingworth asks which "*fînde-siècle* person" persuaded Gerald to stop pressuring his mother to marry Illingworth; Mrs

<sup>21</sup> Michael McAteer links the "leper in purple" and "dead thing smeared with gold" similes to ornate diction of *Salomé* (2016, 28-29).

<sup>22</sup> Lord Illingworth's line "Discontent is the first step in the progress of a man or a nation" (Wilde 1993, 60) is, according to David Alderson, an implicitly Irish challenge to "the restrictive English puritan mentality" (1997, 52).

<sup>23</sup> However, the fact that Lord Illingworth is portrayed negatively by the play's end may (or may not) transform his earlier defense of society into Wilde's muted critique of it: "[t]o be in it is merely a bore. But to be out of it simply a tragedy. Society is a necessary thing" (Wilde 1993, 68).

<sup>24</sup> The excised speech drew heavily on anti-Puritan passages from the revised *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Arbuthnot replies, “The Puritan”, at which Illingworth “[w]inces” (110). Thus, as in *Lady Windermere’s Fan*, Wilde’s effort to dispel English “intellectual fogs” is more successful with Puritanism than with the ruling social order, even though the Puritan in this case happens to be American.

As also happened with *Lady Windermere’s Fan*, *A Woman of No Importance’s* success generated satiric pushback, some of which again featured an anti-Irish component, including cartoons in *Punch* and *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* that depicted Wilde and the play’s characters as members of a Christy minstrelsy troupe (Mendelssohn 2018, 238; Plates 44 and 45). Michèle Mendelssohn has linked these caricatures to minstrelsy routines that Wilde may (or may not) have witnessed or read about a decade earlier during his USA tour, some of which were designed to satirize his aesthetic creed and Irish heritage, and she argues that the memory of these routines helped in turn to shape his society plays: “[e]xposure to Irish and black caricatures taught Wilde what he needed to know to turn his eye on *fin de siècle* Anglo-American socialites, and turn them into characters who quipped like minstrels” (238). She acknowledges that “[n]owhere did he mention that [...] his dramatic techniques] were also hallmarks of Christy minstrelsy” (231) and also that he “didn’t mention these satirists in his correspondence”, but she believes “it would be absurd to imagine that he didn’t know about them” (239). Mendelssohn’s argument that Wilde’s artistic “approach” in the society plays was “minstrel-inspired” and resulted in “his own kind of whiteface theatre” relies on indirect rather than direct evidence (*ibidem*). This indirect evidence includes the comparisons that reviewers in *Punch*, *Judy*, and *The Guardian* newspaper made between *A Woman of No Importance’s* dialogue and Christy minstrelsy exchanges (237). Yet, as John Cooper notes, “there is no evidence that Wilde’s staging of comic repartee was intentionally imitative of interlocutor minstrelsy”; Cooper also highlights another crucial factor: “the comic press” were seeking “to denigrate Wilde by suggesting such a connection” (2019 n.p.). With similar impulses to belittle, Brookfield and Glovertoo had included a Christy minstrelsy sketch in their travesty of *Lady Windermere’s Fan* (2003, 237-240). Mendelssohn notes the minstrelsy section in *The Poet and the Puppets* but misses a key related question: since satirists and hostile reviewers were using minstrelsy to mock Wilde, why would he then borrow from it for his own work? (2018, 227-228). Thus, as with the relationship between *Lady Windermere’s Fan* and *The Poet and The Puppets*, the satiric response to *A Woman of No Importance* in the reviewers’ use of minstrelsy comparisons actually constituted an “Irish dimension” (in the form of anti-Irishness) as large in scope as anything in Wilde’s play itself.

### 3. An Ideal Husband: “you know what your English newspapers are like”

As in the two earlier plays, a key plot strand of *An Ideal Husband* traces the ethical reeducation of a Puritan, in this case Lady Gertrude Chiltern: she changes from someone who adores “ideals” and imposes them on her husband Sir Robert (who finds her “pitiless in her perfection – cold and stern and without mercy”), into someone who learns (in Lord Goring’s words) that “[n]obody is incapable of doing a foolish thing” or “a wrong thing”, and “that life cannot be understood [...] cannot be lived without much charity” (Wilde 2013, 45, 81-82, 99, 63)<sup>25</sup>. The blackmailer Mrs Cheveley offers an additional critique of Puritanism, as she taunts her intended victim Robert:

<sup>25</sup> On the play’s critique of idealism and its connections to Ibsen and Shaw, see Eltis’s Introduction (2013, xix-xx).

Remember to what a point your Puritanism in England has brought you. In old days nobody pretended to be a bit better than his neighbours. In fact, to be a bit better than one's neighbour was considered excessively vulgar and middle-class. Nowadays, with our modern mania for morality, everyone has to pose as a paragon of purity, incorruptibility, and all the other seven deadly virtues – and what is the result? You all go over like ninepins – one after the other. Not a year passes in England without somebody disappearing. Scandals used to lend charm, or at least interest, to a man – now they crush him. And yours is a very nasty scandal. You couldn't survive it. (32-33)

Nevertheless, as was the case with Illingworth in *A Woman of No Importance*, Cheveley's negative characterization ultimately weakens the play's overall denunciation of English Puritanism.

On the other hand, Wilde's critique of "London Society" builds to some degree upon Cheveley's negativity. Lady Markby congratulates herself on her "small shred of decent reputation", which is "just enough to prevent the lower classes making painful observations through the windows of the carriage", and she contends that "our Society is terribly overpopulated" and "someone should arrange a proper scheme of assisted emigration"; agreeing with her, Cheveley comments that, on returning to London after several years, she finds "Society has become dreadfully mixed", and "[o]ne sees the oddest people everywhere", a comment with which she unknowingly criticizes herself (71)<sup>26</sup>. Lord Caversham, who is depicted much more positively than Cheveley, anticipates the irony of this critique by declaring he is "[s]ick of London Society" (8) for being insufficiently exclusive and for consisting of "a lot of damned nobodies talking about nothing" (21). Nevertheless, Caversham's critiques are challenged by the play's two most positively depicted characters: Goring, Caversham's son, tells his father that he "love[s] talking about nothing", since "[i]t is the only thing I know anything about"; and Mabel Chiltern professes to "love London Society" because "it has immensely improved" and "is entirely composed now of beautiful idiots and brilliant lunatics", which is "[j]ust what Society should be" (2, 8).

The play's unstable critiques of English Puritanism and "London Society" are matched by its conflicted depictions of English national character. Cheveley voices the most negative observations about the English, but (as noted) she is also the play's least positively portrayed character. She claims that "a typical Englishman" is "always dull and usually violent"; and earlier, after denouncing English Puritanism, she reminds Robert of "what your English newspapers are like" and asks him to "[t]hink of their loathsome joy", of "the delight they would have in dragging you down, of the mud and mire they would plunge you in", and of "the hypocrite with his greasy smile penning his leading article, and arranging the foulness of the public placard" (78, 33-34)<sup>27</sup>. The play supplements this critique of English newspapers with Robert's claim that "spies are of no use nowadays", since "[t]he newspapers do their work instead", to which Goring replies, "And thunderingly well they do it" (97). However, Robert's guilty past undermines to some degree the ethos of such denunciations, as can be seen when he issues a haughty dismissal: "[y]ou have lived so long abroad, Mrs Cheveley, that you seem to be unable to realize

<sup>26</sup> The reference to a "scheme of assisted emigration" may (or may not) disclose another "Irish dimension" to the play.

<sup>27</sup> As Eltis points out, these remarks appear to refer to scandals involving Sir Charles Dilke and Charles Stewart Parnell (2013, xx), which makes the Parnell allusion another, if minor, "Irish dimension". Similar allusions to the Parnell and Dilke scandals occur in "The Soul of Man Under Socialism" (Wilde 2007, 255-256, 575-576). On Wilde's admiration for Parnell, especially during his political and personal trials, see Ellmann 1988, 289-290; Sturgis 2018, 358-359. Mrs Cheveley's milder critiques of the English (Wilde 2003, 27, 35, 37, 104-106) include her observation that "[i]f one could only teach the English how to talk, and the Irish how to listen, society here [in London] would be quite civilized" (Wilde 2013, 106).

that you are talking to an English gentleman"; she replies, "I realize that I am talking to a man who laid the foundation of his fortune by selling to a Stock Exchange speculator a Cabinet secret" (31). Later, she sarcastically describes Robert to Goring as "so upright a gentleman, so honourable an English gentleman" (113). Thus, the "Irish dimension" inherent in the play's critique of Englishness and English newspapers is undermined to some degree because it is primarily voiced by ethically compromised characters like Cheveley and Robert.

At the same time, a counter-current of dialogue explicitly and implicitly praises Englishness and the Empire. Goring tells Robert that to confess to his crime means Robert "would never be able to talk morality again. And in England a man who can't talk morality twice a week to a large, popular, immoral audience is quite over as a serious politician", with "nothing left for him as a profession except Botany or the Church" (54-55). Yet Goring prefaces this anti-English critique by saying "one of the best things" about "the English" is that they "can't stand a man who is always saying he is in the right, but they are very fond of a man who admits that he has been in the wrong" (54)<sup>28</sup>. In addition, Caversham, described as "[a] fine Whig type", approvingly quotes *The Times'* praise of Robert as one who "[r]epresents what is best in English public life" and who makes a "[n]oble contrast to the lax morality so common among foreign politicians"; Caversham later claims that Sir Robert has "got what we want so much in political life nowadays – high character, high moral tone, high principles" (7, 117, 131). This might initially be viewed as dramatic irony, but Robert ultimately preserves his secret and salvages his career, and the play does not appear to disapprove of his decisions to reject confession and resignation<sup>29</sup>.

Neither does the play challenge the positive image of the British Empire that Robert promotes. He describes the "Argentine [Canal Company] scheme" as "a commonplace Stock Exchange swindle", in contrast to the British Government's purchase of "Suez Canal shares", which was "a very great and splendid undertaking" that "gave us our direct route to India", and whose "imperial value" made it "necessary that we should have control" (28). This too might initially be treated as dramatic irony, but the play's ending implicitly confers approval on Robert's pro-imperial stance, as Caversham congratulates him on receiving a "seat in the Cabinet": "[i]f the country doesn't go to the dogs or the Radicals, we shall have you Prime Minister, some day" (140)<sup>30</sup>.

The play's seeming complicity in imperialism and Machiavellianism raises questions for some contemporary critics: "[w]as Wilde satirising or flattering the privileged elite? Was the play suggesting that moral probity was politically essential or distractingly irrelevant...?" (Eltis 2013, vii). Its sexism raises further questions: "[w]as the play suggesting [...] that women were to be excluded from the political sphere, or that their contribution was an essential counterbalance to men's self-serving ambition?" (*ibidem*). The most pressing question concerns Goring's Act IV homily to Lady Chiltern, which sounds extremely sexist to many contemporary ears:

<sup>28</sup> A similar mix of critique and praise pervades Lady Markby's comment to Mabel that she "will always be as pretty as possible", which "is the best fashion there is, and the only fashion that England succeeds in setting" (70).

<sup>29</sup> Wilde's implicit indulgence of the flaws of both Robert and London society emerges in an interview: "if Robert Chiltern, the Ideal Husband, were a common clerk, *the humanity of his tragedy* would be none the less poignant. I have placed him in the higher ranks of life merely because *that is the side of social life with which I am best acquainted*. In a play dealing with actualities to write with ease one must write with knowledge" (Wilde 1979c, 250; my emphasis).

<sup>30</sup> Given Caversham's positive depiction, his remarks complicate both Michael McAteer's contention that the play is an "*exposé* of the corrupt nature of Imperial finance" (2016, 34) and Sos Eltis's summing up of Robert as a "corrupt politician" and of the play as "Wilde's most pointed exercise in demolishing the language of moral superiority in the specific context of English national identity" (2017, 279).

You love Robert. Do you want to kill his love for you? What sort of existence will he have if you rob him of the fruits of his ambition, if you take him from the splendour of a great political career, if you close the doors of public life against him, if you condemn him to sterile failure, he who was made for triumph and success? Women are not meant to judge us, but to forgive us when we need forgiveness. Pardon, not punishment, is their mission. Why should you scourge him with rods for a sin done in his youth, before he knew you, before he knew himself? A man's life is of more value than a woman's. It has larger issues, wider scope, greater ambitions. A woman's life revolves in curves of emotions. It is upon lines of intellect that a man's life progresses. Don't make any terrible mistake, Lady Chiltern. A woman who can keep a man's love, and love him in return, has done all the world wants of women, or should want of them. (Wilde 2013, 134-135)

Soon after digesting this patriarchal advice, Lady Chiltern regurgitates it to Robert:

A man's life is of more value than a woman's. It has larger issues, wider scope, greater ambitions. Our lives revolve in curves of emotions. It is upon lines of intellect that a man's life progresses. I have just learnt this, and much else with it, from Lord Goring. And I will not spoil your life for you, nor see you spoil it as a sacrifice to me, a useless sacrifice! (136)

Seeking to salvage Wilde's radical reputation from such a reactionary episode, Sos Eltis points to problems in the play concerning coherence, contemporary performance decisions, and audience reception. Regarding the first, she argues that "[t]he play does not establish a consistent viewpoint on the issues it raises" (2013, xv). She acknowledges that Goring's speech "is particularly problematic", since "it is positioned as the traditional *raisonneur's* final verdict", but she maintains that it "comes as something of a surprise from the character who delivers it and is hard to read as the logical conclusion of the preceding action" (Wilde 2013, xvi). This difficulty supposedly arises because in Act II Goring "dismissed his friend's worship of wealth and power over others as 'a thoroughly shallow creed'", and "it is hard to see how the intervening action could have given Goring a higher opinion of his friend's desire for greater political power" (Eltis 2013, xvi, citing Wilde 2013, 51). Regarding performance issues, Eltis argues that "Lady Chiltern's unlikely word-for-word parroting of Goring's advice tends not to validate his words but rather to teeter on the edge of absurdity – an inherent instability which leads most directors to cut her speech drastically" (Eltis 2013, xvi). Finally, regarding reception issues, she concludes that "*An Ideal Husband* is a deceptive and indeterminate play, which can offer different meanings according to the assumptions of its audience members" (xxii)<sup>31</sup>.

Eltis's points regarding performance and reception are relevant, but the origin of the play's supposed puzzles can be accounted for just as parsimoniously by acknowledging our contemporary unease at its sexism and imperialism. Concerning the puzzle of apparent character inconsistency, a solution can be inferred from Eltis's recognition that "[g]oring separates male intellect from female emotion and apparently consigns women to a purely domestic and supportive role" (xvi). In other words, in Act II Goring speaks to Robert man to man, but in Act IV he speaks to Lady Chiltern man to woman. Between those conversations, he speaks to Cheveley and exonerates Robert's crime as "an act of folly done in his youth, dishonourable, I admit, shameful, I admit, unworthy of him, I admit, and therefore [...] not his true character" (Wilde 2013, 107). Thus, *contra* Eltis's argument, the play actually does possess in Goring a coherent, stable, and determinate spokesperson – and one who also happens to speak for Wilde.

<sup>31</sup> Compare Eltis's defense of *An Ideal Husband* in 1996, 152-169. Kristian Williams also struggles to reconcile the play's reactionary politics with the more radical positions Wilde adopts elsewhere (2020, 105-111).



We know this because in an 1895 interview he defined the play's "entire psychology" as "the difference in the way in which a man loves a woman from that in which a woman loves a man, the passion that women have for making ideals (which is their weakness) and the weakness of a man who dare not show his imperfections to the thing he loves"; for examples of this "psychology", he pointed to the Chilterns' exchanges at the end of Act I and II and to Goring's Act IV speech, in which he "points out the higher importance of a man's life over a woman's" (Wilde 1979a, 241)<sup>32</sup>. Wilde confirmed Goring's exemplary status three years later when composing the play's stage directions: Goring is "[a] *flawless dandy*"; one who "*stands in immediate relation to modern life, makes it indeed, and so masters it*"; "*the first well-dressed philosopher in the history of thought*"; and, in preparing to deliver his gender roles homily to Lady Chiltern, Goring reveals "*the philosopher that underlies the dandy*" (Wilde 2013, 18, 84, 134).

Wilde's reactionary gender ideology is highly germane to any consideration of the play's overall politics, including its possible "Irish dimension", because it furnishes a caveat against the kind of idealizing presentism that would like to preserve Wilde's radical credentials by explaining away or ignoring the play's chauvinism, classism, sexism, and imperialism<sup>33</sup>. And Wilde, of course, was not alone in exhibiting an agenda that from our present perspective registers as reactionary. When his "Hibernian School" co-founder Shaw reviewed *An Ideal Husband*, he ignored its regressive aspects, instead praising Wilde as "our only thorough playwright", who "plays with everything: with wit, with philosophy, with drama, with actors and audiences, with the whole theatre" (1970, 176). Echoing Yeats's earlier review of *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime* and highlighting what we would now term the play's "Irish dimension", Shaw declares that for so "acutely Irish an Irishman" as Wilde "there is nothing in the world quite so exquisitely comic as an Englishman's seriousness" (177). Shaw maintains the play has "no thesis", but he believes "[t]he modern note" is "struck in Sir Robert Chiltern's assertion of the individuality and courage of his wrongdoing as against the mechanical idealism of his stupidly good wife, and in his bitter criticism of a love that is only the reward of merit" (*ibidem*). As Shaw's review shows, he either does not see or does not acknowledge the sexism and imperialism that make some contemporary critics uneasy<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> Eltis cites this interview but ignores its implications for Goring's role as Wilde's spokesperson (2013, xiv).

<sup>33</sup> As Kerry Powell notes, "[r]ecent critics of Wilde have been creative in trying to find something between the lines of this regrettable scene that will exculpate him from the gender essentialism and misogynist politics that bring about narrative closure in *An Ideal Husband*" (2009, 95). Powell's extended analysis of the scene (including its earlier drafts) is invaluable (91-96, 99-100). On Wilde's regressive gender politics when contrasting English with American culture in the 1880s, see Mendelsohn 2012.

<sup>34</sup> Some contemporary critics – but not all: Michael McAteer insightfully contextualizes the play's "geographies of empire" but ignores Goring's sexist theory of gender roles (2016, 33), as does Petra Dierkes-Thrun. Although Dierkes-Thrun acknowledges the society plays' "problematic picture of femininity" and "some potentially misogynous aspects in their satire of the upper class's manners and social and moral hypocrisy", she also maintains that "[s]ome feminist scholars have focused too much on these potential misogynous elements and downplayed the more progressive aspects of Wilde's work to the point of distorting the complex picture of Wilde's paradoxical working method" (2015, 76, 92-93); she identifies Victoria White as one scholar with whom she disagrees. White 1998 does critique Wilde's misogyny, as displayed in several works and utterances, but, for some reason, she does not include *An Ideal Husband*. Helen Davies, who also ignores Goring's speech, acknowledges that some critics have discerned "a troubling strand of misogyny" in Wilde's writings, but she also points to critics who "have highlighted" his "commitment to women's interests and rights" (2015, 170). So too, Jerusha McCormack acknowledges that *Salomé* exhibits "violent, not to say hysterical, misogyny" (1998a, 1), but she defends Goring's speech in Act IV as a triumph of "the creed of dandyism" over those who believe the "fiction" of a "single, integrated 'moral' self" (1998b, 91). In contrast, Kristian Williams finds Goring's speech "astonishingly sexist" (2020, 106).

#### 4. Conclusion: Dissolving “fogs” and “lashing vice”

The three society plays continue in a more subdued manner the critique of English values Wilde previously voiced in the expanded *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and various essays, reviews, and interviews. *A Woman of No Importance* is the play most critical of English national character, and *An Ideal Husband* the least. *Lady Windermere’s Fan* avoids that particular target, but (like the other two plays) critiques the upper-class or London society. Nevertheless, perhaps due to commercial British theatre’s conservative constraints, Wilde pulls his punches<sup>35</sup>. As a result, in all three works, those who pose the greatest threat to the social order choose – or are forced – to leave.

On the other hand, with respect to Wilde’s “Hibernian School” quest to “clear” England’s “air” of “intellectual fogs”, the three plays achieve their greatest artistic success and display their most visible “Irish dimension” in the critique of English (and American) Puritanism (Wilde 2000, 554). This success springs from the fact that the plays’ critique of Puritanism is artistically integrated within plot and characterization, through the narratives of Lady Windermere, Hester Worsley, and Lady Chiltern, whereas (with the exception of Hester) the critique of English national character in *A Woman of No Importance* and *An Ideal Husband* is expressed principally through the *bon mots* of frequently contemptuous characters driven by frequently contemptible motives<sup>36</sup>.

Of course, the society plays’ critique of England’s “intellectual fogs” necessarily introduces a didactic element. Throughout his pre-prison public life, Wilde regularly asserted that literature should avoid moralizing, even though *The Picture of Dorian Gray* debate forced him to admit how difficult he found it “to keep” the novel’s “inherent moral subordinate to the artistic and dramatic effect” and not “too obvious” (478). We should bear that candid admission in mind when reflecting on his response to “[a]n alderman named Routledge”, who “had praised Wilde for calling a spade a spade and for lashing vice in *Lady Windermere’s Fan*” (Ellmann 1988, 367). Wilde rejected both charges and declared that if the work contained any “one particular doctrine” it was “sheer individualism”: “it is not for anyone to censure what anyone else does, and everyone should go his own way, to whatever place he chooses, in exactly the way that he chooses” (Ellmann 1988, 367-368; Sturgis 2018, 448-449). Nonetheless, one “vice” Wilde undoubtedly did enjoy “lashing” was English Puritanism, and that specific form of “censure” indisputably fueled his fog-clearing project and produced the most consistent “Irish dimension” in his society plays.

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<sup>35</sup> On these constraints, see Small 1999, xxiv, 1993, xxvi.

<sup>36</sup> George Orwell provides a more positive reading of Wilde’s use in *Lady Windermere’s Fan* of a “chorus of worldly ‘sophisticated’ people who keep up a ceaseless running attack upon all the beliefs current in Wilde’s day” (cited in Williams 2020, 114-115).

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## Tra rispetto per la natura e *fairy faith*: i racconti (*ever*)green di Eddie Lenihan

Luca Sarti

Università degli Studi della Campania (<[luca.sarti@unicampania.it](mailto:luca.sarti@unicampania.it)>)

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### Abstract:

The bond between fairies and nature is as old as the world. Based on this assumption, this study aims to reflect on the relationship between *fairy faith* and respect for nature through the work of the Irish storyteller and activist Eddie Lenihan. After a brief introduction to the art of storytelling in the Emerald Isle, the first part of the article will revolve around the *seanchaí* and his commitment to preserving the Irish cultural heritage. The second part will then centre on *Meeting the Other Crowd: The Fairy Stories of Hidden Ireland* (2003), an anthology of what I call “*ever*green” stories collected by Lenihan since the 1970s in southwest Ireland. Specifically, I will focus on some fairy tales emblematic of the close connection between the natural world and the Good People of Éire, in particular on stories that function as a warning to those who intend to interfere with nature in order to pursue their interests often in the name of a supposed technological progress.

**Keywords:** Cultural Heritage, Eddie Lenihan, Fairy Faith, Nature, Storytelling

Quello tra fate e natura è un legame antico come il mondo (Kruse 2021, 5)<sup>1</sup>. A tal proposito, basti pensare che una delle tante teorie sulle origini delle fate vede queste creature “come personificazioni delle forze naturali” (Conese 2012, 25) e che in diverse culture esse hanno il compito di proteggere i luoghi naturali che abitano, come alberi, boschi e foreste<sup>2</sup>. Pertanto,

<sup>1</sup> Nel presente studio – che è parte del lavoro di tesi dottorale svolto dal 2019 al 2022, *I fairy tale irlandesi nelle raccolte del terzo millennio: identità, trasmissioni, nuove narrazioni* –, il termine “fate”, *fairies*, è utilizzato nell’accezione presa in considerazione da Massimo Conese in *La malattia delle fate. Origini degli esseri fatati* per riferirsi, in senso ampio, a “tutta quella congerie di esseri sovrannaturali (gnomi e folletti, ad esempio) che popolano le cosiddette ‘fiabe di magia’”, presenti nelle tradizioni narrative “di popoli appartenenti a quasi ogni cultura ed epoca” (2012, 15).

<sup>2</sup> È questo il caso, per citarne uno fra tanti, del Salvanèl, folletto del folclore trentino che, secondo la leggenda, si vendica di chi strappa fiori, abbatte alberi, getta rifiuti o accende fuochi nei boschi che abita. Per un appro-

non sorprende che nei racconti che le hanno per protagoniste, fra i vari temi affrontati, quello del rispetto per i *fairies* e i siti ai quali sono associati emerga in maniera significativa e costante. Partendo da questa premessa, il presente articolo intende rappresentare un'occasione per riflettere sulla connessione tra credenza negli esseri fatati, *fairy faith*, e rispetto per la natura attraverso la figura e l'opera di Eddie Lenihan: storyteller e attivista da decenni impegnato nella preservazione del patrimonio irlandese narrativo e paesaggistico. In seguito a una breve introduzione sull'arte dello storytelling nell'Isola di Smeraldo, una prima parte dello studio sarà dedicata alla presentazione del noto *seanchaí*. Una seconda parte sarà invece incentrata su *Meeting the Other Crowd: The Fairy Stories of Hidden Ireland* (2003), antologia di storie raccolte da Lenihan nell'Irlanda sudoccidentale a partire dagli anni Settanta. In particolare, ci si soffermerà su alcuni racconti che è possibile definire (*ever*)*green*, sintomatici dello stretto rapporto tra mondo naturale e Piccolo Popolo nel Paese Verde. Racconti che, in definitiva, fungono da monito per chi intende interferire con la natura al fine di perseguire interessi personali o in nome del cosiddetto avanzamento tecnologico.

### 1. L'Irlanda e le parole

La stretta connessione tra Irlanda e storytelling può essere epitomata con le prime tre parole utilizzate da Kathleen Krull nell'introduzione di *A Pot O' Gold: A Treasury of Irish Stories, Poetry, Folklore, and (of course) Blarney*, e cioè: "Ireland loves words" (2009, 1)<sup>3</sup>. Si tratta di un amore per le parole che trova le sue radici in un tempo lontano, nel passato celtico dell'isola, ed è contraddistinto da scopi differenti ma non inconciliabili tra loro. Come sottolinea Vito Carrassi, citando George Denis Zimmermann, nel meticoloso studio *Il fairy tale nella tradizione narrativa irlandese: un itinerario storico e culturale*, già nella concezione celtica lo storytelling svolgeva difatti una duplice funzione: da un lato, era ritenuto un'attività seria perché consentiva alla conoscenza tradizionale di essere tramandata e contribuiva al consolidamento dell'identità della comunità, della cosiddetta *Irishness*; dall'altro, rappresentava la forma di intrattenimento favorita a ogni livello sociale, e quindi "lo svago preferito da una popolazione che, a tutt'oggi, conserva una predilezione esclusiva per l'arte della parola" (2008, 38). Ovviamente, onde evitare generalizzazioni, si precisa che questa predilezione non va intesa come dote comune appartenente a tutti gli irlandesi. A questo riguardo, in *The Irish Storyteller*, sostanzioso volume dedicato a questa figura emblematica del panorama narrativo irlandese, folklorico e letterario, Zimmermann mette in risalto che:

The Irish are often said to have great facility in verbal expression, to love eloquence, and to spin tales. In actual fact, verbal agility is unevenly distributed among them and there are good and bad storytellers everywhere, but it can hardly be denied that Ireland has enjoyed a highly verbal culture, that conversation and storytelling have been cultivated there as a game or a fine art, and that a good deal of the narrative exchange has been perceived as 'traditional'. (2001, 12)

Pur specificando che essere irlandesi non corrisponde necessariamente ad essere dei bravi narratori, Zimmermann sottolinea che difficilmente si può negare che quella dell'Irlanda sia una cultura altamente verbale, dato che lì la conversazione e la narrazione sono state coltivate come un gioco o un'arte raffinata da quelli che, in *The World of Storytelling* (1997), Anne

fondimento sulla storia di questa creatura, si veda "La leggenda del Salvanel che protegge la natura", disponibile al seguente link: <<https://www.visitvaldinon.it/it/meglio/la-leggenda-del-salvanel-che-protegge-la-natura>> (05/2023).

<sup>3</sup> Pubblicata nel 2004 e illustrata da David McPhail, l'antologia di Krull si propone di tramandare il vasto patrimonio culturale irlandese, attraverso una selezione di testi scelti, alle nuove generazioni anche oltreoceano.

Pellowski (1990) ha suddiviso in storyteller dilettanti e storyteller professionisti (come bardi e menestrelli), e che buona parte dello scambio narrativo è stato ed è ancora percepito come parte di una tradizione. Per dirla con le parole di Gearóid Ó Cruaíoch, è opinione diffusa che “Irish people and Irish culture are supposed to have a special talent, a special capacity, a special appreciation for storytelling and verbal art in general” (2000, 173). Di conseguenza, non c’è da meravigliarsi se intorno all’eloquenza degli irlandesi ruotino diverse storie, come quella che ha per protagonista la Blarney Stone (Cloch na Blarnan), anche nota come “Pietra dell’Eloquenza”: un blocco di calcare incastonato tra i bastioni merlati del Blarney Castle, il castello medievale simbolo di Blarney, villaggio situato nella contea di Cork dal quale prende il nome<sup>4</sup>. La leggenda narra che questa pietra, oggi una delle attrazioni principali della provincia del Munster per turisti provenienti da tutto il mondo, consente a chi la bacia – fra l’altro, in una posizione per niente comoda – di acquisire il dono dell’eloquenza, il cosiddetto *gift of the gab*<sup>5</sup>. Come viene riportato da uno dei primi pannelli descrittivi che si incontrano una volta entrati nel parco che ospita il castello, per oltre duecento anni, “world statesmen, literary giants, and legends of the silver screen have joined the millions of pilgrims climbing the steps to kiss the Blarney Stone and gain the gift of eloquence”<sup>6</sup>.

Tuttavia, quella riguardante questa pietra “magica” è solo una delle tante leggende che popolano i Blarney Castle and Gardens. Infatti, esplorando i giardini che circondano il castello è possibile imbattersi in diverse attrazioni legate a storie di figure “straordinarie” appartenenti alla cultura dell’Éire – termine qui impiegato per fare riferimento a tutta l’isola – come i druidi, le streghe e, soprattutto, le fate. Si tratta pertanto di un luogo simbolico nel quale convergono due caratteristiche che da tempo contraddistinguono gli irlandesi: da un lato, l’eloquenza, e dunque la passione e la predilezione per lo storytelling; dall’altro, il fascino per il “soprannaturale” e, nello specifico, la credenza negli esseri fatati, la cosiddetta *fairy faith*. Due caratteristiche che, fondendosi, danno vita al ricco patrimonio di *fairy tales* di cui può vantarsi l’Irlanda<sup>7</sup>; un patrimonio che, da mezzo secolo a questa parte, continua ad essere preservato e trasmesso attraverso diversi mezzi di comunicazione da colui che viene definito come uno dei più grandi storyteller irlandesi odierni: Eddie Lenihan.

<sup>4</sup> Secondo una delle diverse ipotesi formulate, e cioè quella che si può leggere una volta entrati nel parco che ospita il castello, il termine “blarney” – col quale si indica sia la capacità di raccontare storie, sia quella di adulare e persuadere – sarebbe stato introdotto nella lingua inglese da Queen Elizabeth I. Nello specifico, la sovrana avrebbe esclamato “[t]hat is all blarney”, dopo avere appreso dal suo emissario, Sir George Carew, conte di Leicester, che il capo dei MacCarthy continuava a sfuggire alla richiesta di abbandonare il castello, e quindi di accettare l’autorità della corona inglese, grazie alla sua eloquenza. Per un approfondimento, si rimanda al sito ufficiale del complesso: <<https://blarneycastle.ie/>> (05/2023).

<sup>5</sup> Per baciare la pietra, una volta difficilmente accessibile (Grose 1785, 29), “you must be held by the legs, head downwards, over the battlements” (Le Fanu 1893, 105); una pratica che col tempo è stata resa più sicura con l’aggiunta di una grata in ferro. *Discovery Travel Channel* inserisce il bacio alla pietra tra le novantanove cose da fare nella vita.

<sup>6</sup> Tra le persone celebri che hanno baciato la pietra si ricordano: Mick Jagger, front man dei Rolling Stones; un giovane Winston Churchill; lo scrittore scozzese Sir Walter Scott; e il duo comico composto da Stan Laurel e Oliver Hardy, in Italia meglio conosciuti come Stanlio e Olio.

<sup>7</sup> L’espressione *fairy tale* è qui utilizzata secondo la ridefinizione proposta da Carrassi, e cioè per indicare, in senso ampio, quel genere di racconto irlandese in cui si verificano manifestazioni del soprannaturale e interazioni tra esseri umani, figure leggendarie, creature magiche ed entità divine (Cleto 2014, 385). Contatti che avvengono quindi tra personaggi appartenenti a realtà “parallele”, a quelli che sono indentificati come piani opposti: uno “definito”, “il piano dell’oggettivo, del visibile, del presente, nell’ottica di coloro che in un dato contesto spazio-temporale hanno imposto la propria visione della realtà”; e uno “indefinito”, e cioè “una dimensione soggettiva, invisibile e passata, non più direttamente attingibile, se non per mezzo di un movimento che infranga quel dato equilibrio” (Carrassi 2008, 93).



### 1.1 Eddie Lenihan, *seanchaí contemporaneo*<sup>8</sup>

Nato nel 1950 a Brosna, nella Contea di Kerry, Edmund Lenihan è uno *seanchaí* contemporaneo, da molti considerato una leggenda vivente<sup>9</sup>. Conosciuto come Eddie Lenihan, è uno dei pochissimi custodi delle antiche storie e tradizioni d'Irlanda, del cosiddetto *seanchas*, che tutt'oggi continuano a dedicarsi a una incessante attività di preservazione e trasmissione di racconti mitologici, leggendari, folklorici, e quindi fiabeschi<sup>10</sup>. Docente, folklorista e broadcaster, pure avendo pubblicato cinque libri e sei audiocassette già negli anni precedenti, è diventato noto al pubblico solo sul finire degli anni Ottanta grazie alle sue *storytelling series* di successo: *Storyteller* (1986) e *Ten Minute Tales* (1987-1988), trasmesse dalla RTÉ (Raidió Teilifís Éireann), l'emittente radiotelevisiva nazionale della Repubblica d'Irlanda. Come osserva John S. Gentile nella sezione introduttiva di "Stories of the Otherworld: An Interview with Eddie Lenihan", con i suoi lunghi baffi e la barba che gli arriva al petto, "Lenihan looks very much like he may have stepped directly out from the *sidhe*, those earthen mounds that dot the landscape of Ireland and are said to be inhabited by the fairy folk" (2009, 152)<sup>11</sup>.

Spesso invitato come ospite in programmi televisivi e radiofonici per parlare della sua "missione", Lenihan è finito sotto i riflettori di mezzo mondo quando, nel 1999, si è opposto allo sradicamento di uno *sceach*, un "arbusto fatato", a Latoon (villaggio a venti chilometri da Crusheen, Contea di Clare, dove vive attualmente): un'operazione necessaria per portare a termine il progetto da cento milioni di sterline della NRA (National Roads Authority), assegnato all'ingegnere Tom Carey, che prevedeva la costruzione di un tratto dell'autostrada M18 che aggirasse New Market on Fergus ed Ennis<sup>12</sup>. Sostenendo che la rimozione del biancospino "sacro" "could result in misfortune or even death for those travelling the proposed new road" (Holmquist 1999), Lenihan, grazie alla sua eloquenza, e supportato soprattutto dalla gente del posto, è infine riuscito a convincere le autorità a interrompere i lavori stradali e a modificare il progetto per salvaguardare il *fairy bush*, considerato in vari racconti un punto di ritrovo dei *fairies* del luogo (Deegan 1999)<sup>13</sup>. Questo episodio, all'epoca riportato da vari mezzi di comunicazione

<sup>8</sup> Le informazioni biografiche riportate in questo paragrafo, eccetto laddove vengono indicati i relativi riferimenti bibliografici, provengono dalle sezioni su Lenihan inserite nelle raccolte *Meeting the Other Crowd: The Fairy Stories of Hidden Ireland* (2003) e *Irish Tales of Mystery and Magic* (2006), nonché dalla sezione "About Eddie" del sito ufficiale dello storyteller: <<https://eddielenihan.weebly.com/about-eddie.html>> (05/2023).

<sup>9</sup> Il *Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla*, dizionario Irlandese-Inglese pubblicato da Niall Ó Dónaill nel 1977, definisce uno "seanchaí" – al plurale, "seanchaithe" – come: "[c]ustodian of tradition, historian"; "[r]eciter of ancient lore; traditional story-teller"; <<https://www.teanglann.ie/en/fgb/seancha%C3%AD>>. In altre parole, gli *seanchaí* sarebbero gli eredi moderni dei *filí*, i bardi dell'Irlanda gaelica.

<sup>10</sup> Si ricorda che, come sottolinea Clodagh Brennan Harvey, la tradizione narrativa irlandese si divide in due categorie principali: *seanchas*, e cioè "shorter, more realistic forms (including local and family history, tales about encounters with various supernatural beings, and genealogical lore)"; e *scéalaíocht*, ovvero "long, structurally complex tales" (Harvey 1992, 5).

<sup>11</sup> Per un approfondimento sul rapporto tra Lenihan e lo storytelling, si rimanda a questa intervista avvenuta il 13 marzo 2008 sul palco dello Stillwell Theatre della Kennesaw State University, in Georgia, USA, e a Buterbaugh 2012. In merito alla parola irlandese *sidhe*, menzionata nella citazione, si ricorda che essa viene impiegata per indicare non solo un luogo, ma anche un popolo, quello fatato, comunemente noto come Piccolo Popolo.

<sup>12</sup> Lenihan inviò una lettera allo *Irish Times* per esprimere la sua preoccupazione riguardo l'abbattimento del *fairy bush*.

<sup>13</sup> Si tratterebbe del luogo in cui, secondo varie storie, i *fairies* del Munster si incontrano per discutere le tattiche da adottare contro i vicini *fairies* del Connacht. Come ha confermato Lenihan in una conversazione privata avvenuta in occasione della stesura del lavoro di tesi di dottorato (si veda la nota 1), l'arbusto "fatato" "is still there today, quite a tourist attraction now".

di massa europei e statunitensi, nel corso degli anni – anche di recente (cf. Magan 2021) – è stato ripreso da diversi blog e testate online, specialmente in relazione all’ambientalismo, di cui lo storyteller – come si evince dallo scritto che introduce la raccolta qui presa in considerazione – è sostenitore. Lenihan è infatti “noto anche per il suo fervente attivismo ambientalista. Il suo impegno [...] è rivolto a tematiche legate al processo di industrializzazione di questi ultimi cinquant’anni, che ha letteralmente trasformato e ridotto le aree rurali dell’isola verde” (Pagliaro 2019). In merito alla questione, si ricorda che lo *seanchai* ha collaborato di recente, insieme all’ambientalista Sinéad Mercier e all’artista Michael Holly, al volume *Men Who Eat Ringforts* (2020), nel quale viene esplorata e denunciata la profanazione dell’antico passato irlandese, nonché la distruzione dei forti in nome del progresso. Dunque, oltre ad essere un raro esempio di preservatore di storie, Lenihan può essere identificato anche come un preservatore di simboli “naturalisti”, di luoghi del paesaggio irlandese ritenuti “sacri”, per una ragione o l’altra.

In definitiva, vista l’influenza dello *seanchai* sull’edificazione della suddetta circonvallazione, leggermente deviata per evitare l’abbattimento dell’albero caro alle fate, la vicenda appena raccontata può rappresentare un buon punto di partenza per affermare che, in Irlanda, la credenza nelle fate – magari intrinseca e sicuramente indebolita rispetto al passato – è ancora radicata, oltre ad essere strettamente connessa con il mondo naturale che queste creature abitano. E ciò viene suggerito anche dal titolo scelto dal *New York Times* per l’articolo che al tempo riportò l’accaduto: “If You Believe in Fairies, Don’t Bulldoze Their Liar” (Clarity 1999). I *fairies* costituiscono infatti uno degli interessi principali di Lenihan, il quale, nel ruolo di preservatore culturale, è impegnato da mezzo secolo in un processo di ricerca che, in poche parole, gli ha permesso di assemblare la più vasta raccolta privata di materiale folklorico narrativo irlandese; un materiale che, altrimenti, sarebbe andato probabilmente perso<sup>14</sup>.

In totale, tra testi destinati prettamente agli adulti, ai bambini, o ad entrambi, dal 1982, Lenihan ha pubblicato ben diciotto libri, ai quali si aggiungono numerose registrazioni, su audiocassette o CD, documentari e podcast<sup>15</sup>. La sua produzione crossmediale è dunque il risultato di decenni trascorsi a raccogliere racconti soprattutto dalle voci delle vecchie generazioni, da storyteller eccezionali che, negli anni, hanno deciso di condividere con lui la loro conoscenza, al fine di mantenerla viva e renderla fruibile sia per le nuove generazioni di irlandesi, sia per chiunque fosse interessato alla cultura del Paese Verde. Si tratta di un patrimonio ricco di messaggi significativi che lo *seanchai* del Munster cerca di diffondere in vari modi e attraverso diversi *media*: dalle registrazioni audio ai video caricati sulle varie piattaforme; dai libri stampati e tradotti in diverse lingue alle apparizioni in pubblico presso festival letterari e nelle televisioni, radio, scuole, biblioteche e prigioni<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Benché le raccolte di *Irish fairy tales* predominino, il suo vasto repertorio può vantare anche testi di altro genere, come poesie, racconti storici, storie di personalità celebri, di santi, di mostri, di fantasmi e di eroi leggendari. Tra gli altri, si ricordano: *Even Iron Men Die* (1985); *In Search of Biddy Early* (1987); *In the Tracks of the West Clare Railway* (1990); *The Devil Is an Irishman* (1995); *Defiant Irish Women* (1997), originariamente intitolato *Ferocious Irish Women* (1991); e il recentissimo *The Man in the Big House* (2022). La maggior parte dei libri di Lenihan è pubblicata dalla casa editrice irlandese Mercier Press, con sede a Cork e a Dublino.

<sup>15</sup> Fra i testi indirizzati prettamente ai bambini, si ricordano: *Stories of Old Ireland for Children* (1986); *Strange Irish Tales for Children* (1987); *A Spooky Irish Tale for Children* (1996); *Gruesome Irish Tales for Children* (1997); *Humorous Irish Tales for Children* (1998); *Rowdy Irish Tales for Children* (2001); e il già citato *Irish Tales of Mystery and Magic* (2006), incentrato, come molti dei precedenti, sulle avventure dell’eroe leggendario Fionn Mac Cumhaill e del suo esercito, i Fianna.

<sup>16</sup> Lenihan gira costantemente il mondo per raccontare le “sue” storie irlandesi tradizionali, per fare assaporare i frutti del suo duro lavoro di ricerca a un pubblico sempre più vasto e variegato: dall’Irlanda all’Europa continentale; dall’America all’Asia. Dall’autunno del 2019, lo storyteller ha iniziato a condividere mensilmente la sua conoscenza

Alcuni dei racconti raccolti dalla voce dei “vecchi” irlandesi sono stati trascritti e pubblicati da Lenihan nel testo di seguito esplorato, e cioè *Meeting the Other Crowd: The Fairy Stories of Hidden Ireland*.

## 2. Meeting the Other Crowd: storie di un mondo parallelo

Pubblicato nel 2003 a Dublino, *Meeting the Other Crowd* è un volume di *fairy tales* raccolti da Lenihan nell’arco di tre decenni, a partire dalla metà degli anni Settanta del Novecento, personalmente ed esclusivamente da fonti orali, nella campagna irlandese sudoccidentale<sup>17</sup>. Trattandosi di un lavoro che rappresenta il frutto dell’incontro tra Irlanda e America, il testo è stato ripubblicato oltreoceano l’anno successivo. La raccolta nasce difatti da una collaborazione avvenuta per una “magica” coincidenza: quella tra il folklorista del Munster e la statunitense Carolyn Eve Green<sup>18</sup>. Nello specifico, come John O’Donohue, autore di *Anam Cara: A Book of Celtic Wisdom* (1996), mette in risalto nell’elogio riportato nella prima pagina della raccolta, nella sezione “More Praise for *Meeting the Other Crowd*”, si tratta di un testo significativo poiché offre “wonderful glimpses of a world we need to re-cover and reimagine” (Lenihan, Green 2004, n.p.). Infatti, alla stregua degli esponenti del *Celtic Revival* che, poco più di un secolo prima, si impegnarono profusamente per recuperare il passato gaelico e ricreare un mondo che era stato reso invisibile dall’oppressione britannica, all’alba del nuovo millennio, attraverso il suo lavoro, Lenihan ha cercato di offrire un assaggio di quel mondo, ora oscurato dall’avanzamento tecnologico, nonché dalla presenza di forme di espressione culturale egemoniche, come quelle disneyane. “Following in the footsteps of Yeats and Gregory”, osserva Tom Knapp (2004) nella sua recensione online, “Lenihan collects tales in the old fashion – by talking to those who knew and loved them, by listening while there are still voices to share this rich cultural heritage”. I racconti collezionati provengono quindi dalla voce di storyteller rari, per lo più uomini anziani, ai quali il testo è dedicato, come dimostrano le quattro righe poste all’inizio del volume: “[t]o all those tellers now gone whose voices are not forgotten WHOSE VOICES ARE NOT FORGOTTEN], and to those still with us whose knowledge is more indispensable than ever [KNOWLEDGE IS MORE INDISPENSABLE THAN EVER” (Lenihan, Green 2004 [2003], n.p.)<sup>19</sup>. Una dedica che, da un lato, intende ringraziare e ricordare le voci del passato; dall’altro,

attraverso il podcast *Tell Me A Story with Eddie Lenihan*: <<https://shows.acast.com/tell-me-a-story-with-eddie-lenihan>> (05/2023).

<sup>17</sup> Ciononostante, come ha sottolineato Lenihan, la raccolta è indicativa di ciò che si può trovare nel resto dell’isola.

<sup>18</sup> Nella “Editor’s Preface” del volume, Green racconta di avere scoperto dell’esistenza di Lenihan, per caso, una mattina d’estate del 1999, mentre discuteva insieme al marito Ken di quale albero comprare per l’ingresso della loro casa nel Colorado e di quali storyteller coinvolgere per la produzione “of an audio series for children, *Secrets of the World*” (2004 [2003], xiii). La risposta ai loro dilemmi arrivò tra una tazza di tè cinese e l’altra, quando, sfogliando il *New York Times*, i loro sguardi si posarono sull’articolo di James F. Clarity menzionato poc’anzi, accompagnato da una fotografia di Lenihan davanti al biancospino “fatato” di Latoon. Grazie a Laura Simms, storyteller coinvolta nel suddetto progetto di registrazione, Green si procurò il numero di telefono dello *seanchai* e si mise in contatto con lui, concordando un appuntamento in America. Dopo l’incontro, al quale seguirono tre giorni di registrazioni di storie irlandesi per bambini, rendendosi conto che Lenihan aveva molto di più da raccontare, Green lo contattò nuovamente per proporgli un progetto per adulti che gli avrebbe permesso “to unearth far more of his collection and bring it to a large audience” (xvi). Un progetto che, qualche tempo dopo, sarebbe diventato *Meeting the Other Crowd*.

<sup>19</sup> In questo articolo si farà riferimento alla *paperback edition* pubblicata in America nel 2004 [2003], anno in cui la raccolta è stata tradotta in italiano da Rossana Terrone e pubblicata da Armenia col titolo *Le creature della notte: le storie incantate dell’Irlanda segreta. Racconti e testimonianze sul mondo parallelo del «Piccolo Popolo»: fate, folletti e*

enfatisza l'importanza di quelle che continuano a trasmettere una conoscenza di inestimabile valore affinché non vada persa.

L'antologia include dunque testimonianze dirette o indirette di coloro che, in un modo o nell'altro, credono nei *fairies*<sup>20</sup>; testimonianze che sono rappresentative della cosiddetta *fairy faith*, corrispondente, per dirlo con le parole usate da Walter Yeeling Evans-Wentz in *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries*, a quella “specialized form of belief in a spiritual realm inhabited by spiritual beings which has existed from prehistoric times until now”, in Irlanda così come nel resto di quello che un tempo fu l'antico impero dei Celti (1911, xvi). In altri termini, le storie narrate ruotano intorno a misteriosi incontri che avvengono tra due mondi paralleli: quello umano e quello fatato. E ciò è evidente sin dal titolo della raccolta. Analizzandolo, si può osservare come il verbo “Meeting” annunci l'incontro tra quelli che Carrassi (2008) ha chiamato piano “definito” e piano “indefinito”, e cioè l'interazione tra protagonisti umani e “the Other Crowd”: una delle espressioni utilizzate, insieme a “the Good People”, “the Wee Folk” e “the Gentry”, per fare riferimento ai *fairies*, le creature “soprannaturali” – aggettivo qui usato in maniera convenzionale<sup>21</sup> – attraverso le quali viene ricordato ai lettori di rispettare il mondo e i suoi abitanti nella sua interezza. Passando al sottotitolo, si riconosce invece un'indicazione di genere, “Fairy Stories”, che chiarisce che quelle narrate sono storie “fatate”. Tuttavia, come specifica Lenihan nella sua introduzione, non si tratta delle solite storie di fate gentili a lieto fine alle quali il grande pubblico è stato abituato attraverso prodotti culturali *mainstream*; al contrario, quelle in questione sono generalmente considerate “far too serious, too complicated” per i bambini (2004 [2003], 3)<sup>22</sup>. Tramandate di generazione in generazione, soprattutto di notte, quando l'elettricità non esisteva ancora, esse appartengono a una “Hidden Ireland”: un mondo che non viene definito immaginario, bensì nascosto, e quindi verosimilmente esistente anche nel nuovo millennio, nonostante gli innumerevoli attacchi subiti nel tempo, prima dalla Chiesa cattolica, poi dal sistema scolastico nazionale, e, più recentemente, dalla rivoluzione informatica. In poche parole, si tratta di racconti di una Irlanda parallela “which most Irish people acknowledge exists, but which few of them, except the very oldest or professional folklorists, know much about” (1).

In quanto alla struttura, il volume, composto da settantadue *fairy stories* di diversa lunghezza, si divide in tre parti. La prima, “The Queerest Thing I Ever Saw: Who They Are and What They Want”, è formata da diciotto storie principalmente incentrate sulle richieste dei *fairies* – che hanno quasi sempre bisogno dell'aiuto degli esseri umani per portare a compimento determinati eventi, come parti, funerali e partite di *hurling*, tipico sport irlandese –, e include narrazioni a sfondo religioso o dedicate a tutta una serie di animali ultraterreni, come il cavallo fatato, *fior-lár*. La seconda, “There Since the Start o' the World: Fairy Places and Signs of Their Presence”, si compone invece di ventotto racconti che parlano essenzialmente dei luoghi abitati o frequentati dalle fate irlandesi, ovvero alberi, *fairy bushes*, forti, *fairy fort*, e sentieri,

*gnomi*. Nel 2016, il volume è stato tradotto anche in giapponese; un traguardo che, come ha raccontato Lenihan in una visita presso il Centre for Folklore and Ethnology (Roinn an Bhéaloidis) dello University College Cork, gli ha permesso di viaggiare in Giappone e raccontare storie irlandesi tradizionali a un pubblico “nuovo”; <<https://www.ucc.ie/en/bealoideas/news/meeting-the-other-crowd.html>>.

<sup>20</sup> Nell'Introduzione, Lenihan precisa che non tutti credono necessariamente in ciò che raccontano (2004 [2003], 8).

<sup>21</sup> Come nota Evans-Wentz, dato che in Irlanda si suppone che i *fairies* esistano realmente, sarebbe più corretto identificarli come esseri naturali e non soprannaturali, “for nothing which exists can be supernatural” (1911, xvi).

<sup>22</sup> In Irlanda, è risaputo che è meglio non avere a che fare con le fate, poiché, oltre a un lato buono, “there is a dark and vicious side to their nature” e spesso il loro incontro finisce “in tragedy for the human” (Lenihan, Green 2004 [2003], 111).

*fairy paths*; e dei segni che indicano la loro presenza o il loro passaggio, come il vento fatato, *fairy wind* (*sí-gaoith*), e i vari presagi di morte, dalla *banshee* al *cóiste bodhar*, il carro funebre fatato. La terza, “‘Their Own Way of Collecting’: Gifts, Punishment, and Other Outcomes of Fairy Encounters”, include infine ventisei racconti che, più generalmente, si basano su vicende che rivelano la natura ambigua dei *fairies*, i quali, a seconda delle circostanze, possono essere benevoli o malevoli, e comprendono storie che hanno per protagoniste persone rapite o sostituite, come nel caso dei *changelings* – creature malaticce lasciate nelle culle al posto dei bambini che vengono presi perché “guardati con invidia” (Yeats 1888, 73)<sup>23</sup>.

I racconti collezionati da Lenihan si aggiungono quindi alle storie che, tra Ottocento e Novecento, vennero trascritte da fonti orali dagli esponenti dello *Irish Literary Revival*, nonché a quelle raccolte dal 1935 in poi grazie all’impegno della Irish Folklore Commission, il cui archivio a Dublino conserva più di un milione di “manuscript pages of traditions taken directly from the lips of their tellers” (Dorson 1966, v)<sup>24</sup>. Tuttavia, il fatto che le storie incluse in *Meeting the Other Crowd* provengano da fonti orali non implica che esse siano necessariamente narrazioni inedite. Difatti, mentre alcune riportano fatti accaduti allo storyteller di turno o a persone a lui vicine, altre corrispondono a racconti che è possibile ritrovare in testi stampati in precedenza, a loro volta frutto di trascrizioni. Ciò che è certo è che quelle raccolte sono storie con una forte identità irlandese. Si tratta di una *Irishness* evidenziata, fra le altre cose, dalla presenza ricorrente di toponimi del Paese Verde, come quelli associati ai luoghi “naturali” dell’isola che lo storyteller invita a rispettare; luoghi ai quali, come si è già sottolineato, sono strettamente legati i *fairies* che li abitano.

### 3. Racconti (ever)green

I racconti inclusi nell’antologia in esame possono dunque essere in qualche modo definiti *(ever)green*, nel senso che, oltre ad essere “antichi” e attuali allo stesso tempo per le tematiche affrontate, dimostrano l’esistenza di un forte legame col paesaggio naturale dell’Irlanda, nota per le distese di verde, le immense spiagge oceaniche, le scogliere – come le Cliffs of Moher (Aillte an Mhothair) – e tutta una serie di luoghi incontaminati. Data la sovrapposizione tra i mondi al centro delle storie in questione, tali posti sono frequentati e, soprattutto, abitati non solo dagli

<sup>23</sup> Ognuna di queste narrazioni è introdotta da una breve considerazione pertinente all’argomento trattato. Nello specifico, si tratta di riflessioni e dichiarazioni anonime, estrapolate da conversazioni avvenute tra Lenihan e alcuni storyteller incontrati fra il 1982 e il 2001. In maniera analoga, ogni storia è seguita da un’ulteriore sezione, lunga solitamente mezza pagina, che contiene le annotazioni dello *seanchaí* riguardanti la vicenda narrata, i suoi protagonisti, i *fairies* coinvolti e i temi affrontati. Tali annotazioni si contraddistinguono perché, nonostante la chiara posizione dello *storyteller*, anziché imporre una certa visione, offrono informazioni, suggerimenti e spunti di riflessione invitando i lettori a valutare se gli eventi raccontati possano ritenersi credibili o meno. Si tratta dunque di una scelta sintomatica dell’atteggiamento rispettoso che Lenihan dimostra di avere nei confronti del materiale raccolto. Come sottolinea Green nella prefazione, egli è infatti “more than a memorizer of great tales. He is a transmitter of that other world – fearless, respectful and [...] choicelessly chosen to be so”; una persona profondamente modesta e devota alla sua tradizione, la quale, quando gli viene chiesto dalla sua collaboratrice se crede nei *fairies*, risponde in maniera diplomatica: “Well, all I can tell you is that I know of many things that cannot be explained” (2004 [2003], xvi-xvii).

<sup>24</sup> La Irish Folklore Commission (Coimisiún Béaloideas Éireann) fu formata nel 1935 dal governo irlandese in seguito alla fondazione, nel 1927, della Folklore of Ireland Society (An Cumann le Béaloideas Éireann) e della sua rivista *Béaloideas*, istituite da J.H. Delargy allo scopo di conservare il folklore irlandese. Dal 1971, la commissione è stata sostituita dal Department of Irish Folklore dello University College Dublin, il quale ospita l’archivio dei dati raccolti, ovvero la National Folklore Collection. Per un approfondimento, si vedano Almqvist 1977-1979, Briody 2007.

esseri umani, ma anche da quelli fatati, che di questo paesaggio fanno in una certa misura parte, specialmente se si concorda con la teoria che li vede originare dagli spiriti elementali del mondo naturale<sup>25</sup>. *Fairies* e natura vengono infatti associati continuamente, e da tempo immemore, in diversi campi del sapere, come quello letterario – si pensi alla celebre commedia di William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, dove il bosco, distaccato dal centro urbano abitato dagli ateniesi, rappresenta la dimora delle fate<sup>26</sup> –, e la raccolta di Lenihan sottolinea in più occasioni la necessità di rispettare entrambi. All'interno del testo, è possibile ritrovare questa associazione in varie storie, in special modo in quelle incluse nella prima metà della seconda delle tre parti in cui è diviso il libro – quella dedicata ai luoghi fatati –, di seguito esplorate<sup>27</sup>.

### 3.1 *Lasciateli in pace!*

“The Bush That Bled”, per esempio, rappresenta una di quelle storie appartenenti al folklore irlandese nelle quali viene sottolineato che gli arbusti fatati vanno lasciati in pace, come viene messo in evidenza da uno dei tanti testimoni incontrati da Lenihan nelle poche righe che anticipano il racconto:

*'I know that the whitethorn is always associated with the síoga.<sup>28</sup>  
That's why 'tis called the fairy tree. But 'tis the lone whitethorn  
in the middle of a field that's the dangerous one.  
There was a reason why that was left there, you see.  
No one but a fool would interfere with that.'*  
CROOM, OCTOBER 12, 2001 (2004 [2003], 115)

Si tratta di una narrazione molto breve corrispondente alla testimonianza di un'esperienza vissuta in prima persona da un uomo che, negli anni Cinquanta, lavorava insieme a suo fratello per il consiglio della Contea di Clare, al tempo impegnato nella costruzione di un nuovo tratto stradale nei pressi del Lough Bunny<sup>29</sup>. In breve, lo storyteller racconta di come una mattina gli operai coinvolti in quel progetto si siano opposti alla richiesta del caposquadra di abbattere un biancospino situato nel punto in cui doveva passare la nuova strada, e di come quando – dopo che due di loro, obbligati e minacciati, iniziarono a tagliarlo – l'arbusto iniziò a sanguinare: “I saw it with my own two eyes, and every man there saw it! ... they had only two draws o' that

<sup>25</sup> Si tratta di un'associazione che acquista ancora più senso se si pensa che, come viene sottolineato in diverse storie, il passaggio dei *fairies* viene indicato dai turbini di vento.

<sup>26</sup> Un altro esempio, fra gli altri, è possibile ritrovarlo in *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (1906) di James Matthew Barrie, testo formato da sei capitoli (dal tredicesimo al diciottesimo) estrapolati da *The Little White Bird* (1902), primo libro dello scrittore inglese in cui compare il personaggio di Peter Pan, diventato poi noto grazie a *Peter and Wendy* (1911). Si ricorda che in questa storia, come suggerisce il titolo, il regno fatato coincide con uno dei polmoni verdi della città di Londra: i giardini di Kensington, i quali, alla cosiddetta “Ora della Chiusura”, quando i cancelli chiudono al pubblico, si trasformano da luogo ordinario a mondo incantato. È infatti di sera che gli alberi si animano e le fate, che lungo la giornata fingono di essere altro, soprattutto fiori, escono dai loro nascondigli.

<sup>27</sup> Si sottolinea che va oltre gli scopi di questo studio condurre un'analisi ecocritica del testo. Attraverso gli esempi proposti, ci si limiterà a sottolineare che quelli raccolti da Lenihan sono racconti sintomatici del forte legame tra fate e natura in Irlanda. In alcuni casi, le storie prese in analisi corrispondono a quelli che possono essere definiti *fairy tales*; in altri, si tratta invece di semplici testimonianze dirette o indirette di episodi che suggeriscono che gli esseri umani farebbero bene a rispettare i luoghi delle fate, e quindi i luoghi naturali.

<sup>28</sup> Altra parola irlandese usata per identificare gli esseri fatati.

<sup>29</sup> Il Lough Bunny è un lago d'acqua dolce nell'area del Burren (Boireann), vasto carso nella Contea di Clare noto in tutto il mondo per rassomigliare alla superficie lunare e per ospitare una vegetazione insolita.

saw pulled across that *sceach* when it started to bleed!” (118)<sup>30</sup>. Dopo quell’episodio, lo *sceach* non è stato più toccato ed è ancora lì – o almeno lo è stato fino a quando l’uomo novantenne ha raccontato la storia. Come si può notare, la vicenda è analoga a quella del biancospino di Latoon salvato da Lenihan, il quale, alla fine, non è stato abbattuto perché si è optato per una “civilized solution to what might otherwise have been an ultimately very costly ignoring of powers that cannot be ignored – unless very unwished-for consequences are to be invoked” (119)<sup>31</sup>.

Oltre ai *fairy bushes*, altri luoghi iconici associati agli esseri fatati sono i cosiddetti *fairy forts* (*lios* o *ráth*), e cioè i resti delle dimore preistoriche una volta abitate dai Celti, come gli antichi cerchi di pietre, i forti ad anello e le fortezze collinari che contraddistinguono il paesaggio “naturale” irlandese<sup>32</sup>. Secondo molte storie, essi costituiscono un punto d’accesso al mondo fatato, come viene evidenziato in “The Girl Saved from the Good People” – uno dei pochi *fairy tales* inclusi nel libro di Lenihan che si concludono con un lieto fine, dato che il protagonista, John O’Brien, entrando nel mondo fatato la notte di Ognissanti, attraverso una specie di porta trovata nel forte di Corbally, riesce a salvare una ragazza di Castleconnell, rapita dalle fate l’anno precedente, che alla fine sposa. In realtà, come viene ribadito più volte nel volume, i forti andrebbero lasciati in pace. Di questo avviso è, per esempio, il narratore di “Let Very Well Alone!”, che racconta di non avere mai invaso nessuno dei tre forti situati sulla sua proprietà, a prescindere dalle ordinanze che prevedono una multa che può arrivare a settantacinquemila euro per chi “knowingly destroy a fort” (62). Secondo varie testimonianze, molestare questi luoghi associati ai *fairies* darebbe quindi luogo a gravi conseguenze, come accade al protagonista di “Man Cuts Briars in a Fairy Fort”, il quale racconta che, dopo avere tagliato i roveti in un forte, si vide crescere un bozzo sul dorso della mano, dal quale, una volta inciso, uscì una spina lunga quasi tre centimetri – a detta della moglie, una punizione dei *fairies*. Un epilogo positivo, se si pensa che un altro uomo – come racconta un suo conoscente in “Respecting the Ancient Forts” –, morì schiacciato da un capannone una settimana dopo avere detto di essere entrato in un forte con il bulldozer: “I brought in the bulldozer and made the fairies homeless” (125).

In poche parole, i racconti appena passati in rassegna evidenziano che l’atto di interferire in maniera inappropriata col mondo naturale e disturbare i *fairies* comporta, salvo casi eccezionali, una punizione garantita per i responsabili, come accade al protagonista scettico e irrispettoso della storia che conclude la raccolta: “The Shanaglish Weaver”, “the unhappy story of a weaver who did not believe in fairies and planted a garden in a fairy fort – only to suffer the most gruesome consequences” (Kirkus 2003)<sup>33</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> Nel racconto, viene messo in evidenza che determinate conoscenze sul mondo fatato sono diffuse tra chi vive in campagna, a contatto con la natura, anziché in città, come si evince dalla risposta data da uno degli operai al caposquadra che riteneva che se quello in questione fosse stato uno *sceach* l’ingegnere se ne sarebbe accorto e non avrebbe chiesto di costruire la strada lì: “What do lads inside an office in town know about things the like o’ this?” (2004 [2003], 117).

<sup>31</sup> Come osserva William Gregory Wood-Martin nel secondo volume di *Traces of the Elder Faiths in Ireland*, il biancospino, considerato sacro molto prima che la tradizione Cristiana lo associasse alla corona di spine, cresce da solo vicino alle sponde dei ruscelli, o sui forti. È ritenuto dimora e ritrovo delle fate, e pertanto chi lo disturba o lo manomette corre dei rischi: “don’t tamper with the ‘lone bush’ is rustic warning everywhere in the remote parts of Ireland” (1901, 156).

<sup>32</sup> Lenihan definisce un *fairy fort* come “[a] circular enclosure surrounded by an earthen bank on which whitethorn (hawthorn) bushes often grow”. Conosciuti tra gli archeologi come *ringfort*, in Irlanda ce ne sono più di quarantacinquemila (2004 [2003], 10).

<sup>33</sup> I *fairies* che perseguitano chi non li rispetta, insieme alle carestie e alla persecuzione religiosa, rappresenterebbero uno dei motivi per i quali molti irlandesi, all’epoca, lasciarono l’Irlanda (Lenihan, Green 2004, 145).

### 3.2 *Un tessitore scettico e irrispettoso viene punito*

Come suggerisce il titolo, quest'ultima vicenda è ambientata a Shanaglish, villaggio situato nella parte meridionale della Contea di Galway, durante gli anni della *Great Famine* – la Grande Carestia di metà Ottocento dovuta alla peronospora delle patate, alimento centrale nella dieta irlandese, per la quale metà della popolazione emigrò o morì perlopiù di fame e di colera<sup>34</sup>. Il protagonista della storia è un tessitore, uno “straniero” che giunge nel suddetto villaggio e si trova a sostituire il tessitore locale morto due mesi prima a causa della Carestia; un tessitore che in quel luogo, grazie alle sue abilità, riesce a far fortuna fino a quando un giorno, spinto dal desiderio di stabilirsi e avere un pezzo di terra dove poter coltivare del cibo, fa una scelta sbagliata che gli costerà la vita. Accettando l'offerta di Micky Murphy, il contadino più ricco del posto, il tessitore decide di trasferirsi in un forte fatato per farci un orto, “a thing [that] [...] wouldn't be taken by any Irishman in his right senses” (Lenihan, Green 2004 [2003], 321). Si tratta infatti di una decisione che, come si può leggere nel seguente estratto, lascia sbigottita chi si trova ad assistere a quella che può essere ritenuta una scelta azzardata a tutti gli effetti:

‘Twas then that one of ‘em stepped in, held up his hand.  
 “What kind of man are you, at all, or where are you from, that you have no fear o’ taking the roof off o’ the fairies’ house? How long d’you expect to live?”  
 The weaver only laughed, and looked at him like he was some kind of a fool.  
 “Fairies? Where I’m from there’s no fairies. But if you have ‘em here I’ll tell you this: I’ll take the skin off of ‘em with this spade if they interfere with me.”  
 ‘Twas hard to talk sense to a man like that. There was nothing they could do, only let him at it. But they weren’t there while he was digging it. They blessed themselves and went off about their business, in case, maybe, the Good People might think they were in on it, too. Would you blame ‘em! (322)

Oltre a rivelare lo stupore della gente del posto, ben consapevole del fatto che non bisogna interferire con i *fairies* e i loro luoghi, il passaggio appena citato mostra alla perfezione anche la paura di quegli irlandesi, spaventati al pensiero di trovarsi coinvolti in eventi dalle spiacevoli conseguenze solo a causa della loro presenza. Un timore che, fatto il segno della croce – gesto sintomatico del forte sincretismo religioso che caratterizza buona parte del patrimonio narrativo fiabesco irlandese –, li porta infine ad andare via e a lasciare da solo il tessitore intento a scavare il terreno acquistato per coltivare le patate. Tuttavia, qualcosa di strano non accade quando il tessitore pianta i tuberi bensì quando raccoglie le patate: patate enormi che, una volta aperte, iniziano a sanguinare, “[a]s red as if he cut his own hand” (324). Un chiaro avvertimento al quale lo scettico non dà peso, fino a quando, il mattino dopo, viene trovato da un suo vicino, e dal prete chiamato per il tanfo tremendo proveniente dalla sua abitazione, sdraiato sul letto, “every bit of him twisted – hands, legs, mouth, and his eyes turned back in his head” (326); e, nei giorni successivi, perde la sua pelle, che viene letteralmente via, insieme a tutto il resto.

Per avere utilizzato un forte fatato a mo’ di orto, convinto di essere stato in grado di strappare la pelle di dosso alle fate qualora lo avessero infastidito, alla fine il tessitore fu lui a rimettercela: “he thought he’d take the skin off them, but ‘twas they took it off o’ him – and not just his skin, but teeth, hair, nails, until they took the very life from him” (329). Da quella volta, stando a quanto viene affermato dal narratore della storia, i forti del posto non sono più stati disturbati per evitare tragiche conseguenze. Il messaggio di quest'ultimo racconto è dunque chiaro e diretto: “[o]ne who knowingly interferes with fairy property must be prepared for the consequences” (330).

<sup>34</sup> Per un approfondimento recente sulla Carestia, si rimanda a Boylan 2016.



#### 4. Conclusioni: rispettare le fate, rispettare la natura

Queste testimonianze contribuiscono quindi a dimostrare che “[i]f you disrespect these fairies, the result is simple: ‘You’re dead’”, poiché gli esseri fatati hanno una loro cultura e vanno pertanto visti come legittimi abitanti del Paese Verde (Buterbaugh 2012)<sup>35</sup>. Quello tra natura e *fairies* è infatti un legame che si manifesta anche attraverso gli usi e costumi di queste antiche creature: giocare a *hurling* (su un prato naturale); cavalcare cavalli anziché guidare macchine; combattere con bastoni e non con pistole (non potrebbero, perché temono ferro e acciaio); e, per ultimo, vivere e incontrarsi nei luoghi menzionati finora. In altri termini, questi esseri sono associati a “cose naturali”, “of the landscape”: quello irlandese. Secondo l’interpretazione di Lenihan, tale legame farebbe parte della loro “religione”, fatta di “respect for things old, for tradition, for the landscape, for the nature” (2004 [2003], 16). Ed è in contrapposizione a questo mondo naturale, legato al passato, che si trova il mondo moderno, industrializzato, ultratecnologico, globalizzato, oggi digitalizzato, sempre più connesso e accelerato, nel quale sono a rischio patrimoni non solo narrativi, ma anche naturali. Un mondo attraversato da un’era in cui, come sottolinea lo *seanchai* del Munster, “these foregoing stories, from a technologically far more backward era, should still have that one vital lesson to impart to us, without which all our technology will get us nowhere in the end: respect” (Lenihan, Green 2004 [2003], 330). Rispetto per sé stessi, per il mondo e per tutti i suoi abitanti – per gli esseri umani, quelli animali e quelli vegetali, nonché quelli fatati, a prescindere da se siano visti metaforicamente o come creature realmente esistenti, poiché si tratta di esseri “*who came before us*” (*ibidem*). In conclusione, quello tra Irlanda, *fairies* e natura può essere dunque interpretato come un legame basato su una visione animistica del mondo<sup>36</sup>. Un mondo nel quale gli esseri umani – fra l’altro, arrivati in un secondo momento<sup>37</sup> – spesso dimenticano di essere solo “piccole creature di passaggio” che non hanno il diritto di distruggere “what the next generation will most assuredly need to also see itself through” (*ibidem*)<sup>38</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> Nello specifico, si fa qui riferimento a una conversazione personale avvenuta fra Lenihan e Chad Buterbaugh nel 2007, riportata nell’articolo citato: “To paraphrase Mr. Lenihan: The fairies have their own culture and their own agenda, and they’re to be understood as rightful inhabitants of the Irish landscape” (Buterbaugh 2012).

<sup>36</sup> A tal proposito, si ricorda che l’animismo – termine adottato da Edward B. Tylor per indicare “the doctrine of souls and other spiritual beings” (1871, 21) – contraddistingueva l’antica religione celtica, nonché il celticismo di fine Ottocento, e caratterizza, di conseguenza, il neopaganesimo. Si tratta di un insieme di credenze alla cui base si trova l’importanza di agire in maniera rispettosa nei confronti di tutti gli esseri “viventi” che abitano il mondo (e il cosmo) insieme agli esseri umani: dagli animali agli alberi, dai fiumi alle pietre, e quindi gli “spiriti”, inclusi gli esseri fatati. Per un approfondimento sull’animismo, si rimanda a Graham 2006 e 2014.

<sup>37</sup> Secondo un’altra delle teorie sulle origini dei *fairies*, in Irlanda, questi esseri discenderebbero direttamente dai Tuatha Dé Danann, la razza divina che abitava l’isola prima dell’arrivo dei primi esseri umani: i mortali Milesi, i figli di Míl Espáne, da cui sarebbero discesi i Gaeli e, quindi, gli irlandesi. Nello specifico, dopo essere stato sconfitto dai Milesi, si suppone che il popolo della dea Dana non abbia lasciato l’isola, ma si sia rifugiato, in seguito a un “accordo” con i nuovi abitanti, in un mondo “altro”, “in una inedita dimensione invisibile, ultraterrena, diciamo pure sotterranea” (Carrassi 2008, 86). In “Inisfail”, storia inclusa in *Celtic Wonder Tales* – raccolta illustrata da Maud Gonne, musa ispiratrice di William Butler Yeats –, la poetessa Ella Young, esponente del revival letterario irlandese, racconta che, in seguito alla sconfitta subita, guidati da Nuada dalla mano d’argento, i Tuatha Dé Danann stesero su di sé “the Cloak of Invisibility, the Faed Feea” (1910, 124). Da quel momento, essi si sarebbero ridimensionati e trasformati nel popolo delle “fate”, e sarebbero andati ad abitare i “grandi tumuli sepolcrali dell’Irlanda preceltica, dai quali continuano a compiere incursioni tra gli umani” (Conese 2012, 34). Sull’insediamento dei Tuatha Dé Danann, le loro battaglie e la loro sconfitta, si rimanda a Gregory 1904.

<sup>38</sup> Ciò che suggeriscono questi racconti coincide, in definitiva, con quanto negli ultimi anni viene continuamente ribadito da tutta una serie di attivisti come Greta Thunberg e i suoi sostenitori a proposito del cambiamento climatico e dei suoi effetti, e cioè che un comportamento irrispettoso nei confronti del mondo naturale può avere catastrofiche conseguenze su chi lo adotta.

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## A Socratic Revelation: Sebastian Barry's Roadmap to Understanding Identity

*Andrea Ciliotta-Rubery*  
SUNY Brockport (<arubery@brockport.edu>)

### *Abstract:*

Critics have suggested that Sebastian Barry's works provide a platform for omitted narratives within the Irish story. While I agree, I argue that Barry goes further, presenting the readers with a "structural paradigm" for understanding political identity. Grounded in Socratic thought, this paradigm establishes the connection between citizen and state, whereby the internal order of a state is directly linked to the internal order of its citizens. In the absence of such ordered citizens, the state is unlikely to possess a cohesive identity. For Barry, individual self-awareness is requisite for Ireland's establishment of a unified identity. This Socratic "roadmap" towards understanding political identity is best seen in the turbulent nature of the principal characters in *A Long Long Way*, *On Canaan's Side*, and *The Temporary Gentleman*.

**Keywords:** Irish Literature, Nationalism, Philosophy, Political Identity, Socratic Thought

The link between politics and literature proves foundational in the works of the Irish novelist and playwright, Sebastian Barry. While admitting that his "subject isn't politics at all" (Barra 2014), there can be little dispute that thematically, his most acclaimed novels engage with the political events of the stories' time period. Through the medium of historic memory, Barry allows his characters to encounter with the prescient political turmoil connected with the Anglo-Irish experience and subsequent crisis of identity. In her essay "Branded Ireland or Ireland branded? Versions of Irish Identity", Rebecca Pelan suggests that Ireland has always had to "negotiate" its identity amongst competing views of self-explanation. The first negotiation can be seen amongst the romanticized depiction of an idyllic, rural Celtic identity pitted against the harsh realism of Joyce and others who rejected this version with its "sentimentalization of failure" (2012, 5). The second negotiation of identity occurs amongst two competing narratives; first, Ireland's understanding of itself

relative to its colonial past with England and next, with the view of Ireland as “homeland” by the Irish diasporic community in the United States (6). These phenomena, along with a long history of religious division, poverty and a short-term economic boom in the 1990s have further obfuscated a shared vision of Irish identity.

While the intention of this essay is not to examine the various “negotiated” interpretations of Irish identity, it is meant instead, to look closely at how Sebastian Barry’s works uniquely effect the identity narrative within the Irish experience. First, it will draw brief attention to the initial impact of Barry’s works on their intentional gift of “voice” to those Irish men and women whose stories have been deliberately left out from the historic Irish narrative. Barry reminds his readers that without their inclusion, the concept of Irish identity will never be complete. Second, the paper will argue more notably, that Barry’s works do not develop nor promote any concept of Irish identity. Instead, it will argue that Barry offers a pathway or process by which an Irish identity may be discovered. This second argument reveals itself with a structural paradigm, reminiscent of the one provided by Socrates in *The Apology*, on how one comes to know one’s self. It is with the adoption of this paradigm or pathway, that Barry suggests how Ireland may best come to know herself.

### 1. *Omitted Voices*

Barry’s works draw attention to parts of the Irish narrative that must be included in any formative understanding of Ireland’s identity. These parts, as Barry seems to suggest, are often parts left out; the disadvantaged few whose voice is absent from the predominant narrative of Irish history. This can be seen in his most celebrated work, *A Long Long Way*, which tells the harrowing tale of a naïve Catholic volunteer, Willie Dunne, whose time with the Dublin Fusiliers is met with the unending carnage of World War I, along with the unforeseen contempt of homegrown Irish Republicanism. In the futility and confusion of this young man’s short life, Barry provides a testimony for the unsung bravery of those forgotten Irish Catholics who fought and died on behalf of the Crown, without recognition and with the disdain of fellow Irishmen back home. Similarly, his *Secret Scripture* gives testament to the many forgotten victims of Ireland’s asylum system, whose routine incarceration of morally “questionable” women has left a permanent stain on the reputations of the Catholic Church and Irish State for their complicity in such injustices. It is through Roseanne McNulty’s “Secret Scripture”, hidden under the floorboards of her asylum room, that her unsung story is hurled before the reader in all of its ugliness, preventing this and other stories from being excluded from the historic narrative of Irish identity.

While critics have largely seen great value in Barry’s efforts to bring forth these forgotten voices, praising the lyric dignity with which he presents these remarkable characters, some have taken issue with the degree to which Barry enlists our support of these overlooked voices. In his essay, “The Politics of Pity: Sebastian Barry’s *A Long Long Way*”, Liam Harte argues that Barry’s creation of such innocents as Willie Dunne and Jesse Kirwan was an intentional device to manipulate audiences to feel pity for these doomed characters, making their unnoticed sacrifice worthy of our memory:

Ideologically, however, Barry’s poetics of innocence seems to me to veer toward a rather heavy-handed polemic, insistently promoting the message that these once-vilified volunteers should not be seen as tragic victims of historical circumstance, thus leaving the novel open to the charge that it refutes one partial version of history with an equally partisan rebuttal. (2014, 212)

For Harte, Barry's presentation has undermined his original intent. Similarly, a version of this same critique has been leveled against Barry's *The Secret Scripture*. This time the focus is on Roseanne, an "unwed" mother whose child is taken from her at birth and who, because of her indiscretion, is institutionalized for sixty-five years. While Barry admits that this story was prompted by some childhood memories of his own aunt, it is clearly intended to be emblematic of the many untold stories of young Irish women whose "shameful acts" lead to unwarranted incarceration in Magdalene Laundries' mental hospitals and other facilities alike. The dignity for which Barry affords Roseanne, along with the unlikely "sentimental" ending he provides for her, has led some reviewers, including those who granted this work the Costa Prize, to view the ending as somewhat unbelievable (Harney-Mahajan 2012, 55). For these critics, Barry has again gone too far in his efforts to win audiences over to the side of Roseanne and her tragic story. Whether or not Barry intentionally over plays these unsung narratives seems secondary to the contribution made by them in understanding better, those forgotten factors contributing to a true Irish identity. As Pelan notes, "the modern Irish experience is a complex combination of fragmented, historically and politically influenced, conflicting, and constantly shifting reality" (2012, 8) and thus, piecing together any firm sense of identity proves challenging. Barry's inclusion of these forgotten narratives is a welcomed contribution to this effort, for how can an Irish identity ever be realized without acknowledging the shame suffered by the Catholic soldiers fighting on behalf of the British in WWI and the scores of women subjected to the brutality of the Magdalen Laundries and the judgment of the Church?

The case can be made, however, that Barry does not just "fill the void" of omitted narratives from the multifaceted nature of Irish identity. Instead, he seems to present his readers with something much greater; a structural paradigm that allows for a more revealing, integrated, and holistic approach to discovering a sense of Irish identity in his works. This "structural-paradigm" mirrors Socrates's teaching in *The Apology*:

I went, instead, to each one of you privately to do him, as I say, the greatest benefits, and tried to persuade him not to think of his affairs until he had thought of himself and tried to make himself as good and wise as possible, nor to think of the affairs of Athens until he had thought of Athens herself; and to care for other things in the same manner. (Plato 1984, 43)

First, Socrates asserts the interconnected dependence between man and the state, with a teaching applicable to both individuals and collective communities, alike. It implores us to think of the whole before the parts; the whole being our individual selves and the states that we live in and the parts being the daily choices and policies we pursue, respectively. In keeping with this directive, he tells us that to know who we are as individuals or states, we must dedicate thoughtful attention to the type of life we would like to live and the persons we would like to become. In contrast, going about the "affairs" of the day, without thoughtful consideration of who we are as persons, will lead to confusion, uncertainty, and poor choices. Thus, in their connection, the unreflective man and the unreflective state, mirror each other, with neither knowing who or what they are.

Fortunately, Socrates's teaching provides a starting point to remedy this crisis of identity and Barry seems to have incorporated it into his novels. The solution resides in Socrates's belief that the state is an aggregate of the individual natures of its citizens. This can be seen in an early discussion between Socrates and Glaucon, in *The Republic*, on how to best create a just city in speech, as Socrates asks:

Isn't it quite necessary for us to agree that the very same forms and dispositions as are in the city are in each of us? I said. Surely they didn't get there from any other place. It would be ridiculous if someone

should think that the spiritedness didn't come into the cities from those private men who are just the ones imputed with having this character. (435e, 114)

If we are to agree with Socrates's analogy that the spiritedness of a state comes from and reflects its spirited citizens, then we can assume that the disorder of a state comes from and reflects the disorder of its citizens, as well. To think otherwise, Socrates suggests, would be "ridiculous", thus identifying its citizens as the source of a city's "forms and dispositions". This assertion takes on greater significance when considering Socrates's earlier advice on the importance of caring for our inner life first. When citizens take little time to critically reflect upon themselves and what they hold, it is likely that the state will do much the same. It is with the individual then, that the problem of identity must direct its focus. If Ireland is to have an understanding of its own identity, it must begin with its citizens having a better understanding of themselves. This conclusion seems to be at the foundation of many of Barry's novels.

The frequency with which Barry connects elements of disorder and confusion at the state level with the disordered actions of his main characters is noteworthy. Beginning with *A Long Long Way*, and continuing on with *The Secret Scripture*, *On Canaan's Side*, *The Temporary Gentleman* and *Days Without End*, one cannot help but notice the Socratic connectedness between the external confusion of state policies and the internal confusion of the central figures. For example, the unsettledness of the young Irish state is seen in the unsettled views of Willie Dunne, Jesse Kirwan, Eneas and Tom McNulty. The disquietedness of the newly formed Ghana is realized in the internal anguish of Jack McNulty and Tom Quaye. The continuum of violence across the American frontier against Native and African Americans is reflected in the confused violence of Thomas McNulty and John Cole. Beyond Barry's attention to this connection, is the special attention he pays to the internal turmoil of his leading characters. The case can be made that Barry identifies the source of all private and public disorder originating with the individual. The absence of self-awareness and purpose renders his characters vulnerable and irresolute, as reflected at large in the ever changing, scattered and, at times, purposeless policies of the state. Such confusion obfuscates any possibility of uncovering a true idea of one's personal and public identity.

Proof that Barry views the individual as central to understanding the overall problem of identity is best exemplified in three of his major works, *A Long Long Way*, *On Canaan's Side* and *The Temporary Gentleman*. In all three stories, the main characters begin their lives in Ireland and travel elsewhere, by means of war or emigration. Ireland's confusion about itself is reflected in each of these characters, as they journey abroad, unknown to others and themselves. While some ultimately evolve towards greater self-awareness, others do not. The results are striking. For those who finally understand the significance of knowing one's own mind, the harshness of the world is somehow mitigated by a spirit of purpose and forgiveness. This proves especially salient when considering the impact of the choices made by individuals within the political realm, for much of Ireland's identity is somehow contingent upon its citizens' ability for forgiveness. For those who never come to know their own minds, the world remains largely without direction and peace. While Barry does not provide his readers with any sort of prescription or definition of Irish identity, he has made use of Socrates's paradigm of the connectedness between the state and its citizens, with special attention towards citizens, to better demonstrate the starting point of where the journey for identity must begin. Knowing who we are as individuals is merely the first step in fostering the states' ability to achieve the same. A careful look at these three works will demonstrate this critical relationship.

## 2. *A Long Long Way*

A finalist for the Man Booker Prize, Barry's *A Long Long Way*, tells the harrowing story of Willie Dunne, the son of an Irish Catholic police officer at Dublin Castle, whose loyalty to the Crown sets the stage for his son's brief but powerful period of doubt during his service with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in WWI. Too short to become a policeman like his dad, Willie chose, instead, to volunteer on behalf of Ireland, in the hopes of making his dad proud and protecting the defenseless women of Belgium from the Germans. Willie's naiveté becomes immediately apparent, with his simplistic view of the world and his unyielding faith in his father's assessment of good and evil. While the story shares themes of wasted youth, loss of innocence and uprootedness, present in Vera Brittain's *A Testament to Youth* (1933) and Erich Maria Remarque's *All's Quiet on the Western Front* (1928), offers a unique and simultaneous glimpse into the feeble efforts of both a young man and a young state trying to understand themselves. Chaos abounds and as Barry seems to suggest, the root of Ireland's disorder may find its roots in the internal disorder of the story's leading characters.

Several notable scenes in *A Long Long Way* prove this point but none more than an early discussion between Willie and Mr. Lawlor, the father of Willie's love interest, Gretta. After learning that Mr. Lawlor suffered a head injury during the Sackville Street riots, Willie's dad began sending various care packages to the family (Barry 2005, 6-7). While James Dunne saw such gatherings as incongruous with public safety, he nonetheless, felt remorse that citizens had been injured in the police efforts to restore public order. To address his unspoken guilt, he sent his son with some pheasants and on his first delivery Mr. Lawlor asks, "[s]o what do you think, son, about Peelers rushing in on passers-by and knocking the bejaysus out of them?" (9). Admitting that he does not know what to think about such a question, Willie then becomes the target of Lawlor's rancor:

You should know. You should have an opinion. I don't care what a man thinks as long as he knows his own mind [...] The curse of the world is people thinking thoughts that are only thoughts which have been given them. They're not their own thoughts. They're like cuckoos in their heads. Their own thoughts are tossed out and cuckoo thoughts put in instead. Don't you agree? (*Ibidem*)

With prophetic clarity, Lawlor sums up the essential flaw in Willie's character, namely, he does not know himself. Certainly, he holds views, but these are the views provided by his imposing father who has blindly followed mandates of the Crown. Willie had heard his father's version of the Sackville Street events, but he did not realize until Lawlor's admission that it was his father's police officers who were responsible for the deaths of four men. In Willie's mind, his dad was merely keeping an innocent public safe but after this realization, such thoughts were no longer possible.

This example, along with Willie's naive declaration of intent to save the "defenseless women of Belgium" demonstrates his absence of a mature self-reflection. He could not provide Mr. Lawlor with a thoughtful response about the event because he had never given it any thought of his own. He had merely believed his father's version. Mr. Lawlor's opposing narrative challenged such views, leaving Willie a newfound disquiet that remains for the entirety of the novel. From this point on, he is no longer certain whether the Crown or its Irish agents have Ireland's best interest.

Despite the fact that "[h]e hoped his father's fervent worship of the King would guide him" (22), Willie soon found himself adrift amongst attitudes hostile towards that same King. His Sergeant and longest lasting friend, Christy Moran, provides the first attack:



This fucking British army, I hate it [...] The same fucking army that always done for us. Held me head down in all of history and drowned me and me family, and all before, like fucking dogs, and made a heap of us and burned us for black rebels. English bastards, bastards the lot, and poor people like me and the father and his oul da and his again and all going back, all under the boot, and them just minding their own business, fishing out of Kingstown harbor till they were blue in the teeth. (25-26)

Moran's untoward disdain took on greater relevance for Willie after his D Company suffered 800 casualties from a German gas attack. In an unforgettable exchange with British officers, Willie is confronted with an unknown level of British hostility as the unmoved Major Stokes responds, "Christ Almighty [...] What's wrong with you fucking Irish? Can't you take a bit of gas?" (117). Willie's face must have betrayed his disbelief, for Stokes continued the attack: "what's the matter with you? Little Irish midget with a shitty arse. Don't look at me like you're going to make a fucking complaint. Don't fucking look at me [...] Those fucking Irish" (121).

Major Stoke's disregard for these Irish sacrifices was matched at home by the sentiments of Dublin's young Republicans. Once again, Willie's world view is shaken, as he and several others, most notable Jesse Kirwan, are asked to patrol the streets of Dublin against an imminent danger. Assuming a German threat, Willie complied only to find himself the target of gunfire and the "prisoner" of "a very young shivering man in a Sunday suit" (92). After being shot in the neck by Willie's captain, this young man was asked by Willie if he was German: "'German?' Said the man. 'German? What are you talking about? I'm an Irishman. We're all Irishmen in here, fighting for Ireland'" (*ibidem*). Irishman fighting for Ireland? Wasn't he, Willie Dunne, an Irishman fighting for Ireland on behalf of England, her protector and champion? What could it possibly mean that the Irish were now willing to kill those fellow Irishmen who wore a British uniform, viewing them as traitors and tools of the Crown? Willie had no answer but seemed confused further by the young rebel's request to say an act of contrition; a shared moment of sin and forgiveness. Jesse Kirwan, however, seemed deeply saddened by the day's events, as his mind now confronted a new world reality: Irish involvement in the war was the product of a false promise. While Lord Kitchener called for war against the Germans and John Redmond, a home ruler, encouraged young Irishmen to take up the call, the British promise of self-rule for Ireland was a fabrication. The active recruiting of young men from Ulster to the war effort was designed to combat any nationalistic impulses amongst the soldiers.

Without really knowing his own reasons for joining up, nor what to make of Jesse's refusal to fight, Willie's internal conflict increases exponentially, as does that of his fellow Irish countrymen. While the war is effectively over for Jesse Kirwan, as "an Irishman can't fight this war now. Not after those lads being executed. No, indeed" (155), it is not over for others. Like the corporal watching Kirwan's jail cell, he'd have easily shot the rebels in Dublin, in fact, been "fucking jubilant, me. Bastards" (152). Compound this with the British prejudice of the likes of Major Stokes who "[w]ouldn't think twice about shooting an Irishman anyhow. Says we're all fucking rebels" (*ibidem*), Willie cannot make sense of any of it. Certainly, Willie Redmond's speech before the House of Commons which "expressed the pious hope again that the fact of Nationalist and Unionist Irish soldiers fighting side by side might some day foment a greater understanding of each other and bring Ireland in spite of the recent rebellion to a place of balance, peace and mutual nationhood" (195-196) was for naught.

In an effort to make sense of his world, Willie writes to his dad, the one person of unquestioned certitude. Conveying the "pity" he felt for the young rebel shot before him, Willie admits of his own confusion on the matter, intimating that the killing of the rebellion's leaders just "doesn't feel right" (139). Knowing his dad won't be pleased with this sympathetic view, Willie sought out advice from Fr. Buckley:

So for a while there I didn't know what was what. And when Jesse Kirwan was shot, Father. What can a fella say about that? And the reason he gave me. I still don't know what he meant. I don't know anything at all these days. So I just eat my grub and do what I'm told, but, Father, what for, what for, I don't know. (214)

Despite Fr. Buckley's reassurance that "[y]ou can know your own mind and your father can know his" (215), Willie took little comfort. Being witness to the brutality of war, especially civil war, cast aspersions on Willie's blind acceptance of his dad's world view. Nothing was the same now, especially himself.

Willie's uncertainty bore the markings of a new kind of maturity. He no longer viewed the world in dichotomies of good and evil, right and wrong. He saw now the complexities of life, with all of its brutalities, sufferings and unexpected graciousness. In the end, he came to lose everything; the girl he loved, his father's respect and ultimately his life. Yet, it is in these losses that he emerges as someone who is finally at peace with himself. Willie makes no claims to understand the war. He sees a shared humanity in the German soldiers as well as the Dublin rebels who despised him for wearing a British uniform. He overlooked his father's petulance towards him with his final words, "[b]ut it cannot change the fact that I believe in my heart that you are the finest man I know. When I think of you there is nothing bad that arises at all" (279). His willingness to forgive, to see others as himself and to recognize the loss of his old life, allowed for Willie to embrace his new world order with a gracious acceptance. He did not necessarily know who he was, but he seemed to know better, what he was not. It was because of this then, that he was able to hear the voice of a German soldier singing "Silent Night" and not view it as the voice of the enemy, but the voice of a man "who might have seen horrors" himself (289). Generously, Willie's beautiful voice rose to meet these words and share in song. In this moment of charity and forgiveness, Willie's agency became apparent.

The beauty of Willie's story is not found in the outcome of events. WWI ended with the senseless loss of millions of lives. Ireland's efforts towards independence resulted in a divided country whose understanding of itself has been marred by religious and nationalist divisions and the life of Willie Dunne was extinguished by a sniper bullet at the very moment of his selfless generosity in song. In themselves, these outcomes are all problematic and yet, it is in the changes of Willie Dunne that Socrates's prescription for internal and, ultimately, external order can be seen. Like his homeland of Ireland, Willie begins this story by not knowing who he is or what he wishes out of life; his thoughts were unreflective, mirror images of his father's. However, the incomprehensive loss of life, both at home and abroad, dispelled him of his father's certitude. It was replaced, instead, with a Socratic-like journey of questioning all things, being open to contrary ideas and knowing "what I do not know" (Plato 1984, 26). In the end, had he lived, Willie's openness and ultimate act of generosity would be the exact prescription for beginning to remedy Ireland's ills. Patience, forgiveness and willingness to put one's self in the place of others, all things that found a home in Willie, would serve Ireland well if she was to do the same.

### 3. On Canaan's Side

The parallel relationship between Willie's early internal disorder and Ireland's external disorder shares a familiar place within Barry's later work, *On Canaan's Side*. This time, however, the external disorder of the state is shared by Ireland and the United States, with the continuum of both country's uncertainty regarding its sense of self and its citizens. In the case of Ireland, it is reflected in the oppositional positions taken by free-state supporters and those who endorse

the new constitution, both claiming the right to define a new Ireland. In America, it is reflected in its continued inability to reconcile the ideals of freedom and equality with existing racial inequality. Once again, the foundation of this disorder can be located in the internal struggles of characters like James Patrick Dunne, the father of Lilly Dunne Bere, the protagonist of the story and sister to the late Willie Dunne of *A Long Long Way*, Tadg Bere and Joe Kinderman, Lilly's first and second husband, respectively. While these figures come to know themselves better in varying degrees, those that do know themselves in the story demonstrate generosity and forgiveness, requisites for the stability and progress of these nations. Without overtly stating this relationship, Barry has woven a beautiful story of loyalty, betrayal and love of homeland that bears witness to Socrates' claim that there exists a parallel, connecting structure between the internal and external disorder of states and their citizens, for which the remedy of this disorder begins with self-awareness and then forgiveness.

While *On Canaan's Side* is largely the story of Lilly Dunne Bere's life in America, it begins, however, in Ireland after the war, when her dad has retired to Wicklow and her fiancé becomes a member of the Black and Tans security force. It is with the brief story of these two men that *On Canaan's Side* first reveals this Socratic link between the internal disorder of the citizen with the external disorder of the state. In both instances, these men are at a loss to understand how there is no place for them within newly formed Ireland. With their service no longer acknowledged, valued or wanted, James and Tadg struggle to make sense of this unfortunate turn of fate. Of her dad, Lilly recalls:

My father was chief superintendent of police under the old dispensation. He was the enemy of the new Ireland, or whatever Ireland is now, even if I do not know what that country might be. He is not to be included in the book of life, but cast into the lake of fire, his name should not be mentioned because it is a useless name with a useless story. (Barry 2011, 42)

Despite his years of service to the Crown and keeping order in Dublin's streets, James Dunne was viewed as a dangerous relic from an old regime. He had no place in this new Ireland. He would be part of that whole legion of Irish men whose treasonous service sentenced them to a future of invisibility or worse, death. In the end, James Dunne's internal confusion mirrored Ireland's own confusion and inconsistent attitude towards those Irish citizens who had served England.

Tadg Bere, Lilly's fiancé, served in WWI as one of the many young Irishmen, fighting on behalf of Ireland and England and, like James Dunne, his service would ultimately be viewed as treasonous. Upon his return to the new free state of Ireland, Tadg was unsure of his place. With the help of Lilly's dad, he secured a job with the newly formed police force called "the Black and Tans"; a name attributed to their half police, half army uniforms (44). Such mixed-matched uniforms were an ominous testimony to the new state's uncertain attitude towards its own police force. Proof of this uneasiness quickly followed, as IRA men set a trap to capture a supply truck of food meant for Aughavannagh Barracks (49). As James conveys to Lilly, the Black and Tans seemed ready for the attack, almost as if someone had preemptively told them of the plan. Several IRA men died and because Tadg was recognized amongst the Black and Tans, he and Lilly, "her father an ould policeman", must likely be the source of the betrayal (50). For that reason, Tadg and Lilly would escape to America to evade the death sentence leveled against them.

Both James Dunne and Tadg Bere found no comfort in the new Ireland, neither seemed welcomed by large swaths of society. Their past service in both the police force and the military seemed to matter little. All that seemed important was their service to the Crown and for that,

they were to pass into history, unwanted and forgotten. As we know from Barry's unsettling story, *The Steward of Christendom*, James Dunne would spend his last days in a county home in Wicklow alone, tormented by a hospital aide and visions of his dead son. Tadg's fate was far worse. While he and Lilly were able to escape to America under false names, his tormentors eventually caught up, assassinating him in a Chicago Museum. While it seems that, in life and death, the emerging new Ireland had little room for such men in its narrative, Barry is not so convinced. Like his confused characters of James and Tadg, the new Ireland struggles with this uncertainty. Indeed, his works suggest that many and possibly most Irish were suspicious of such persons' loyalty and yet, he suggests that maybe not all were ready to discard men like Tadg and James. In James Dunne's case, two men took great risk in telling him about the IRA's intent to kill both Tadg and Lilly, out of some past relationship between their two fathers. Tadg Bere's assassin spared Lilly. While these two examples may seem minor in scope, they do reflect the continued confusion amongst so many Irish, as well as its state, as to how to proceed while living amongst those deemed as enemies.

If Ireland and its inhabitants gazed upon a confusing future, so did its counterpart, America. The character of Joe Kinderman, Lily's second husband, reflects this best. Unbeknownst to Lily, the funny, kind, "ashen-faced" policeman with whom she had fallen in love, secretly hid his race from those around him (111). Whitening his already light toned skin each morning, Joe found it easier to engage the world as a white man, garnering the respect of his friends and his community. He would be the champion of her African American friend Cassie, for whom he stood up bravely against the protests of a motor car driver, who tried to refuse her entry. He would take both women, two young domestics, one an immigrant and one African American, to an amusement park and proudly ride and laugh alongside them. While his seeming ability to transcend race and prejudice caused Lily to fall in love with him, it would only be with Lily's announcement of her pregnancy that this masquerade began to fall apart. Fearing the child may be born with darker skin than his own, Joe faked his death during a factory explosion and secretly slipped away from his family. His seeming racial transcendence was rooted in denial and it was not until years later, with an accidental reunion, would Joe explain his cowardly departure. Accompanied by his new African American wife and daughters, Joe related his fears of having his true race revealed, the greater ease of life as a white man and the likely reality of losing his entire family upon the birth of a dark-skinned child. Despite Lily's reassurance that color would have never lessened her love for him, he was unwilling to take such a risk, likening it to "being burned in a fire" (198).

Joe's internal confusion on race mirrored America's same confusion. The uneasiness of his place in society as a black man, his ascent into positions of power and respect as a white man all lead to internal uncertainty. While his love for Lily and the baby were unreserved, he could not face the possibility of their hatred and abandonment. Race, like religion in Ireland, would be the Achilles heel of this new nation and Joe was not strong enough to endure its pain. Both his literal and symbolic "running" from the disquieting problem of race, would be the unfortunate course taken by many in America. Once again, Socrates' teaching that the affairs of the state mirror the internal affairs of the individual soul proves exact and more important, that the possible solution seems to reside with acts of unspoken generosity and forgiveness.

In many ways, *On Canaan's Side* is Lily Bere's testimony to a mixed life of both joy and suffering. The suicide of her beloved grandson pushes her to rethink the many dark events of her life, the losses she has suffered and the withdrawal of love from both family and friends. No betrayals, however, compare to those carried out by her husband, Joe Kinderman and her friend, Mr. Nolan. In both cases, the results were the same. Lily lost her two husbands as a result of hatred and cowardice and yet, in both cases, she shows undeserved generosity. While Joe's

abandonment may be viewed as selfishly weak, his confusion about race was not unlike many others'. However, Mr. Nolan's treachery proved less defensible. His began back in a Chicago art museum where he walked up to an unsuspecting patron named Tadg Bere and in front of his wife, shot him to death. Unable to bring himself to kill Lily, he then set out on a quest to find and befriend the young widow for whom he had caused such horror. In this capacity, he proved to be generous to Lily, her troubled son and grandson. Nonetheless, these many acts of kindness proved bittersweet upon the revelation of his murderous act. For many, such an unseemly betrayal would be unforgivable and yet, Lily managed to do so.

Lily soon comes to realize that the idea of an innocent life and an innocent country may be unfounded. Her beloved Tadg may not have been the saintly man she once believed, as "[t]here may well have been terrible crimes against his own soul. Of course. A killer perhaps, a young killer, in his own country in his own time. Not without guilt, dark guilt" (244). Surely, she'd be justified in damning the whole lot of Irish republicans who gave no thought to cross an ocean and murder a husband, just for having been a Tan. This would not be true, however, to what she knew, as the Tans did terrible things to many, right at "[the] threshold of a new country. My own country that is foreign to me" (245). While Lily claims no understanding about this senseless violence and the men who perpetrated it, she does know that no one, especially the young, are without blame. On several instances, she references the young age of herself, her husband and both countries, as if to suggest that their cruelties were largely the product of their collective naiveté. No one escapes youth and thus, no one escapes the likelihood of judgment gone array. Lily's self-awareness is a product of clearly seeing the past and our shared complicity in its wrongdoings. It is with this recognition that she is able to return to the deathbed of Mr. Nolan and forgive, "there at his bloody side while he, my former friend, the murderer of my husband, died" (246). Predicated upon a new sense of awareness, Lily's forgiveness represents a worthy course for all.

#### 4. *The Temporary Gentleman*

The question of individual identity and lack of self-awareness surfaces immediately in Barry's *The Temporary Gentleman*. As the title suggests, there is something impermanent and incomplete about Jack McNulty's nature, as he is invariably described as "[a] gentleman enough, in your own way" (Barry 2014, 77) and "not an entirely desirable person here" (87). The reader soon comes to realize that all of Jack's talents and energy will be overshadowed by a tendency to drink and gamble. While his unending love for the beautiful Mai Kirwan will become one of the unintended consequences of his irresponsible behavior, Jack is not without merit. Barry has created a complex portrayal of a flawed man within the structure of a self-reflective narrative, whereby Jack thinks back upon the loves and losses of his life, his responsibility in their creation and his desire to make amends. It is largely through this narrative memoir that the reader comes to know the long-standing disorder of Jack's internal life, his inability to control the demons within and his final effort to correct this imbalance.

Unfortunately, Jack is ill prepared for the task of self-correction. Unlike Willie Dunne and Lily Dunne Bere, Jack does not seem to garner any greater self-awareness from the recognition of his failures as they occur. Instead, he adopts the pattern of running from all difficult situations, preventing any witness to the consequences of his actions. This results in a collection of broken promises, heartbreak and death; damage too vast to ignore. Thus, his attempt to make right the errors of his life comes only at the end and only after many have long suffered or passed. Three incidents reveal this point. The first incident occurred when Jack met the for-

midable Mr. Kirwan, Mai's dad. Aware of both the elevated social status of the Kirwan family and Mai's adoration of her father, Jack made the unfortunate decision to calm himself with whiskies before their first encounter. The drink had the opposite effect: instead of relaxing him, it seemed to ennoble him with the ill-conceived courage to challenge Mr. Kirwan's assessment of Sligo and its people. The reaction was immediate, Mr. Kirwan stopped talking and as Jack recalls, "he looked at me with an open, smileless look, that didn't need words, that had all the appearance of a final judgment, on this bloody Jack McNulty, the *buveur* of Sligo, that he be cast forever into the deepest and dampest dungeon, and the keys thrown away" (52). Ultimately, Jack's drinking would cause Mr. Kirwan to ban him from their home, begging his daughter to abandon her affections for him. As it turned out, Mai did not listen and Jack merely waited things out until Mr. Kirwan died to ask for her hand in marriage.

A second incident occurred when Jack's irresponsible gambling habits resulted in the loss of Mai's beloved family home, Grattan House. Unbeknownst to Mai, Jack had mortgaged the house for bank credit and depleted the stash of hidden silver. It was only when she went to find the silver gone that the impossibility of their situation became evident. All Mai could do was to whisper, "Jack" and all he could do was to realize that his "talent" for "blank[ing] out the possibility of this terrible event" had failed him (138). Upon his own recollection, Jack acknowledges his recklessness and lack of self-awareness:

The guilt attached to 'losing' Grattan House is still profound, eternal, and terrifying. But at the time I am not sure I fully understood what I had done. Looking back now, sitting in this simple clay and wooden room in Accra, it is clear that it was a time to lay my heart bare to her, to talk to her about how we lived, and to beg her to forgive me for what had happened. But I did none of those things. (143)

A third incident of note occurs when Jack departs after the stillborn death of his son Colin. Leaving Mai to suffer alone, Jack, at 37, volunteers as an engineer in the war. When his brother Tom brings Jack's two daughters for a short visit, Jack is confronted with the havoc left behind:

'It's nice of you to drive them over,' I said.  
 'It's a long time not to see their father', he said, and in my private mind I said *un-oh*, here it comes.  
 'I don't need to tell you there's been difficulties since you left', he said, and seemed to get stuck immediately.  
 'What difficulties, Tom?' I said.  
 'Well I suppose I don't need to say anything about the heart of the matter. Is there any chance you might get back to see her, you know? Mai, I mean'.  
 'Well, I'm not due leave for a bit anyhow'.  
 'That's a pity then', he said.  
 'Mai's in the doss mostly and Mam says she's just crying most of the day'.  
 I sat there in silence for a moment, withdrawing my legs a little.  
 'How's Roseanne getting on?' I said. (183-184)

In typical fashion, Jack attempts to change the subject. Through either silent avoidance or departure, he repudiates all that is his own doing, avoiding any real responsibility for his behavior. It is only at the end of the work that Jack becomes reflective on this point but to no avail. So long as there is the occasional relapse into drinking, Jack seems destined to be beholden to this chaotic master:

When I contemplate the stations of her cross it is impossible to disagree with Queenie. Her unhappiness over having the babies I didn't understand, even though Mam tried to tell me. The loss of Grattan House was my doing. I responded to the death of Colin by moving further away, and then enlisting as

soon as possible when war broke out. And when she plainly needed me the most, I returned to the war. And throughout everything, from the beginning, I was drinking, showing her what drinking was. (277)

While Jack is right to blame the drink for many of his problems, it is not the sole cause. There is something fundamentally amiss about Jack's internal awareness. Why else would Barry include the side note that Jack lived his entire life not realizing the existence of man by the same name and age living in his own town, if not to prove his imperceptiveness? By his own admission, "the great fog that has persisted through my life" has rendered him largely incapable of recognizing the desperation of those around him (176). It is only at the end of the work that this fog begins to lift as Jack records the events of his life. Unfortunately, this "enlightenment does not bring happiness" as it proves an insufficient challenger to the chaos of Jack's soul (177). When his internal disorder yields itself to a final night of drinking, the temptations of a beautiful woman and an act of violence, Jack's end is assured.

Once again, Barry has created a character whose internal disorder is mirrored in the aggregate disorder of Ireland, as both seem disconnected from the gravity of surrounding events. While almost every corner of the world has been touched by the brutality of the Second World War, the people of Sligo have barely noticed its presence:

They talked passionately enough, full of jokes, joshing as always, but the thing I noticed was that they never referred to the war the whole night. I listened to the familiar talk, of land, and marts, and deals, and local scandals – but never the war. Of course they wouldn't have heard too much about it, the radio said nothing, the newspapers were blank. They had an idea about it no better than a child's. It was curious to be among them, Tom laughing with them, with the new salt on his talk of personal triumph. The doings of Sligo were paramount, and if ten thousand men had been fastened to the Russian earth by frost and blood, it meant nothing. The war was a word. I had come back from a word and was soon going back to it. (224)

For so many, this was an English war that didn't involve Ireland. Certainly, the men of Sligo find the war reprehensible when one of their own dons an English uniform, but only because it is seen as a betrayal, doing the work for the exploiter. Hitler's vast designs upon Europe and his slaughter of the innocent goes unnoticed. Ireland seems to exist within a "child-like" cloud of rivaled, local interests, filtered through an anti-English lens. Despite the fact that Jack almost dies in a submarine attack and a bomb explosion, his lucky escape goes unnoticed. Instead, he is judged to have abandoned his family, as Mai notes:

'You're not here, Jack. They need their father here'.

'I am away at the war. Away at the war. The whole world is away at the war'.

'What the hell are you doing going out there?' she said. 'Nobody in Ireland gives a tuppenny damn about it'.

'When you see Hitler coming up Wine Street in a tank you might take a different view', I said.

'Bloody Hitler – what did he ever do to you, Jack?' (203-204)

For Mai, Tom McNulty and Jonno Lynch, Eneas's archenemy, the implications and outcome of the war have no relevance. To them, Jack is a traitor for abandoning his family and Eneas for abandoning his homeland. Ireland appears oblivious to its place on the world stage, as its focus remains entrenched in the local and personal. How can it ever come to know itself better if it denies the occurrence of things around her?

Of course, the same can be said for Ghana. Despite efforts to modernize, Ghana shares Ireland's propensity to operate within a patriarchal world of personal alliances and affronts. Amidst so much change, it yet remains much the same, thwarting its ability to progress nationally.

For a brief moment, Jack seems to have recognized this when he noted that “Everything new contains the rotten cancer of the old here, as indeed we found ourselves in Ireland” (290-291). Unfortunately, this momentary insight had little impact on Jack’s actions, as he disregarded Inspector Tomelty’s warning of caution regarding Mensah’s vengeance: “Mensah’s a taxi driver. He can move about. He’s angry. I tell you, half the time I’m out here, it’s like I never left Ireland. Take away the heat and the fucking palm trees and the black skins and it’s all just Ballymena in the rain, I tell you” (249).

Without any real or lasting self-reflection, neither Jack, nor Ireland nor Ghana can escape the entrapment of both past and present. Their fates seem already decided by this absence.

In the final analysis, one of the greatest strengths of Sebastian Barry’s novels is their absence of a prescriptive teaching on Ireland. He doesn’t pretend to know what is best for her, how she should view herself nor what her place must be within the world. Instead, he provides his readers with rich and complicated narratives, headlined with characters, whose lives intertwine with the political and religious complexities of the times. While he may draw attention to those “omitted” voices from Irish history, he, in no way, dictates which of those hold greatest weight in determining Irish identity. Rather, he provides his reader with a “path” by which an Irish identity might become knowable. This path begins with the enlistment of Socrates’s structural understanding of the connection between the individual and the state, with the state being an aggregate reflection of its individual members. Following this, Barry seems to share Socrates’s conclusion that if the internal life of individuals is disordered, the external life of the state will be the same. In order to stabilize this symbiotic relationship, reflection and change must begin at the individual level. It is only when individual members of society begin to critically examine their own lives that true growth and understanding of one’s self and others is possible. This cannot be more evident than with the characters he has created in these three works. Through painful reflection, both Dunne children come to see their worlds with greater clarity; a clarity that spares no pain but offers a kind of resolution for those willing to understand. Their journey towards greater internal order allows them to witness the shared, yet flawed humanity of others and in this recognition, forgive. As Socrates notes, such individual awareness cannot help but positively impact our collective existence, leading us to a better understanding of our collective selves. Barry’s characters allow us to see what this journey might look like and how it might facilitate a greater understanding of ourselves and our countries. Why else would he begin *The Temporary Gentleman* with Virgil’s words, “Hic Amor, haec patria est” (There lies my love, there lies my homeland)?

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## Truth in Fiction is Truth Infection: A Study of Emma Donoghue's *Room*

*Ahlam Ahmed Mohamed Othman*  
The British University in Egypt/Al-Azhar University  
([ahlam.othman@bue.edu.eg](mailto:ahlam.othman@bue.edu.eg))

### *Abstract*

Inspired by the 2008 Austrian case of Fritzl, who locked his daughter in a basement for twenty-four years, raped her repeatedly and fathered her seven children, three of whom he imprisoned with her, Emma Donoghue's *Room* (2010) is not a mere retelling of the actual story of kidnap and escape. Donoghue's fictional universe is comprised of several possible fictional worlds: a metafictional world that implicitly directs the model reader's attention to the process of fictive composition, a "superfictional" world that takes the shape of moments of enlightenment, a "subfictional" world that houses the author's beliefs and memories that are not in focal awareness, and a "nonfictional" world that houses the author's repressed thoughts that are hidden. The present study aims at unraveling these possible fictional worlds in a novel the naïve reader receives as a five-year-old boy's account of his confinement and subsequent escape to the outside world.

**Keywords:** Irish Canadian Fiction, Emma Donoghue, Narratology, Possible Worlds Theory, Room

How much truth can a spirit *bear*,  
how much truth can a spirit *dare*?  
(Nietzsche 2004, 5)

Possible worlds theory, which posits that the literary text imposes its own laws on the fictional world and opens a new horizon of possibilities (Pavel 1975, 175), stands as a living proof of interdisciplinary cross-fertilization with work in philosophy and modal logic revolutionizing classical narratology, and work in narratology informing philosophical and modal logic enterprise. The main contribution of possible worlds theory to narratology lies in replacing the metaphysical notion of truth as an essential correspondence between world and language by a pragmatic, more relaxed view according to which "[a] statement is true if it 'works', if its assertion is warranted by a state of affairs it produces regardless of referential questions" (Ronen

1994, 37). Possible worlds theory thus marks a shift in the conceptualization of truth from a fixed, absolute standard to a flexible concept relative to a universe of discourse. Accordingly, fictional discourse is viewed as an autonomous universe in relation to which propositions can be deemed true or false.

In her short article, “Les mondes possibles du texte” (1977), Lucia Vaina defines the fictional universe as a succession of states of affairs mediated by events. The sum of these states of affairs constitutes the factual domain of the narrative universe, while the actions that mediate these states form another set of possible worlds, the world of the characters who aim at preventing or producing these states of affairs. To Vaina’s two sets of possible worlds, Umberto Eco adds a third set: the world constructed by the reader to rationalize narrative events. In Eco’s model, a text is “*a machine for producing possible worlds* (of the *fabula*, of the characters within the *fabula*, and of the reader outside the *fabula*)” (1984, 246). According to Eco, therefore, the fictional universe “tells at least three stories: (i) the story of what happens to its *dramatis personae*, (ii) the story of what happens to its naive reader; (iii) the story of what happens to itself as a text (this third story being potentially the same as what happens to the critical reader)” (205).

According to Marie-Laure Ryan, the possible world imagined and asserted by the author constitutes all the states of the *fabula*: the possible subworlds imagined, believed or wished by the characters of the *fabula* that propel the events forward, the possible subworlds imagined, believed or wished by the Model Reader at every disjunction of probability, and “ghost chapters”, that are later approved or disapproved by the states of the *fabula* (1992, 542). “Model Readers”, Joseph Francese explains, “do not allow the author’s biography and poetic vision to condition their reading, but interact only with the work” (2003, 161). Rather than following the author’s point of view, the Model Reader creates meaning and order of the literary text “by constructing a Model Author, who is a projection of the wishes and desires of the empirical reader” (162).

As a further development of Ryan’s view, I posit that the possible world, or rather the fictional universe, imagined and asserted by the author, is comprised of the following possible worlds:

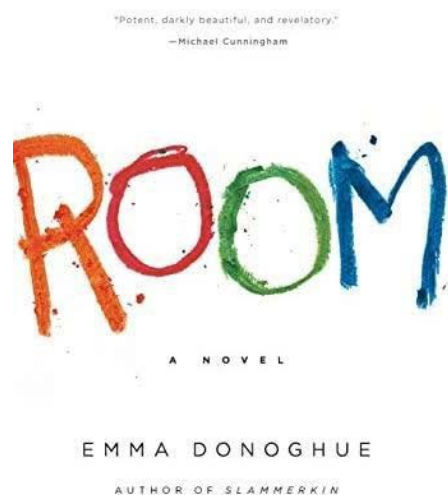
1. A *Metafictional* world: fiction which directs attention to the process of fictive composition. It can be explicit, denotative, or implicit, connotative.
2. A *Subfictional* world: fiction that houses the author’s beliefs and memories that are not in focal awareness. It is intended and usually takes the shape of recurrent use of certain words.
3. A *Nonfictional* world: fiction that houses the author’s repressed thoughts. It is usually unintended and hidden within the fictional universe.
4. A *Superfictional* world: revelatory fiction that transcends ordinary fiction. It happens to the author as a revelation, as a moment of enlightenment<sup>1</sup>.

The fictional universe of Emma Donoghue’s *Room* (2010) is made up of five chapters and several thresholds. On the Cover page, the thematic title on the Little, Brown and Company edition published on 13 September 2010, is written in four rainbow colors: orange, red, green and blue, representing the LGBTQ+ communities. Moreover, the thematic title, *Room*, refers to a nonspecific place that stands out like the LGBTQ+ people. The rhematic subtitle, *A Novel*, establishes the genre of the work as a fictional narrative; together with the disclaimer on the Copyright Page:

<sup>1</sup> The proposition of possible fictional worlds in this paper was inspired by a conversation with Dr. Alaa Abd al-Hadi, President of the Egyptian Writers’ Union, about the way the author’s mind works subconsciously. During the conversation, Abd al-Hadi suggested researching the difference between the subconscious and unconscious and finding out how they manifest themselves in a work of fiction.

This is a work of fiction. The people, events, circumstances and institutions depicted are fictitious and the product of the author's imagination. Any resemblance of any character to any actual person, whether living or dead, is purely coincidental.

it warns the Model Reader against taking the fictional universe as a mere retelling of the 2008 Austrian case of Josef Fritzl, who locked his daughter, Elisabeth, in a basement for twenty-four years, raped her repeatedly and fathered her seven children, three of whom he imprisoned with her. Designating Emma as "Author of *Slammerkin*", an obsolete eighteenth-century term that denoted a woman's dressing gown and was used figuratively to describe a sexually promiscuous woman, is also significant. *Slammerkin*



is a work of historical fiction that is based on the account of the sixteen-year-old Mary Saunders, who was hanged for murdering her mistress, Joan Jones, in Monmouth, Wales, in 1764. The novel was awarded the Ferro-Grumley Award for Lesbian Fiction in 2002. Together with the Acknowledgements, where Donoghue acknowledges her "beloved Chris Roulston", Professor of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies, with whom she lives as a female partner, and the dedication of the work to "Finn and Una, my best works" (2010, n.p.), the two kids Donoghue conceived from a sperm donor, this threshold reinforces reading *Room* as a story of the LGBTQ+ communities.

The Model Reader gets another hint of reading the *fabula* as one about the LGBTQ+ communities from the epigraph, a Simonides' poem about the Danaë myth that echoes the biblical story of Jesus Christ's birth:

My child  
Such trouble I have.  
And you sleep, your heart is placid;  
you dream in the joyless wood;  
In the night nailed in bronze,  
in the blue dark you lie still and shine. (Simonides c. 556-468 BCE in Donoghue 2010, n.p.)

Simonides is a famous Greek lyric poet whose poetry moved people with pity. The verses quoted above are sung by Danaë to her child, the cause of all her troubles. In Greek mythology, Danaë is the daughter of King Acrisius who was warned that he would be killed by his daughter's son. To counter this oracle, King Acrisius shut Danaë up in a bronze chamber under the court of his palace. Although she could not escape from prison, Zeus, the king of the gods, came to her in the form of golden rain which fell through the roof of the subterranean chamber and down into her womb. Soon after, their child, Perseus, was born (Kingsley 1856, 1).

The Danaë myth thus echoes the biblical story of Jesus Christ's birth that Jose, the young woman locked in the basement and Jack's mother, whom he refers to as "Ma", is keen on narrating to Jack to let him see the similarity between his status as a fatherless son and Baby Jesus. In Simonides' verse, Danaë is lamenting her fate, her imprisonment in the dark bronze

chamber, which parallels Jose's confinement in *Room*, while her care-free child, who represents Jack, sleeps tightly, and shines brightly in the dark bronze chamber. Not only the theme but also the diction, which suggests rainbow colours ("heart" red, "bronze" orange, "shine" yellow, "wood" green, "blue" blue, "blue dark" violet), directs the Model Reader's attention to the LGBTQ+ pride rainbow flag, originally designed by Gilbert Baker as a striped eight-colour flag and consisting, after a series of revisions, of six colours: red = life, orange = healing, yellow = the sun, green = nature, blue = art, violet = spirit.

Can we call the afore-mentioned thresholds metafiction? I believe yes: metafiction can be implicit as well as explicit. Through these sophisticated and well-thought signals, the author implicitly helps the Model Reader understand *Room* as a "potent, darkly beautiful, and revelatory" work, as Michael Cunningham declares on the back cover, that subtly presents the secret world of LGBTQ+ people, thus uniting theme and technique, content and form, mind, and body.

Similarly, the table of contents that contains the titles of the five chapters ("Presents" – "Unlying" – "Dying" – "After" – "Living") calls to the Model Reader's mind the transgender pride flag, designed by the American transgender Monica Helms in 1999. The flag consists of five horizontal stripes: [l]ight blue for the male sex, pink for the female, and white in the middle for the intersex, the gender neutral or those transitioning. The first chapter, entitled "Presents", begins with Jack, who shows male physical traits and stands for Jose's repressed masculine sexual desires. In the second chapter, "Unlying", Jose reveals the truth about the outside world to Jack, who starts to show some feminine characteristics. The third chapter, entitled "Dying", represents the transitional phase when Jack, representing the repressed masculine sexual desires, pretends to be dead. The fourth chapter that takes place at the psychiatric clinic, and is aptly entitled "After", represents the attempt to make Jose conform to her biological sex, with Jack showing feminine traits. However, Jose cannot stand this kind of transformation and attempts suicide. The last chapter, entitled "Living", represents Jose's coming to terms with her internal masculine gender identity.

The world of the *fabula* thus focuses on the dilemma of transgender, an umbrella term "[d]esignating a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond to that person's sex at birth" (OED). Of all rainbow colors, blue, traditionally representing male gender, is mentioned 55 times, white, which represents transitioning, is mentioned 50 times, while pink, traditionally representing female gender, is mentioned 15 times. In addition to the recurring transgender colors, the fictional universe of *Room* is rife with references to numbers five and six that stand for the various types of nonconforming genders: lesbians, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and others. Thus, when Jack mentions the "five crayons that are blue, orange, green, red, brown" (Donoghue 2010, 20) and "five chocolates in the bag, pink, blue, green, and two reds" (22), he is referring to the LGBTQ+ people.

Can we call these intentionally recurrent signals of transgender "Subfiction", fiction that houses the author's beliefs and memories that are not in focal awareness? The answer is probably yes. Subfiction works the same way as the subconscious, defined by Malim and Birch as "[the] level below conscious awareness" (1998, 205), which contains our beliefs and memories and allows us to do things without thinking. The repeated references to the LGBTQ+ communities throughout the novel reveal the author's beliefs that lie underneath the conscious level, symbolized by the tip of the iceberg that appears to everyone. Contrary to the visible tip of the iceberg, subfictional references remain hidden underwater to the naïve reader. Only the Model Reader is capable of diving beneath the surface and displaying how the author's subconscious works.

In *Room*, dialogue is used to impart truth to the fictional universe and avoid using third person pronouns that signal gender identity, thus creating gender fluidity. Through dialogue, the reader learns, that Jack is Jose's second child; her first child, a girl, was born dead:

'Did she stay in your tummy? The girl baby?'  
 Ma doesn't say anything for a minute. 'She came out blue'.  
 Blue?  
 'She never opened her eyes'. (Donoghue 2007, 205)

In other words, the female gender identity assigned at birth never saw light; it was born dead. The rest of the dialogue is a reflection on transgender, Jack inquires:

'She got recycled?'  
 Ma nearly smiles. 'I like to think that's what happened'.  
 'Why you like to think that?'  
 'Maybe it really was you, and a year later you tried again and came back down as a boy'. (*Ibidem*)

The idea here is that Jack, who represents the internal masculine gender, was originally a girl but developed into a boy, an act of metamorphosis that represents the LGBTQ+ communities. In contrast to the baby girl who "came out blue", however, the baby Jack is described as hot pink with open eyes:

'What color was I?'  
 'Hot pink'.  
 'Did I open my eyes?'  
 'You were born with your eyes open'. (206)

The suggestion here is that non-conforming gender identity is constructed very early. Ironically, the baby girl "came out blue", that is clad in a masculine hue, and dead, contrary to the traditional representation of women as symbols of fertility and life. The baby boy, on the other hand, was hot pink, a feminine color that stands for sex, and open-eyed, an idiomatic expression which signifies the ability to see the truth. This brings in a long debate about sexuality and whether sexual orientation is biologically determined. Such dialogues are meant to draw the Model Reader's attention to the predicament of transgender and the whole LGBTQ+ communities. They are assigned a sex at birth with which they might not feel comfortable.

It is significant that Donoghue chooses to construct the fictional universe out of the consciousness of a five-year-old boy; that is, out of the masculine id that remains infantile. Jack is five at the beginning of the fictional universe and remains a five-year-old boy till the very end. Jack announces at the very beginning:

Today I'm five. I was four last night going to sleep in Wardrobe, but when I wake up in Bed in the dark, I'm changed to five, abracadabra. Before that I was three, then two, then one, then zero.  
 'Was I minus numbers?'  
 'Hmm?' Ma does a big stretch.  
 'Up in Heaven. Was I minus one, minus two, minus three -?'  
 'Nah, the numbers didn't start till you zoomed down'.  
 'Through Skylight. You were all sad till I happened in your tummy'. (3)

The dialogue with which the fictional universe begins serves more than one metafictional purpose: first, it implicitly tells the Model Reader that the world of the *fabula* is the world of the id, the author's hidden and repressed masculine sexual desires. Second, it directs the reader's attention to the LGBTQ+ communities through the significant mention of number five. Third, it describes the repressed masculine gender identity as a gift from God as Jack miraculously grew in his mother's tummy without a father, just like Baby Jesus. Fourth, it establishes the relative truth of

the fictional universe: the *fabula* is both true and fictional at one and the same time. Though based on a true story, it features an imaginary world; though its world is fictional, it exhibits transcendental truth. Thus, the world of the *fabula* is a revelatory world of “Superfiction”, which parallels the superconscious mind in surpassing ordinary fiction and presenting a vision that transcends ordinary consciousness. Fifth, it establishes the pace of the discourse time (a long narrative is told in a few seconds). That a few seconds can indicate the passage of a whole year and change one’s perspective suggests the relative notion of truth adopted in this fictional universe and points to the nature of discourse time which spans a few weeks but presents a rich fictional universe full of events.

Jack’s character was born in Room; that is, inside the mind, and has been locked with Jose therein ever since. Through the following dialogue between Jose and Jack, Donoghue implicitly reflects on the act of character creation:

She grins. ‘I could feel you kicking’.  
 ‘What was I kicking?’  
 ‘Me, of course’.  
 I always laugh at that bit.  
 ‘From the inside, boom boom’. Ma lifts her sleep T-shirt and makes her tummy jump.  
 ‘I thought, Jack’s on his way. First thing in the morning, you slid out onto the rug with your eyes wide open’. (3-4)

The act of character creation is portrayed as a moment of enlightenment like the revelatory moment of giving birth. Indeed, Jack’s character emerges as a real child thanks to the language he speaks, characterized by generalizing the rule of forming regular past and past participle verbs to irregular ones such as “rotted” and “forgetted” (9), generalizing the rule of forming possessive nouns to pronouns as in “why are the eyes of me shut?” (5), coining new words by using root compounds formed from two nouns like “dickey-bird” (28), forming adjectives by adding the suffix -y to verbs such as “meltedy” (7), and taking the meaning of words literally as in his comment on Dr. Clay’s description of him as “plastic”: “[b]ut I’m not plastic, I’m a real boy” (209). Nevertheless, the creation of Jack’s character is not as simple as it seems: although his language is that of a child, his consciousness is that of an adult. In other words, his voice is the internal voice of the author herself, which is quite fitting being no more than the author’s id.

To add a fictional dimension to the character of Jack, Donoghue implicitly compares it to the act of drawing. Jose says: “[y]esterday morning and the day before and the day before that, I put the lamp on and drew you” (5). She tells Jack that she drew him while he was asleep; that is, unconscious. She explains: “[w]ell, I couldn’t draw you while you were awake, or it wouldn’t be a surprise, would it?” Ma waits. ‘I thought you’d like a surprise’ ” (*ibidem*). However, Jack retorts: “I prefer a surprise and me knowing” (*ibidem*). In other words, the narrator emphasizes his separate identity and insists on his right to be conscious of what the author does. On another level, a nonfictional one, Jose, as the superego, tries to impose her vision of how the id should behave, but the id resists these attempts and insists on being in the know of whatever the superego is doing.

Representing the author and the superego at one and the same time, Jose engages in the following dialogue with Jack, the narrator, who represents the id:

‘I wish the drawing was better’, she says, ‘but at least it shows what you’re like’.  
 ‘What am I like?’  
 She taps Mirror where’s my forehead, her finger leaves a circle. ‘The dead spit of me’.  
 ‘Why I’m your dead spit?’ The circle’s disappearing.  
 ‘It just means you look like me. I guess because you’re made of me, like my spit is. Same brown eyes, same big mouth, same pointy chin’. (7)

The author wishes she portrayed Jack's character in a better way, but she consoles herself that at least he resembles the author because he is the manifestation of her unconscious repressed feelings; that is, the masculine side of her character.

Not only does Donoghue reflect on the act of character creation, but she also gives her character the chance to reflect on his own creation as well. Jack says:

I look down at Rug with her red and brown and black all zigging around each other. There's the stain I spilled by mistake getting born.  
'You cutted the cord and I was free', I tell Ma. 'Then I turned into a boy'. 'Actually, you were a boy already'. (4)

Metafictionally, the dialogue is about the act of creating the narrator. He was part of the author's consciousness and then she cut the cord and freed him. On another level, a nonfictional one, Donoghue released the masculine gender identity repressed in the unconscious mind and gave it shape in the character of Jack. Donoghue emphasizes here that she did not create Jack as a boy; he was a boy already. In other words, the id already houses the author's masculine sexual desires; all she had to do was to cut the cord and free it.

However, the creation of a separate identity for the narrator is no easy task. In an implicit metafictional note, Jack says:

For my third turn I do 'Can't Get You out of my head'. Ma has no idea. 'You've chosen such a tricky one .... Did you hear it on TV?'  
'No, on you'. (6-7)

Jack here implies that the author occupies his mind and consciousness. This is tricky, the author believes, because it is self-revelatory. It will disclose her unconscious repressed feelings and desires to the reader.

The fact that Jack recurrently requests to be breastfed by Jose is also a significant, implicit, metafictional remark; Jack says: "[o]h, I forgot to have some when I woke up", to which Jose replies, "[t]hat's OK. Maybe we could skip it once in a while, now you're five?" (6). In other words, the narrator is still being fed ideas by the author. However, he does not need this quite often since he is five now and can represent the LGBTQ+ communities. Jose asks him: "[t]ell me, Mr. Five, would you like your present now or after breakfast?" (4). Metafictionally, the author is receding and giving the narrator a choice. On the nonfictional level, the superego is giving way to the wishes and desires of the id; that is, the repressed masculine sexual desires.

In another implicit Metafictional remark, Jack, the narrator, reflects on the construction of his separate identity, he says:

I still don't tell her about the web. It's weird to have something that's mine-not-Ma's. Everything else is both of ours. I guess my body is mine and the ideas that happen in my head. But my cells are made out of her cells so I'm kind of hers. Also when I tell her what I'm thinking and she tells me what she's thinking, our each ideas jump into our other's head, like coloring blue crayon on top of yellow that makes green. (10)

On the one hand, the narrator metafictionally reflects on what distinguishes him from the author. He first guesses it is the physical characteristics that distinguish him from her, but he soon dismisses the idea as untenable because he is born of her. Even mentally, he finds it hard to distinguish his ideas from hers. They seem to be inextricably mixed like the green color that is formed by mixing blue and yellow. On the nonfictional level, the id reflects on the difference



between him and the superego. He guesses that it is his interest with the physical that distinguishes him from the superego, yet he soon dismisses this idea as he is born of the superego. He then surmises they are different mentally, but he soon discovers that they are not, since they both occupy the unconscious mind.

Marie-Laure Ryan and Alice Bell describe the experience of reading fiction as one of “recentering” (2019, 16); that is, regarding the fictional world as actual in make-believe, as existing independently of the text even though the reader knows it is created by the text. It is this “recentering” into fictional worlds which explains why readers regard fictional characters as real people and why they identify with them. The fictional world, Ryan maintains, consists of both static properties mentioned in descriptions and world-changing events mentioned in the narrative parts.

The fictional universe of *Room* is full of such descriptions that present unnecessary details, or so the naïve reader thinks. Rather than narrating events by a heterodiegetic narrator, Donoghue invites the Model Reader into the secret world of the id to see events from his perspective. I say seeing events because the homodiegetic narrator is so close to what is being observed. Rather than narrating past events, he describes scenes isochronously in the present tense, thus imparting a sense of immediacy and realism to these events. Such descriptions turn the act of reading the narrative into one of watching a movie. For example, Jack describes Wardrobe as a female:

Wardrobe is wood, so I have to push the pin an extra lot. I shut her silly doors, they always squeak, even after we put corn oil on the hinges. I look through the slats but it's too dark. I open her a bit to peek, the secret drawing is white except the little lines of gray. (Donoghue 2010, 6)

The underlying meaning goes far beyond the mere description of a wardrobe by a five-year-old kid. The pin that needs to be pushed is no more than the penis and the silly doors that squeak and need to be lubricated are no more than the *labia minora*. When he opens the vagina a bit to peek, he sees a secret drawing in white, the *vulva vestibule*, with little grey lines. Instead of reading it as a detailed description of a wardrobe, the Model Reader can discover the sexual underlying meaning and perceive the minute description of female genitalia by the id, who is preoccupied with sexual matters.

In wardrobe, Jack remarks: “[m]a’s blue dress is hanging over a bit of my sleeping eye, I mean the eye in the picture but the dress for real in Wardrobe” (6). The narrator, or the id, is thus seen peeking at the portrayal of his character. The juxtaposition of the sleeping eye and the dress is highly significant: while the animate organ is not real, the inanimate dress is real. For the LGBTQ+ communities, the dress is more real as a marker of gender identity than body organs. The blue color of the dress signifies masculinity while its genre signifies femininity, thus reflecting the double gender identity of the id and the superego.

Examples of such detailed descriptions of furniture with sexual connotations abound throughout the fictional universe, Jack notes: “I stroke Table’s scratches to make them better, she’s a circle all white except gray in the scratches from chopping foods” (*ibidem*). Later, he remarks: “[s]pider’s real. I’ve seen her two times. I look for her now but there’s only a web between Table’s leg and her flat [...] She brushes webs away; she says they’re dirty but they look like extra-thin silver to me” (8). The gray scratches on Jose’s curvy, white figure are the result of the repeated act of rape, while the web between her legs stands for pubic hair that Jose gets rid of.

Not only pieces of furniture but also toys made from recycled materials are minutely described by Jack in sexual terms, he says:

We've been making Labyrinth since I was two, she's all toilet roll insides taped together in tunnels that twist lots of ways. Bouncy Ball loves to get lost in Labyrinth and hide, I have to call out to him and shake her and turn her sideways and upside down before he rolls out, whew. Then I send other things into Labyrinth like a peanut and a broken bit of Blue Crayon and a short spaghetti not cooked. They chase each other in the tunnels and sneak up and shout Boo, I can't see them but I listen against the cardboard and I can figure out where they are. (14)

For the naïve reader, this is no more than a child play; for the Model Reader, however, it is a description of female fallopian tubes that look like dark and hidden tunnels. The kid, or id, who cannot insert his penis, sends "a peanut and a broken bit of Blue Crayon and a short spaghetti not cooked" (*ibidem*) down the tunnel or female vagina.

Another toy made from recycled materials is Eggsnake which is described in detail as follows:

Eggsnake is more longer than all around Room, we've been making him since I was three, he lives in Under Bed all coiled up keeping us safe. Most of his eggs are brown but sometimes there's a white, some have patterns on from pencils or crayons or Pen or bits stuck on with flour glue, a foil crown and a yellow ribbon belt and threads and bits of tissue for hairs. His tongue is a needle, that keeps the red thread going right through him. We don't bring Eggsnake out much anymore because sometimes he tangles and his eggs get cracked around the holes or even fall off, and we have to use the bits for mosaics. Today I put his needle in one of the holes of the new eggs, I have to dangle it till it comes out the other hole all sharp, it's pretty tricky. Now he's three eggs longer, I extra gently wind him up again so all of him fits in Under Bed. (21-22)

The Eggsnake is no more than Jack's penis; it grew longer than when he was three years old and is kept coiled up in the underwear. Sometimes it ejaculates drops of milky fluid which gets sticky like flour glue. Jack does not release it much because it gets cracked around the vagina; that is, it ejaculates.

Can we say that Jack's detailed descriptions with sexual undertones belong to the "non-fictional" world which houses the repressed hidden thoughts of the author, corresponding to the unconscious mind that Freud (1933) viewed as "the repository for repressed memories" (Malim, Birch 1998, 205)? I believe yes, Jack is no more than the id; he stands for the repressed masculine gender identity of the author.

If, in the nonfictional world, Jack represents the id, Jose stands for the superego that imposes codes of conduct and rules on Jack. She tells Jack: "I know you're excited," she says, "but remember not to nibble your finger, germs could sneak in the hole" (Donoghue 2010, 4). She kills the mouse that Jack would like to keep saying: "[i]f we let him stay, we'd soon be overrun with his babies. Stealing our food, bringing in germs on their filthy paws" (32). Moreover, she puts restrictions on watching TV, Jack says:

I'd love to watch TV all the time, but it rots our brains. Before I came down from Heaven Ma left it on all day long and got turned into a zombie that's like a ghost but walks thump thump. So now she always switches off after one show, then the cells multiply again in the day and we can watch another show after dinner and grow more brains in our sleep.

'Just one more, because it's my birthday? Please?'

Ma opens her mouth, then shuts it. Then she says, 'Why not?' She mutes the commercials because they mush our brains even faster so they'd drip out our ears. (11)

Representing the superego, Jose thus imposes rules over the id and restrains his wantonness and insidious desires.

Through dialogue, the Model Reader learns about the daily routine which Jose has established and of which Jack is highly conscious: “Monday is a laundry day” (39), “after nap we do Scream every day but not Saturdays or Sundays” (40), “Friday means mattress time” (65), “it’s Wednesday so we wash hair” (54). Metafictionally, such rules help indicate the time naturally as well as show the power exercised by the superego over the id. Thus, when Jose “points up at Watch that says 08:57” Jack understands: “that’s only three minutes before nine. So I run into Wardrobe and lie down on my pillow and wrap up in Blanket that’s all gray and fleecy with the red piping” (25).

If Jack is the id on whom the superego exercises control, Old Nick – the man responsible for abducting Ma and continually raping her – is the realistic ego who tries to satisfy the desires of the id in a realistic manner. Thus, he buys him a jeep with remote for his birthday, a toy that traditionally suits boys, but refuses to satisfy other superfluous needs that sound unrealistic. Old Nick mediates between the two worlds: the inside world of the mind and the outside world of real life. Jack says:

Men aren’t real except Old Nick, and I’m not actually sure if he’s real for real. Maybe half? He brings groceries and Sundaytreat and disappears the trash, but he’s not human like us. He only happens in the night, like bats. Maybe Door makes him up with a beep beep and the air changes. I think Ma doesn’t like to talk about him in case he gets realer. (18)

It seems that the superego dislikes the ego because of the control he exercises on both the superego and the id, locking them inside the unconscious mind and denying them freedom of interaction with the outside world.

Although Jack and Jose spend years locked in Room, i.e., inside the mind, only two weeks of the discourse time take place in Room. The Model Reader takes an “inferential walk” to construct the day on which the discourse time begins. Through the dialogue that takes place between Jack and Jose regarding the web on the table leg, the Model Reader infers that the discourse time starts on Saturday. Jose tells Jack: “[t]ell you what, I’ll leave it till we clean, OK?” And Jack replies: “[t]hat’s Tuesday, that’s three days” (12). On the other hand, Jack and Jose spend only a month communicating with people in the outside world, but this period occupies most of the discourse time. Jack informs the Model Reader about the day of his escape from Room: “[i]t’s April today so I get to blow up a balloon” (108). The choice of April Fool’s Day for Jack’s trick, pretending to be sick and then playing dead to fool Old Nick, is so apt. The Model Reader interprets Jack’s trick as the id’s attempt to break loose and give reign to his repressed sexual desires. The id succeeds in escaping from the control of the ego and in rescuing the superego as well. When the id and the superego venture into the outside world, they need support to regain their balance. It is at the clinic they receive the necessary care. However, the inside world, i.e., the brain, continues to feel more real. Unable to adapt to the outside world, the superego represented by Jose attempts suicide. After recovery, the superego and the id live together at the Independent Living Facility, a significant name that stands for the independence of the unconscious mind. The discourse time ends on the first of May, spanning merely one month and a half. The following dialogue takes place between the id and the superego:

Tomorrow is May Day, that means summer’s coming and there’s going to be a parade. We might go just to look.

‘Is it only May Day in the world?’ I ask. We’re having granola in our bowls on the sofa not spilling. ‘What do you mean?’ says Ma.

‘Is it May Day in Room too?’

‘I suppose so, but nobody’s there to celebrate it’. (315)

At the urge of the id, the superego and the id pay one last visit to Room, the unconscious mind. Again, the choice of Labour Day to pay farewell to Room is significant. It signifies separation from security and peace of mind and venturing into the world of toil and hard work.

Not only does dialogue help the Model Reader construct the beginning of discourse time and establish its pace, but it also plays a major role in arranging the events of the narrative. Through dialogue, complete homodiegetic analepsis, in Gerard Genette's own terms, is realized, thus filling an earlier gap in the narrative; namely, Jose's failed attempts at escaping from Room one year and a half after being kidnapped. Jose tells Jack:

'Exactly. I smashed the toilet lid down on his head'.  
 I've got my thumb in my mouth and I'm biting and biting.  
 'But I didn't do it hard enough, the lid fell on the floor and broke in two, and he – Old Nick – he managed to shove the door shut'.  
 I taste something weird.  
 Ma's voice is all gulpy. 'I knew my only chance was to make him give me the code. So I pressed the knife against his throat, like this'. She puts her fingernail under my chin, I don't like it. 'I said, 'Tell me the code'.  
 'Did he?'  
 She puffs her breath. 'He said some numbers, and I went to tap them in'.  
 'Which numbers?'  
 'I don't think they were the real ones. He jumped up and twisted my wrist and got the knife'.  
 'Your bad wrist?'  
 'Well, it wasn't bad before that. Don't cry,' Ma says into my hair, 'that was a long time ago'. (97)

The retrospective technique helps the author retrieve narrative antecedents and rejoin the first narrative without any gap. Thus, Jose's twisted wrist brings the reader back to the first narrative.

Jose continues to unravel the truth about her kidnap in the second chapter aptly entitled "Unlying" to Jack, the id who has begun to show some feminine characteristics. Jack says: "Ma makes me three braids for a change, they feel funny" (66). Towards the end of the chapter, Jose tells Jack:

'Listen, Jack, I need to tell you another story'.  
 'A true one?'  
 'Totally true. You know how I used to be all sad?'  
 I like this one. 'Then I came down from Heaven and grew in your tummy'.  
 'Yeah, but see, why I was sad – it was because of Room', says Ma. 'Old Nick – I didn't even know him, I was nineteen. He stole me'. (93)

The word "story" calls for reflection on narratology and truth. Jose describes the story of her kidnap as totally true. To the naïve reader, whose moral and social sensitivity has been molded by a condemnation of kidnap, there is no other alternative but to believe the story of Jose. On the level of the possible world of the *fabula*, the kidnap of the nineteen-year-old Jose took place seven years before the narrative began.

No matter how hard Jose emphasizes the truth of the kidnap story, it seems fictitious to the five-year-old Jack, and the Model Reader as well. When Jose urges Jack to listen saying: "[y]ou have to let me tell this story," Jack wonders: "[c]an I pick another?" When Jose insists: "[i]t's what happened," Jack asks: "[c]an I have Jack the Giant Killer?" (94). The dialogue thus serves as a metafictional signal that casts doubt on the interpretation of the *fabula* as a story of kidnap and directs the Model Reader to the intended reading of the *fabula* as a story of the LGBTQ+ people.

Although Jose does not mention that Old Nick is Jack's father, the naïve reader takes this "inferential walk": having kidnapped her at the age of nineteen, imprisoned her in Room and raped her repeatedly, no other father is logically possible but Old Nick. To the Model Reader, however, Jack's words "I came down from Heaven and grew in your tummy" (16) calls to mind the biblical story of Jesus Christ who was conceived by Virgin Mary through the power of the Holy Spirit and without sexual intercourse. Earlier, Jose tells Jack the biblical story of Virgin Mary's conception of Jesus, she says:

What started Baby Jesus growing in Mary's tummy was an angel zoomed down, like a ghost but a really cool one with feathers. Mary was all surprised, she said, 'How can this be?' and then, 'OK let it be.' When Baby Jesus popped out of her vagina on Christmas she put him in a manger but not for the cows to chew, only warm him up with their blowing because he was magic. (18)

The parallelism drawn between the conception of Jack and that of Jesus, reinforced with the dedication of Room to Donoghue's kids she got from a sperm donor and the Danaë myth, suggests that the story is about the LGBTQ+ people, the communities of lesbians, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer, rather than one of kidnap, as the naïve reader is made to believe. Through the following dialogue, the truth about Jack's origin is disclosed:

'Why he said don't forget where you got me? Wasn't it Heaven?'  
Ma is clicking Lamp but he won't wake up either. 'He meant – who you belong to'.  
'I belong to you'.  
[...]  
'Why he told you not to forget?'  
'Well actually, he's got it all wrong, he thinks you belong to him'. (76)

Both Jose, who represents the superego that dictates rules and restrains the wantonness of the id, and Old Nick, who represents the ego that realistically satisfies the desires of the id, claim ownership of Jack, who stands for the id or the repressed sexual desires of the author. However, both Jack and Jose belong to Donoghue's unconscious mind, and they have been locked in there for years by Old Nick, the ego, until they were both released in the present work.

The third chapter entitled "Dying" represents, on both the subfictional and nonfictional levels, the transitional phase in the life of the transgender when the gender identity ascribed to them at birth is buried in preparation for the emergence of true gender identity. The world of Jose and Jack is the secret LGBTQ+ world to which Donoghue grants only the Model Reader access. To the naïve reader, the world of the characters is like the world of the *fabula*, the story of Jose's kidnap and escape. All the naïve reader understands from the following dialogue is that Jose spent seven years locked in Room and has been thinking of a plan for escape:

'We need to figure out a plan'. Her voice is all high.  
'Like what?'  
'I don't know, do I? I've been trying to think of one for seven years'. (69)

The Model Reader, however, interprets the dialogue as follows: as an individual with a nonconforming gender identity, Jose has been trying throughout these seven years of confinement and isolation from society to get into the open and failed. That is why she decides the only way to escape from isolation is through trickery. The original plan devised by Jose, or the superego, was to let Jack, or the id, pretend to be sick so that Old Nick may take him to

hospital where he can ask for help; that is, a transgender surgery. When this plan fails, Jose lets Jack play dead, an act which is later repeated by Jose who attempts suicide to escape societal pressure. The message that Jack carries inside his underwear when he escapes as a dead body wrapped in a rug is the message of LGBTQ+ communities, i.e., their troubled sexual identity has to do with their genitals. To conform to the expectations of society, LGBTQ+ individuals sometimes resort to transgender surgery. When their attempts at conforming fail, they bury their true sexual identity, and their message stays hidden inside their underwear.

The fourth chapter entitled "After," represents the stage that follows the escape from the mind to the outside world. At the psychiatric Cumberland Clinic, the id represented by Jack, and the superego represented by Jose receive the support necessary to regain their psychological balance. They are advised to wear masks; that is, to hide their true gender identity to avoid various social ills, from rejection and prejudice to violence and aggression. Jack, the id who stood for the repressed masculine gender identity, starts to show some feminine traits: wearing long hair, carrying a Dora bag, and using the ladies' restroom. In other words, the id tries to conform to the female gender identity ascribed to the author at birth, and the superego represented by Jose starts to relax her control over the id. Jack wonders why lunch is brought after one o'clock, but Jose tells him: "[r]elax [...] Everything's different here'. 'But what's the rule?' " Jack asks. "There is no rule. We can have lunch at ten or one or three or the middle of the night' " Jose replies (184). The lack of rules signifies freedom. Jack asks his mum:

'Are we locked in?'

'No'. She nearly barks it. 'Of course not. Why, are you not liking it here?'

'I mean but do we have to stay?'

'No, no, we're free as a bird'. (191)

Not only the id but also the superego experience freedom having been released from confinement in the unconscious mind and received proper psychological support. However, it is a false sense of freedom. The reality is that both Jack and Jose are constrained in every way: they cannot go out for fear of the paparazzi; Jack cannot walk barefoot and is obliged to wear shoes even if they make his feet sore; more importantly, they cannot leave the clinic until the doctors decide, as the following dialogue makes clear:

'How long are we here?'

'It's only been twenty-four hours. It just feels longer'.

'No, but – how long do we still be here after now? How many days and nights?'

'I don't actually know'. (191)

The sense of time in the outside world, i.e., outside the unconscious mind, is quite different because many events happen simultaneously. Jack loses track of time; he wonders:

In *Outside* the time's all mixed up. Ma keeps saying, 'Slow down, Jack', and 'Hang on', and 'Finish up now', and 'Hurry up, Jack', she says Jack a lot so I'll know it's me she's talking to not persons else. I can hardly ever guess what time it is, there's clocks but they have pointy hands, I don't know the secret and Watch isn't here with her numbers so I have to ask Ma and she gets tired of me asking. 'You know what time it is, it's time to go outside'. (196)

The lack of rules and the ease of the superego's control over the id thus change the id's consciousness of time so much that it seems unreal in the real world compared to the fancy time spent in *Room*; that is, inside the unconscious mind.

The fifth chapter, entitled “Living”, marks the return full circle to the first stage where Jack, as a representative of male sexual desires, and Jose, as the superego, are part of the unconscious mind. Jose says: “[g]uess what, Jack, you and me have our own apartment” (300). The only difference is that the male sexual desires are no longer repressed. Thus, Jack informs the Model Reader: “[t]his morning the kitchen’s empty. I get the scissors from the drawer and cut my ponytail all off” (284). The id tries to exercise some influence on the superego so it adopts the same male gender identity. Jack tells Jose: “I could cut yours and then we’d be the same again” (303). However, Jose decides to keep the female gender identity. She tells Jack: “I think I’m going to keep mine long” (*ibidem*). Having released repressed male sexual desires, the id and the superego can now live together in peace. In other words, the author has finally come to terms with her double gender identity: the outer feminine traits and the inner masculine feelings.

In this paper, an attempt has been made to shed light on the possible metafictional, super-fictional, subfictional and nonfictional worlds imagined by the author of the fictional universe of *Room*, which tackles the problematic of transgender, their isolation from society that is reluctant to accept nonconforming genders, and their various attempts at conforming with their biological sex from medical surgery to psychological treatment. The answer suggested to the dilemma of transgender in this fictional universe is acceptance of their difference. As Nietzsche remarks, “to accept oneself as a fate, not to desire oneself ‘different’ – in such conditions this is *great rationality* itself” (2004, 20).

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# The Armenian Genocide in Letters to the Editor of *The Irish Times*

*Isabella Martini*

University of Florence (<[isabella.martini@unifi.it](mailto:isabella.martini@unifi.it)>)

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## *Abstract:*

Selected by newspaper editors to keep specific topics current in the news, Letters to the Editor (LTE) have long intertwined with historical events, among which the twentieth century Armenian genocide. At that time international humanitarian workers and political personalities made appeals to the reading public and expressed their indignation for the violence perpetrated to Armenian civilians. Rarely, however, have LTE been studied for their linguistic features. Since they were to meet the ideological agenda of the newspaper's readers of the time, which recurrent linguistic strategies were used to achieve this? This contribution is part of a more extensive research combining corpus linguistics and discourse analysis to study the representation of the Armenian genocide in historical news discourse.

**Keywords:** Corpus Linguistics, Discourse Analysis, Historical News Discourse, Historical Pragmatics, Letters to the Editor

## *1. Introduction*

The massacre of the surviving Armenians (1915-1923) and the strategies of denial on the part of its perpetrators became a matter of contemporary political relevance when official acknowledgement of the Armenian genocide was set as one of the conditions for Turkey to enter the European Union (EU). Furthermore, what is now the Republic of Armenia has been suffering from territorial claims that led to the recent renewal of hostilities triggered by the military occupation of the Nagorno-Karabakh area by Azerbaijan. Nowadays, as well as during the second wave of twentieth-century massacres of Armenians that started in 1915, after the 1909 massacres of Adana, the events affecting the Armenian population have continued to have wide international news coverage.

The tragic events concerning the Armenians from 1915 were not only reported in editorials and in news articles, in-



cluding from war and local correspondents from Turkey, but also in letters to the editor in the international press. International humanitarian workers and political personalities denounced the massacres in LTE published in major international newspapers (Peltekian 2013; Chabot Godin, Kappler, *et al.* 2016), making appeals for intervention and expressing their viewpoints by commenting on the events. Notable Armenians, anonymous residents of Smyrna, Greek and Russian delegates, as well as local citizens and politicians actively involved in relieving the sufferings of the Armenians formed a cross-cultural variety of voices. Although mediated for publication, these letters are still significant of the position of the international press as far as the representation of the Armenian genocide was concerned, with only a minority of dissenting voices (Walsh 2018; Martini 2023a, 2023b).

My research stems out of the substantial difference observed in the reception of the Armenian genocide (*Medz Yeghern*) and the Holocaust, which has raised doubts as to whether the textual strategies of the news discourse on the Armenian genocide had somehow influenced its newsworthiness. Despite massive coeval press coverage, and many letters to the editor published on the topic, which was therefore considered newsworthy, little is generally remembered, and international recognition of the massacres as a genocide has been delayed, and, as of today, is far from being achieved.

So far, contributions on the topic have been published discussing linguistic aspects of the representation of the Armenian genocide in the British press, namely in *The Times* between 1914 and 1926 (Martini 2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2022, 2023a, 2023b forthcoming, 2024 forthcoming). A corpus of 186 LTE of *The Times* about the Armenian question (LEAQ) was built and analysed combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. Keywords and their frequent collocates and clusters were examined using first a corpus-driven approach (Tognini-Bonelli 2001); then, corpus-assisted discourse analysis (Partington 2004, 2010, 2015) was applied to extended co-textual reference searching for non-obvious meanings of quantitative results. The same analytical method was applied to LTE of *The Irish Times*, and a corpus of 32 LTE was built and named Letters to the Editor on the Armenian Question Irish Times (LEAQIT). Although its limited size prevented statistically relevant results, the same quantitative and qualitative analysis was performed to answer two research questions:

- What were the linguistic strategies used to represent the Armenian genocide in *The Irish Times*?
- Were the linguistic strategies in place in LTE of *The Irish Times* different from those in use in *The Times*? And if so, to what extent?

From their appearance in eighteenth-century newspapers, LTE have consolidated as a public privileged space for high-profile readers to voice their ideological stance and comment on news topics (Torres da Silva 2012; Chovanec 2012; Sturiale 2018; Cavanagh 2019) relevant to a newspaper's ideological agenda. Which leads to a potentially broader research question: which ideological agenda was represented to the reading public through the news values expressed in the linguistic strategies detected in the *Irish Times*? Discussing political implications related to this question would go beyond the scope of this contribution; however, the linguistic analysis conducted in this article will consider ideological matters as well as elaborating on linguistic results.

## 2. *The Armenian Genocide. A Brief Historical Contextualisation*

The Turkish government has always denied that the massacre of Armenian civilians was a genocide, blaming reports with inflated statistics on the number of victims, and regarding the massacres as unfortunate but ordinary wartime violence. Recent studies have focused on the distorting effects of the denial of the genocide on the Turkish population (Aybak 2016), with school textbooks perpetuating the erasure of the cultural and physical memory of the Armenian people (Ferrari 2016). However, connivance with the official governmental line of denial has recently been questioned by Turkish and Armenian intellectuals, who, together, have started to support a more objective narration of the events (Suny, Göçek, Naimark 2011) of what has been considered the first genocide of the twentieth century (Dadrian 2003).

The Christian populations living under the Ottoman empire had already been a target of nationalist violence. The genocide was not an isolated outburst of premeditated violence; it was preceded by the Hamidian massacres in 1895-1896 and the Adana massacres in 1909 (Mayersen 2014; Alayrian 2018). Formally accusing the Armenians of having contributed to the defeat of the Turkish army against the Russian army in January 1915, during World War I, on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1915 the order was issued to eliminate all male Armenian residents throughout the empire, to evict all Armenian civilians from their homes and escort them to their death towards the Syrian desert (Rafter 2016).

## 3. *LTE Theoretical-methodological Framework and Previous Results with LEAQ*

LTE have been studied in their political function to express democratic participation (Wahl-Jorgensen 2002; Pounds 2005, 2006; Romova, Hetet 2012) and in their sociological features across different historical and cultural contexts (Cavanagh, Steele 2019), but rarely they have been the subject of linguistic analysis (Chovanec 2012; Sturiale 2018) before this research project on the Armenian question. LTE originated as a space to share hard news, and have increasingly become a privileged space for selected high profile contributors, where they respond to either an article published in the same newspaper as an editorial, or to a previous letter. They may also initiate a new conversation on a publicly relevant topic (Brownlee, Del Lungo, Denton 2010). Comments and personal opinions, as well as openly expressed ideological stance, are common; moreover, LTE in quality newspapers such as *The Times* (Hobbs 2019) ensure visibility and public recognition. LTE are also likely to discuss newsworthy matters of international and make public what is otherwise privately discussed (Cavanagh 2019).

As newsworthiness is among the principal selection parameters of LTE, studying how it is constructed in LTE would be pivotal to isolate linguistic features specific to such letters. So far, studies have demonstrated that newsworthiness is construed through language choices and textual strategies that shape the news discourse, of hard news in particular, to meet the desired effect on readers; newsworthiness has also been studied in relation to how it is subject to variations across time, places, and cultures (Matheson 2000; Bednarek 2006, 2010; Bös 2015; Bednarek; Caple 2019).

As far as the study conducted so far on the LTE in LEAQ is concerned, keywords and their frequent collocates and clusters have been analysed, and results have shown recurrent grammatical patterns of discourse organisation that reduce the impact of the representation of the Armenian genocide (Martini 2021a), and a semantic prosody of condemnation of the genocide expressed through the lexico-grammatical features of recurrent evaluative language (Martini 2021b, 2021c). When analysing recurring patterns and clusters of the keywords related to the

Armenian national identity (*Armenia, Armenian, Armenians*), frequently occurring collocations in LEAQ showed that these keywords were usually associated with other words related to other national identities (usually to the Greek Christian minority) through the coordinator *and*, thus depriving the victims of their own individual narrative and potentially confusing the reader.

Drawing from existing lines of research on news discourse that examine the construction of newsworthiness through the use of evaluative language, one methodological framework of analysis applied on LEAQ relied on the findings of Bednarek (2006, 2010) and of Bednarek and Caple (2019). A corpus-assisted quantitative and qualitative analysis was performed in Martini (2022b), and the results showed that a combination of the news value of timeliness with the evaluative parameter of negative emotivity (Bednarek, Caple 2019) constructs newsworthiness of LEAQ LTE. Frequently occurring words related to the expression of timeliness were investigated (such as *recent, new, and last*). Findings showed that a consistent semantic prosody of condemnation, related to the attributive use of the adjectives *recent, new, and last*, is expressed through collocating evaluative language, or through evaluative language connected through anaphoric or cataphoric reference.

An analysis of the most recurrent term to indicate genocidal violence (massacres) was also performed in Martini (2024 forthcoming), and results showed that negatively connoted evaluative language (adjectives, nouns, verbs), pertaining to the news value parameter of emotivity (Bednarek, Caple 2019), frequently occurred in extended co-textual references to reinforce the node (massacres), as if the word massacres itself was no longer enough to convey the scale of the atrocities.

A further examination was conducted on the lexico-grammatical features expressing ideological stance (Martini 2022). Following the ideological square and the polarisation of positive ingroup Us vs. negative outgroup Them elaborated by van Dijk (2009), a controversial ideological polarisation emerged as far as the representation of the conflicting sides of the genocide is concerned. Results showed linguistic strategies used to reinforce an ideological polarisation which not only involves Turks and Armenians but extends to the sides fighting World War I and, ultimately, to the underlying centuries-old tension between Christians and Muslims.

Martini (2022) showed that the analysis of L1, L2, R1, and R2 most frequent collocates of polarised keywords (*Turks, Turkish, Turkey* vs. *Armenians, Armenian, Armenia*) has shown that similar grammatical structures are used to validate the polarisation between the victims of the genocide (Armenians) vs. its perpetrators (Turks) or, at times, to reverse it. Agency, represented through the use of the preposition *by*, is also always made explicit, which is not a recurrent feature in general news discourse.

The methodological and analytical framework applied on LEAQ was therefore applied on LEAQIT, and findings obtained so far on LEAQ were referential to elaborate similarities and differences in the linguistic representation of the Armenian question in LEAQIT. Quantitative and qualitative analysis results were elaborated in comparison with those already available to collect further evidence and, in a more general and comprehensive perspective, to identify the features of the news discourse in use in LTE.

#### 4. Construction of the LEAQIT Corpus

The Irish Times Archive was searched using Armenia as search word between 1<sup>st</sup> January 1914 and 31<sup>st</sup> December 1926, thus covering the same time span of the search performed to build the LEAQ corpus on The Times. Using *Armenia* as keyword allowed me to collect results of the occurrences of *Armenian* and *Armenians* as well. Searching *The Times Archive* required to conduct three separate queries to also obtain the occurrences of *Armenian* and *Armenians*.

In order to select LTE, the search word *editor* was added to refine the already obtained search results. The word *editor* is indeed always recurring in LTE in *The Times* and in *The Irish Times* inside the formulaic opening of each letter.

Twenty-seven LTE were therefore collected to build the Letters to the Editor on the Armenian Question Irish Times (LEAQIT) corpus. Being a small corpus, no general statistically relevant results are to be expected. However, the corpus size not only makes a thorough reading of textual materials easier, but it might be interpreted as a first sign of some sort of a different type of interest on the subject. Combining a corpus-driven approach, following Tognini-Bonelli (2001) and Hunston (2002), with corpus-assisted discourse analysis (Partington 2004, 2010, 2015), keywords and their frequent collocates and clusters have been analysed, replicating the methodology applied on LEAQ. As mentioned in the previous section, the results showed grammatical patterns of discourse organisation that reduce the impact of the representation of the Armenian genocide, and a semantic prosody of condemnation of the genocide expressed through the lexico-grammatical features of recurrent evaluative language.

The aim of the analysis performed on LEAQIT is to establish which linguistic strategies are in use to represent the Armenian Question in *The Irish Times* and to what extent they differ from those used in *The Times* – if they differ at all. It was first necessary to extract the keywords of the LEAQIT corpus. Keywords are crucial in Linguistics software-aided analysis because they represent those words that are unusually frequent in the corpus under examination when compared with a larger corpus of similar texts, termed a reference corpus. The results thus obtained gives a clear quantitative indication of the core lexical items of a corpus that will therefore undergo further qualitative analysis (Scott 2020). To obtain the keywords of LEAQIT, a wordlist of LEAQIT was created using WordSmith Tools v8.0 (*ibidem*) and it was compared with the wordlist of the written section of the BNC XML Edition corpus (2007). The written BNC section was used since no larger corpus of LTE has been built yet, while the BNC is a 100-million-word collection of samples of written and spoken language that also includes extracts from regional and national newspapers. Table 1 shows the first ten relative most frequent keywords by their ranking position on a 500 keyness scale:

Key word	Freq.	%	Texts	RC. Freq.	P
ARMENIANS	49	0,79	20	95	0,0000000000
ARMENIA	46	0,74	27	322	0,0000000000
TOWNLEY	22	0,36	22	24	0,0000000000
ARMENIAN	25	0,40	17	258	0,0000000000
BALFOUR	21	0,34	21	237	0,0000000000
REFUGEES	27	0,44	16	1.830	0,0000000000
SUBSCRIPTIONS	19	0,31	13	347	0,0000000000
YOURS	27	0,44	26	3.092	0,0000000000
FRIENDS	29	0,47	19	13.527	0,0000000000
ALEXANDRETTA	6	0,10	4	0	0,0000000000

Table 1 – Keywords of the LEAQIT corpus. Created with WordSmith Tools 8.0 KeyWords

Table 1 shows keywords and their frequency in LEAQIT source texts in the first and second column respectively; the third and fourth columns display the percentage of the frequency and the number of texts in which each keyword occurs in LEAQIT; the fifth column indicates the frequency of each keyword in the reference corpus (the written section of the BNC XML Edition corpus) and the last column shows the p value referring to the keyness value of the items under consideration.

Among the most frequent keywords, three are related to the Armenian national identity (Armenians, Armenia, Armenian), while two refer to the author of most letters (Townley and Balfour). One keyword only is immediately detectable as relating to the genocide (refugees), with another keyword mentioning one of the locations related to the genocide (Alexandretta, now Iskenderun). Other two keywords (subscriptions and friends) are implicitly related to the genocide as well, once their co-textual references are expanded. The keyword yours is instead the recurring closing formula of all LTE.

It is interesting to remark how keywords in LEAQIT differ significantly from those of LEAQ, shown in table 2 below and displaying the same categories as table 1:

Key word	Freq.	%	Texts	RC. Freq.	P
TURKISH	398	0,34	110	1.408	0,0000000000
TURKS	271	0,23	100	463	0,0000000000
ARMENIANS	227	0,19	102	95	0,0000000000
ARMENIAN	247	0,21	108	258	0,0000000000
TURKEY	266	0,23	90	2.014	0,0000000000
CONSTANTINOPLE	166	0,14	62	249	0,0000000000
ARMENIA	141	0,12	75	322	0,0000000000
GREEKS	145	0,12	53	694	0,0000000000
EDITOR	190	0	180	3.826	0,0000000000
MAHOMEDAN	67	0	29	0	0,0000000000

Table 2 – Keywords of the LEAQ corpus. Created with WordSmith Tools 8.0 KeyWords

In the LTE of *The Irish Times*, reference to the perpetrators of the genocide is not detectable in the first keywords; this could be interpreted as the first sign of a different representation of the Armenians in LEAQIT, which is then reinforced by the words directly related to the genocide. Some further context is needed as far as the two keywords *Townley* and *Balfour*. The qualitative analysis of the corpus shows that both *Townley* and *Balfour* refer to the author of 22 out of 27 letters, Blayney Reynell Townley Balfour (1845-1928), who signed the letters as B.R. Balfour. Some preliminary research conducted online provided a general outline of the author, regarding his lineage and the house he used to live in, Townley Hall, nearby Drogheda, which he mentioned when signing his letters. The same B. R. Balfour is listed as B.R. Balfour, Esq., a member of the executive committee of the *Friend of Armenia*, the quarterly magazine established in 1897 by the association *Friends of Armenia*, in the immediate aftermath of the 1894-1896 Hamidian massacres of the Armenians (Tusan 2017).

## 5. Data Analysis

The LEAQIT corpus was analysed with WordSmith Tools 8.0 (Scott 2020), to compute concordance lines and examine frequent collocations and clusters of the keywords. Following the analysis conducted on LEAQ, concordance lines of the keywords relating to the Armenian identity (*Armenians, Armenia, Armenian*) will be examined, as well as concordance lines of keywords related to the genocide (*refugees, Alexandretta*) and of the keywords *subscription* and *friends*. Data will be examined to answer the research questions through extended co-textual references, according to the corpus-assisted methodology, to access non-obvious meaning “constructed and reinforced by the accumulation of linguistic patterns” in the extended context of the selected words, or “nodes” (Partington, Marchi 2015, 220). A focus on evaluative language and on which news value parameter newsworthiness is constructed, complements the qualitative analysis of the corpus.

### 5.1 *Armenians, Armenia, Armenian*

The keywords related to Armenian national identity are among the most frequently occurring lexical words in the corpus: *Armenians* (x49), *Armenia* (x46), *Armenian* (x25). *Armenians* most frequently occurs in the initial parts of the LTE in LEAQIT, as shown by the plot elaborated with the concordance lines of *Armenians*, and it most frequently collocates with emotive language (*destitute* x4; *suffering* x4; *refugee* x3). All the occurrences of these words are immediate L1 collocates of the node. Table 3 below shows the occurrences of the collocate *destitute*:

THE <b>DESTITUTE</b> ARMENIANS. TO THE EDITOR OF THE IRISH TIMES
THE <b>DESTITUTE</b> ARMENIANS. TO THE EDITOR OF THE IRISH TIMES
for funds to relieve suffering among <b>destitute</b> Armenians and to provide for the orphans of
funds are always needed for relief of the <b>destitute</b> Armenians in Turkey. A noble work seems to
<b>DESTITUTE</b> ARMENIANS. TO THE EDITOR OF THE IRISH TIMES

Table 3 – Concordance lines of the collocation *destitute + Armenians* in the LEAQIT corpus. Created with WordSmith Tools 8.0 Concord

Three occurrences of the noun phrase “the destitute Armenians” appear in the title of three distinct letters, all signed by Balfour, and published respectively on 6<sup>th</sup> November 1915, 6<sup>th</sup> December 1915, and 31<sup>st</sup> July 1922. The strongly connoted adjective *destitute* is associated as a recurrent emotive connotation of Armenians in the title of the letters. This same representation with strong emotively connoted adjectives appears in other letter titles, which use other adjectives or verbs used as adjectives, such as *persecuted* (6<sup>th</sup> June 1922), *refugee* (20<sup>th</sup> March 1924), *suffering* (22<sup>nd</sup> December 1916 and 20<sup>th</sup> July 1923). Letter titles act as the first connection with the readers to grasp their attention and have them read the body of the letter. Therefore, part of the construction of the newsworthiness of the letters on the Armenian question in the LTE section of *The Irish Times* relies on the use of emotive language in the titles in association with the plural form of the noun of nationality *Armenians*, which differs from the LEAQ corpus. In that corpus only one occurrence of *Armenians* in the title of the letter collocates with negatively connoted emotive language in a letter published on 5<sup>th</sup> October 1915 with the title “Persecution of Armenian” and signed by Edward Atkin, Hon. Secretary of the Anglo-Armenian Association.

The other two occurrences of the collocation *destitute Armenians* listed in table 3 appear

in two letters, published on 22nd December 1916 and 12th June 1916. Example (1) and (2) expand the co-text of their occurrence in chronological order:

(1) The Armenian Committees are now endeavouring to assist in restoring many of the refugees to settle again in the districts which have been occupied by the Russians. A considerable sum will be needed for this work, and funds are always needed for relief of the **destitute Armenians** in Turkey. [12th June 1916, signed by B.R. Balfour]

(2) Sir,--May I call attention to an advertisement in another column, again appealing for funds to relieve suffering among **destitute Armenians** and to provide for the orphans of the late and previous massacres? [22nd December 1922, signed by B.R. Balfour]

Both (1) and (2) represent the victims of the genocide as *destitute*, highlighting the condition of the victims not only as extremely poor, but also as lacking the means to provide for themselves. Further linguistic choices reinforce this specific representation by mentioning the current political state of the Armenians after the Turkish persecutions (*refugees*), the violent actions (*massacres*), their most piteous consequences (*orphans*), the appeal for money (*a considerable sum; funds are always needed; appealing for funds*), and the expected outcome of the appeal (*restoring; settle again; relief; relieve suffering; provide for*).

*Suffering* and *refugee* are used as collocates of *Armenians* in two more occurrences in the body of the letters; *unfortunate* and *remaining* are also used to collocate with *Armenians* in the body of one letter each. Example (3), (4), (5) and (6) show extended co-textual reference of these further collocates of *Armenians*:

(3) Sir, I have again to thank many of your readers for their contributions for relief of destitute and **refugee Armenians**. The greater part of the money is being sent to the Lord Mayor, of London's Fund for **Refugee Armenians**, but I include in the following list a few contributions to the Friends of Armenia, whose work is still being continued in Turkey, notwithstanding difficulties caused by the war. [6<sup>th</sup> November 1915, signed by B.R. Balfour]

(4) Sir,--I think my last appeal for the **suffering Armenians** appeared in your columns on the 27<sup>th</sup> May. I subjoin a list of subscriptions received since that date. [4<sup>th</sup> October 1921, signed by B.R. Balfour]

(5) SIR, -I have received several subscriptions in response to my own and Canon Darling's appeals for the **suffering Armenians**. Most of them have come in within the last few days, and I hope to acknowledge all in your columns as soon as possible. [18<sup>th</sup> October 1915]

(6) Whether or not this remarkable prophecy will now be fulfilled to the letter, it is utterly unthinkable that the **unfortunate Armenians** will ever again be forced under the yoke of the Turkish savages. [31<sup>st</sup> July 1916, signed by C. Gough]

The extended co-text in examples (3), (4) and (5) illustrates how emotive language is here used to thank the readers for their contributions to the fund established to help the Armenian victims of the genocide. To all three letters, the author (B.R. Balfour) added a list of contributors with their contribution to the fund, to express his gratitude and to disclose their names and make them appear in the newspaper. This seems to be presented as a most valuable acknowledgement of their help. Example (6) is one of the few letters not authored by B.R. Balfour and it provides

a strong viewpoint on the current political situation involving the Armenians. In particular, it expresses the specific wish for the Armenians to be liberated from their situation, using strong negatively connoted language again when referring to the perpetrators of the genocide (*forced under; joke; Turkish savages*), placed in end-weight position of the sentence (Biber, Johansson, Leech, *et al.* 1999). This is on the side of the sentence occupied by the most important part of the information provided.

### 5.1.1 Armenia

*Armenia* is the second most frequent keyword in LEAQIT, contrary to LEAQ, where it ranks seventh. The most frequent left-collocate of Armenia is the noun *friends* (x28), which in all occurrences is embedded in the phrase *friends + of + Armenia*. The Friends of Armenia was among the most active associations to gather funds and to provide concrete support to the victims of the genocide (Tusan 2017). B.R. Balfour, the author of all the letters including the cluster *friends of Armenia*, signed some of them as Hon. Sec. and Treasurer. As already anticipated, most letters plead the Armenian refugees' cause and the readers of *The Irish Times* for donations, therefore it is not unexpected to find such frequent reference to the humanitarian association. Table 4 below shows the first ten lines extracted from the concordance lines of *Armenia*:

the Lord Mayor of London's Fund. The " <b>Friends of Armenia</b> " are now giving relief to Syrians and
Application should be made to the Secretary, <b>Friends of Armenia</b> ," 47 Victoria street, Westminster,
and can be obtained from Miss Hickson, " <b>Friends of Armenia</b> ", 47 Victoria street, Westminster.
received the following telegram sent to the <b>Friends of Armenia</b> from Tiflis, dated 23rd February.
as being practised on the Greeks. The " <b>Friends of Armenia</b> " have recently extended their aims so
se to Captain Gracey's appeal for the " <b>Friends of Armenia</b> ", and the Lord Mayor of London's
THE " <b>FRIENDS OF ARMENIA</b> " (IRISH BRANCH). TO THE EDITOR OF THE
and the money will be divided between " <b>Friends of Armenia</b> " and the Lord Mayor of London's Fund.
work of relief are published in the " <b>Friends of Armenia</b> ", which appears every quarter, and can

Table 4 – Concordance lines of the collocation Friends + of +Armenia in the LEAQIT corpus. Created with WordSmith Tools 8.0 Concord

The concordance lines illustrate how the phrase *Friends of Armenia* recurs with the address of the association (*47, Victoria Street Westminster*); the mention of further funds collected for charity reasons (*Lord Mayor of London's Fund*); people working for the organisation (*Secretary; Miss Hickson*); the reference to the sums collected (*money*); the actions of the organisation (*giving relief; work of relief; extended their arms; appeal*). Being entirely factual information, the representation of the Friends of Armenia provides the idea of an established, transparent organisation, devoted to charity purposes and to improving the conditions of the refugees. Example (7) and (8) provide extended co-textual reference out of the concordance lines listed in table 4:

(7) I have now received a joint appeal from the "**Friends Of Armenia**" and from the Lord Mayor of London's Fund for Armenian refugees. They have authorised Captain Gracey, who has been working among the Armenians for many years, to travel through Great Britain and Ireland on their behalf in order to obtain help and sympathy for these suffering people. [4<sup>th</sup> October 1921, signed by B.R. Balfour]



(8) A systematic attempt appears to have been made, and, I fear, is still in process, to exterminate the Christians in Asia Minor. Terrible cruelties are reported in your columns as being practised on the Greeks. The “**Friends of Armenia**” have recently extended their aims so as to enable their workers to relieve distress among Syrians and other sufferers in the Near East. [6<sup>th</sup> June 1922, signed by B.R. Balfour]

Example (7) presents the action of the organisation and names Captain Gracey, giving credit to his figure through his activity with the victims, as the one who has collected in person help for the victims. Such factual information provides credibility to the actions of the organisation, and are complemented with the use of emotive language (*suffering people*) in end position, preceded by the aim of Captain Gracey’s tour (*obtain help and sympathy*). The same strategy is in place in example (8) and (9). Example (8), however, does not provide factual information to support the legitimacy of the organisation’s doings in the immediate co-text surrounding the phrase *Friends of Armenia*; the only factual information provided here is related to an intratextual reference to the news published in the newspaper. This could also be interpreted as an overt acknowledgment of how these LTE comply with the agenda of *The Irish Times* in relation to the Armenian question. The information on further atrocities on other Christian populations is therefore used to show how the organisation is not only helping the Armenians, but also other fellow victims of the massacres (*extended their arms; Syrians and other sufferers*), with the similar lexical material describing the aim of the organisation (*relieve distress*).

A specific area of action of the *Friends of Armenia* concerns the female victims of the atrocities, as reported in example (9):

(9) We are constrained to appeal once more to the generosity of your readers on behalf of the Armenian Christians, especially the women and girls. It is, perhaps, not generally known that there are many thousand women and girls practically captives in Turkish houses and harems. Miss Keren Jeppe, a Commissioner of the League of Nations, and also the “**Friends of Armenia**”, have homes ready to receive these women and girls when they can effect an escape. [19<sup>th</sup> March 1926, signed by B.R. Balfour; E.B. Cullen; John Macmillan]

The coordinate phrase *women and girls* (x3) is repeated in the extended co-text of Friends of Armenia together with the estimate number (*many thousands*) and with news on their conditions (*captives*), combining the news value of superlativeness related to a large scale of the victims affected (*many thousands*) and the evaluative parameter of emotivity by making reference to their conditions as prisoners (*captives*) by the perpetrators of the genocide (*in Turkish houses and harems*). This letter, in particular, is jointly signed as follows: “B.R. BALFOUR, D.L, Townley Hall, Drogheda, Joint Honorary Secretary; E.B. CULLEN, Seymourstreet, Lisburn, President of the Methodist Church in Ireland; John MACMILLAN, Dinanew House, Ravenhill road, Belfast, Joint Honorary Secretary”. The utmost urgency, to receive donations to save Christian women enslaved by Muslims is therefore highlighted by having two joint secretaries and the President of the Methodist Church in Ireland sign, this appeal. This is also connected to the ideological conflict between polarised ingroups and outgroups outlined in Martini (2022), where Armenians are assimilated to a positive local ingroup in view of their religious beliefs against a negative outgroup of Turkish Muslims. Such opposition also extends to further ideological oppositions related to the opposing sides fighting World War I, and ultimately, to the conflicting representations of the victims and of the perpetrators of the genocide.

### 5.1.2 Armenian

The adjective of nationality *Armenian* most frequently right-collocates with *refugees* (x14), with words related to the atrocities of the genocide (*massacres, horrors, sufferers*), with words and phrases related to society (*orphans, men, women and girls*), and with words related to religion (*Catholicos, Christians*). *Refugees* is a political term which evokes a series of specific conditions embodied by those who are referred to as refugees; it involves destitution, the loss of their homeland, and almost intolerable life conditions. Without being *per se* a negatively connoted term, in view of the semantic associations evoked, *refugees* therefore complies with a negative emotive evaluative parameter, and therefore orients the representation of the Armenians. Five out of fourteen occurrences of *Armenian + refugees* are letter titles; one of them is preceded by the noun phrase subscriptions and appeals, thus immediately clarifying the aim of the letter. A sixth occurrence displays refugees as R3 collocate in the title “ARMENIAN ORPHANS AND REFUGEES”. The collocation with *refugees* is therefore used to attract the readers’ attention and to trigger an emotive reaction. Table 5 shows some further concordance lines of the collocation *Armenian + refugees* in the body of the LTE of the corpus:

and from the Lord Mayor of London’s Fund for <b>Armenian refugees</b> . They have authorised
on the borders of Turkey and Persia, as well as of the <b>Armenian refugees</b> in the Caucasus, some of
have sent me some of their recent news of the <b>Armenian refugees</b> in the Caucasus, which
Friends of Armenia,” and the Lord Mayor of London’s <b>Armenian Refugees</b> Fund. Captain Gracey has
an appeal for further contributions in aid of the <b>Armenian refugees</b> , especially for those now at

Table 5 – Concordance lines of the collocation Armenian + refugees in the LEAQIT corpus. Created with WordSmith Tools 8.0 Concord

The collocation occurs with words and phrases mostly related to charity work (*Lord Mayor of London’s Fund; appeal for further contributions; Friends of Armenia; appeal; aid*) and to locations (*Turkey; Persia; Caucasus*). This reinforces the representation of what is being done to help the refugees and to provide more specific information on where the refugees are located, after being forced to leave their land and having survived the massacres. Example (10) provides further co-textual reference:

(10) Distressing accounts have arrived of the condition of thousands of Armenians and Syrian Christians on the borders of Turkey and Persia, as well as of the **Armenian refugees** in the Caucasus, some of whom are now being assisted to return to their former homes in Turkish Armenia. [22<sup>nd</sup> December 1922, signed by B.R. Balfour]

Negative emotive language (*distressing*) is used to modify the opening subject of the sentence (*accounts*), which relates to the evaluative parameter of reliability expressed by *accounts*. Therefore, thus combined, *distressing + accounts* negatively connote the opening of the sentence and anticipate the reliability of what follows. The reliability is then reinforced by the use of *thousands*; conveying an unspecified and astonishing large quantity; the evaluative parameter of expectedness is therefore used to further construct the emotive impression of the opening. Moreover, the reference to *Christians* makes the victims ideally closer to the readers of the newspaper, appealing to their sense of belonging to the same religious group to urge them to donate.

## 5.2 Refugees

It is interesting to note that *refugees* (x27) is also one of the keywords of the LEAQIT corpus, occurring in 16 out of 27 LTE, while in the LEAQ corpus there are only 31 occurrences of the term in 186 letters. This provides further textual evidence that shows how *The Irish Times* seems to use more emotively connoted language when presenting letters on the Armenian questions. Apart from the already discussed collocation Armenian + refugees, the noun frequently occurs with place names (*Turkish Armenia; Turkey; Persia; Syria; Caucasus; Russia; Corfu; Greece; Beirut; Asia Minor; Adana; Tiflis; Cilicia; Alexandretta*) and words indicating quantity (*300,000; thousands*). Similarly, a tendency was identified in the LEAQ corpus when examining frequent prepositional phrases collocating with Armenians (Martini 2022), whereby recurrent linguistic strategies are used to locate refugees. This might be of help for the reader to understand the proportions of the massacres and the extent of the tragedy in view of the most disparate places mentioned, and also to prompt them to help. Example (11) is particularly significant of the evaluative strategies in use to persuade the reader to donate:

(11) Delayed telegraphing until I could see the actual conditions myself. Much has been done for the **refugees**, but their condition is still pitiabile in the extreme. We are giving clothing, bedding, soap, sugar, ten, petroleum, and fuel to twenty thousand, but there are one hundred and eighty thousand no better off than those we are helping. Funds in hand permit us to do no more than we are doing. We are now in a position to distribute wisely and quickly any funds sent in our care, either for general relief or particular objects.

The text is a reported telegram included in a letter by B.R. Balfour, published on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1916. The effect is of a first-hand account of the gruesome situation, which uses negatively connoted emotive language (*pitiabile in the extreme; relief*), quantities (*twenty thousand; one hundred and eighty thousand*), words related to charitable purposes (*funds* x2; *distribute wisely and quickly*), and a list of the objects given to refugees (*clothing; bedding; soap; sugar; ten; petroleum; fuel*) to meet their primary needs. The entire paragraph relies on the evaluative parameter of reliability to convince readers of the inhuman situation of the refugees and again convince them to donate. The same strategy appears in another letter, published 21<sup>st</sup> December 1921 and signed by B.R. Balfour, as reported in example (12):

(12) Latest information received from their representatives in Cilicia says: “Thousands refugees stranded at Alexandretta. No shelter, No food. Situation heart-breaking”. I feel that we cannot let such an appeal pass without making an effort to send immediaterelief. These people have fled to Alexandretta from terror of the Kemalists.

Here the same linguistic strategies applied in examples (10) and (11) are detectable. The news value of timeliness (*latest*) and the evaluative parameter of reliability (information) are used to open the excerpt and construct the credibility of what follows. Geographical locations are then mentioned to confirm that it is a matter of first-hand reliable information provided from the places where the events are unfolding (*Cilicia; Alexandretta*); information which is further reinforced, and made persuasive, mentioning an unspecified considerable number (*thousands*), negatively connoted language (*stranded; fled; terror*), charity-related words (*appeal; relief*), and the perpetrators of the violence (*Kemalists*).

### 5.3 Subscriptions

*Subscriptions* (x19) is the last keyword discussed in this article, and it pertains to a very specific aim of the majority of LTE of the LEAQIT corpus. The letters sent by B.R. Balfour are not only trying to convince the readers of *The Irish Times* to donate, but each single donation is then mentioned on a regular basis in the LTE published on the newspaper, disclosing name and surname of the donors. *Subscriptions* most frequently collocates with *received* (x10), *acknowledged* (x3), and *response* (x3). *Subscriptions + and + appeals* is a pattern identified by WordSmith Tools v.8.0, and it corresponds to three different letter titles, published on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1926, 10<sup>th</sup> April 1926, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1926. *Subscriptions* and its frequent collocates construct a specific lexical net related to charity work and to the recurrent aim of the letters to ask for donations and at the same time to openly acknowledge them. Example (13) provides further co-textual reference of the keyword:

(13) SIR, -I have received several **subscriptions** in response to my own and Canon Darling's appeals for the suffering Armenians. Most of them have come in within the last few days, and I hope to acknowledge all in your columns as soon as possible. [16<sup>th</sup> October 1915, signed by B.R. Balfour].

Emotive language is used to qualify the recipients of the charitable purpose of the letter (Armenians), which are modified with the left collocate *suffering*, and surrounded by language referring to the quantity of the donations (*several*), related to the news value of superlativeness and to timeliness (*within the last few days; as soon as possible*). The construction of the opening sentence reinforces the reliability of the charitable operation and confirms that donors will be mentioned in the news and be publicly thanked for their effort (*acknowledge all*).

Example (14) below is taken from a later letter, published on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1926, signed by B.R. Balfour, and it further confirms the linguistic strategies in use when mentioning the donations and the victims which have partially emerged above:

(14) SIR, -I beg to enclose a list of **subscriptions** received since the 1<sup>st</sup> February, and to send the best thanks of our Committee to your readers for their continued generosity. This persecuted race deserve all that we can do for them. They were our allies in the war, and they are fellow-Christians. [23<sup>rd</sup> April 1926, signed by B.R. Balfour]

The extended co-textual reference mentioned in example (14) shows how the keyword *subscriptions* introduces and further expands the conditions and treatment of the money received, i.e., the explicit acknowledgement of donors in the body of the letter (*enclose a list*), combined with expressions of gratitude towards the donors (*the best thanks; your readers; continued generosity*). Negatively connoted emotive language (*persecuted*) is used to refer to the beneficiaries of donations and to stir an emotional reaction in the readers that will prompt readers to increase donations. The common political and religious grounds for donating are also made explicit with reference to the Armenian position in World War I (*our allies in the war*) and to the shared religious upbringing (*fellow-Christians*). To make the message more effective in persuading the readers to donate, Balfour then tries to appeal to the similarities of Armenians and the Irish readers, using the news value of proximity, and establishing an ideological similarity between the two groups, polarising them as positive ingroups against the implicit negative outgroup of the Turks.

## 6. Conclusive Remarks

The LEAQIT corpus is a collection of LTE on the Armenian question that, despite its limited size (ca. 36,000 tokens), provides a significant contribution in understanding how the Armenian question was represented in one of the most significant Irish broadsheet newspapers during and immediately after the years of the Armenian genocide. As discussed by Martini (forthcoming 2024), the word *genocide* was still to be invented at the time of the LEAQIT letters (1914-1926), and this study provides linguistic findings that contribute to better understand the evolution of the representation of systematic massacres that ultimately led to Lemkin coining the word *genocide* in 1944 (Lemkin 1944). Moreover, the findings of this study on a small but significant portion of the Irish press on the Armenian question shows some noticeable differences in its representation.

The LEAQIT corpus is mainly composed of letters appealing for donations to support the humanitarian effort needed to take care of the Armenian refugees and are almost all written by one same author, B.R. Balfour, whose figure would be worth further research that goes beyond linguistic investigation to reconstruct his role for the Friends of Armenia humanitarian association. Linguistic strategies specific of LEAQIT are in place that differ from those already emerged from the study of the LEAQ corpus of LTE of *The Times*, and that are related to the keywords analysed so far.

Names and adjectives related to the Armenian national identity, are top LEAQIT keywords, while the top most recurring keywords of LEAQ are *Turkish* and *Turks*; this suggests a representation of the Armenian question in LEAQIT that focuses most exclusively on the victims. Moreover, the three keywords *Armenian*, *Armenia* and *Armenians* frequently occur with negatively connoted emotive language in extended co-textual references, which further contributes to their representation as victims of genocidal violence. This connoted representation is reinforced by the collocates connoting the keyword *refugees*, which is not a keyword in LEAQ. The frequent use of the news values of timeliness and reliability and the use of geographical locations to show how refugees are dispersed across multiple areas represent the Armenians as needing assistance in dire straits. Frequent mentions of different geographical locations provide a realistic and reliable picture of how Armenian refugees are looking for safe areas outside of their former homeland in order to survive the violence. The last keyword analysed, *subscriptions*, makes explicit reference to the aim of the largest part of the corpus, i.e., collecting donations to help the Armenians. Extended co-textual evidence shows not only all the previous linguistic strategies used when constructing the co-text of subscriptions, but also evidence of a multiple ideological polarisation of the victims and perpetrators of the genocide, of the fighting sides in World War I and of Christians against Muslims, as detected in LEAQ (Martini 2022).

Therefore, the results of this study show evidence of similar linguistic strategies to represent the victims of the Armenian genocide. This comprises emotive language and consistent reference to cultural and ideological proximity between the readers and the Armenians, to which language[,]appealing to a fair and transparent management of donated sums, occurs to underline the humanitarian emergency of a people. A significant difference, however, should be highlighted as a final remark. When adjectives and nouns of national identity are mentioned, there is no coordination with immediate left- or right-collocates referring to other national identities, as was the case in the LEAQ corpus. The LEAQIT corpus, therefore, grants the Armenian question its own individual narrative.

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## Digital Hyperworks: A Few Irish e-Lit Examples

*Arianna Antonielli*

Università degli Studi di Firenze ([arianna.antonielli@unifi.it](mailto:arianna.antonielli@unifi.it))

### *Abstract:*

As the very idea of authorship is changed by the digital environment, so is the role of the author, their practices, their centrality inside the text undergoing a radical transformation. The analogic author sees their works operating in a traditional, typically ‘Gutenberg’ environment, whereas the digital author exploits information technology to explore what Poster calls a “networked authorship” (2002, 490). A scattered authorship (Landow 1992, 130) and a collective/cooperative notion of writing are typical features of the digital framework, and of hyperliterary works that enable a multisequential reading. The assumptions above inform the empirical investigation developed in this study. It looks at the ways digital authorship tools have contributed to deconstructing the idea of “one strong authorial voice”. In its place, these tools have introduced a “mild”, plural alternative, which is currently being circulated on the Internet. Therefore, the unity of a digital text appears to be in its destination, not its origin. This essay considers several Irish digital works as case studies. It shows how the fragmented nature of digital literary works, which resemble the hypertextual links, moves close to Barthes’s “lexias” which, with their “galaxie[s] de signifiants” (Barthes 1984 [1968], 11) establish intra- and inter-textual connections dismantling the unity of the text and implement the notion of a multiple, collective authorship.

*Keywords:* Digital Literary Environment, Electronic Literature, Irish Literature, Wreadership

### *0. Foreword*

In the real world nowadays, that is to say, in the world of video transmissions, cellular phones, fax machines, computer networks, and in particular out in the humming digitalized precincts of avant-garde computer hackers, cyberpunks and hyperspace freaks, you will often hear it said that the print medium is a doomed and outdated technology, a mere



curiosity of bygone days destined soon to be consigned forever to those dusty unattended museums we now call libraries. Indeed, the very proliferation of books and other print-based media, so prevalent in this forest-harvesting, paper-wasting age, is held to be a sign of its feverish moribundity, the last futile gasp of a once vital form before it finally passes away forever, dead as God. (Coover, 21 June 1992)

With the digital revolution, the compressed and rectangular space of paper-based, textual, analogue communication is freed. Digital communication is by its very nature liquid, formless, continuous, in that hyperlinks represent the antithesis of punctuation marks: rather than circumscribing concepts, they break down boundaries and open up an infinite set of (alternative) learning paths. Knowledge is no longer a consequential sequence of topics, but instead it is more like a network that users create every day; an “interface” through which to construct, negotiate, and share meaning(s). Characterised by its ability to encompass everything that is typically excluded from printed text, digital text is inclusive. While the work created in an environment that could be defined as “analogue” (in clear contrast to a digital one, and thereby to different modes of representation, production, organisation, transmission and data sharing) is based on linearity and “monolithic” structures, what is created in a digital environment makes room for fragmentation.

The digital environment changes the very concept of authorship, to the extent that the author as a figure, their related practices and textual centrality undergo a radical transformation, taking the assumed twentieth-century crisis of the “I” to its extremes. As both a symbol and a representation of the social process, the creative process is expressed through the image of the network, under the form of a distributed, fragmented, dematerialised authorship, which is no longer oriented or focused on the singularity of the writer. While the *analogic author* is a single, absolute author, who conceives their works in a traditional, typically “Gutenbergian” environment, the digital author operates in a digital environment and, as such, exploits technologies, navigating what has been called “networked authorship” (Poster 2002, 490). The lack of boundaries of the new textuality disperses the very figure of the author (Landow 1992, 130), fuelling forms of cooperative writing and hyperliterary works that require a multisequential reading. The “absolute” author is transformed into a collective author, who takes shape from within multiple interactions of different authorial voices.

However, not only have the technological tools supporting a form of digital authorship sensitively influenced the figures, forms and modes of literary creativity, but also its very contents and genres, which are slowly moving towards a similar liquidity, or structural non-finiteness. In a digital environment, hyperauthorship indicates the active participation of readers/users in the development and creation of hypertextual content. These forms are manifested through various modalities, such as the following:

- *Collaboration*: users can contribute to the creation and enrichment of a hypertext work through sharing ideas, feedback, and various contributions. This is made possible via platforms for collective writing, discussion forums, and online collaboration tools.
- *Co-creation*: users can participate actively in the construction of a hypertextual work through adding new links, and interactive content. This allows creators and co-creators to expand and enrich the work in unpredictable ways, ultimately generating a variety of narrative paths and interpretations.
- *Personalization*: users can customise the reading and interaction experience with a hypertextual work, adapting it to their preferences and interests. This may include the ability to

select specific narrative paths, modify the order of nodes, and even influence plot development through individual choice.

- *Remix and mashup*: users can remix or combine existing hypertextual contents to create new works or interpretations. This practice allows reusing and reinterpreting pre-existing materials, while also opening new creative and critical perspectives.
- *Commenting and annotation*: Users can add comments, annotations, or in-depth analysis to a hypertext work, thereby contributing to its understanding and interpretation. This form of participation enriches the text with different perspectives and different levels of reading.

These forms of hyperauthorship, where a primary author (“hyperauthor”) allows a number of secondary authors (“hyper-readers”) to develop possible alternative reading possibilities on their behalf, emphasise the importance of active interaction and readers/users’ participation in creating and interpreting hypertextual works. In this case, the digital environment opens up new possibilities for engagement and collective meaning-making, breaking author-reader boundaries and making space for individual expression and the establishment of a creative community.

### 1. Historical Background

According to Nelson’s own definition, who coined the term during his 1965 lectures at Vassar College, the *hypertext* refers to a few text passages interconnected through links that allow the reader to take different paths. In *Literary Machines* he wrote:

[A] non-sequential writing-text that branches and allows choices to the reader, best read at an interactive screen. As popularly conceived, this is a series of text chunks connected by links which offer the reader different pathways. (Nelson 1990 [1981], 0/2-0/3)

Formulated in the wake of Vannevar Bush’s Memex (*Memory Extended*), which was the first computer system aimed at indexing and retrieving computer documents (Bush 1945)<sup>1</sup>, the Nelsonian hypertext intended to reproduce the associative functions of the human brain and its cognitive trends, using computational technologies and creating a global meta-document, including all previous versions; it thus emerged as a literary “docuverse” – precursor of the World Wide Web. Hypertext systems are essentially based on imitation of dialogue and human thought process, the latter operating through associations facilitated by external links. Transitions from one path to another are frequently traversed or forgotten, resulting in the loss of certain elements, and creating a temporary memory. In a hypertext, this mental process, or flow of thought, is replicated through artificial means (Bush 1945).

From the Xanadu project (1965) to *Computer Lib/Dream Machine* (1974), Nelson’s vision appears to be tied to the effects of emancipation generated by means of communication. It is also aimed at furthering the development of computer technologies in the humanities, namely, the idea of a hypertext as a universal library. Like all digital technologies, hypertext has an “emancipatory” power for both writers and readers or, in Nelson’s words, it is “the manifest destiny of free society” (Nelson 1992, 57).

<sup>1</sup> Memex was a tool based on multiple inclined screens where contents were projected, allowing the reader to read several topics simultaneously, adding personal comments, and creating new connections.

Unlike the book as commonly perceived, a (literary) hypertext is a form of dynamic communication that can be built and enjoyed in a non-sequential manner. Its structure is formed by textual blocks (or *lexias*, as Barthes puts it, or “units of reading”, 1970) and/or multimedia blocks (internal or external), which are joined together by electronic links. First theorised by George P. Landow, Robert Coover and Jay D. Bolter in the late 1980s and first half of the 1990s, the *literary hypertext* immediately reveals its familiarity with certain concepts of poststructuralist literary theory, for instance decentralisation, de-identification, and rhizomatic thought. The concept of non-linearity or sequentiality resembles the principles of Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizomatic theory (1987; Moulthrop 1995). The rhizome does not grow vertically, but rather it branches and reaches out horizontally, with neither beginning nor end. All points on the rhizome can and must be connected to all others. Similarly, hypertexts eschew hierarchical textual ordering and linear narrative developments, allowing for unique and subjective reading experiences.

While for Landow, authors like Derrida, Foucault, and Barthes all contributed to dismantling the notions of authorship, readership, linearity, and traditional textual canons, he also sees the hypertext as promoting a “vindication of postmodern literary theory” (Bolter 1992, 24), that is, as a ramification or implementation of poststructuralist or deconstructionist theories ranging from antilogocentrism to the idea of the death of the author. It is worth remembering Roland Barthes’s words when he states that “It is necessary to free the reader from their condition of minority, a condition produced by a rigid form of textuality that excludes the reader from the pleasure of the text and condemns them to a predetermined universe of meaning”. “In this ideal text”, Barthes writes,

the networks (*réseaux*) are multiple and interact with each other without one being able to dominate the others; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of meanings; it has no beginning: it is reversible; it can be accessed through multiple entrances, none of which can be declared the main one with certainty; [...] in this absolutely plural text, systems of meaning can indeed appropriate it, but their number is never closed, as they measure themselves against the infinity of language. (1974, 5-6)

Barthes illustrates a new vision of the work, as no longer closed but, as Eco also said in 1962, as “an open work” in motion. To some extents, Barthes can be thought to have paved the way for the development of hypertext theory. Hypertext is the most suitable form for this new conception of the “open work”, due to its multiple levels and reading paths. Authors deliver multiple individual narrative paths into the hands of readers and make the latter potential co-authors, thus generating the concept of the hypertextual *wreader*: a reader, as conceived by Landow (1992), who assumes an authorial role in the identification of an individual reading path (Page 2012). We can witness the emergence of the reader as an *alter auctor* and Landow’s (1992) concept of “wreadership” (from the union of writer and reader).

A definition of the text as outlined above, involves interactivity, multisequentiality, multilinearity, and multimedia strategies. The range of possibilities offered by a hypertext provides new tools for the writers to amplify their messages while maintaining the internal coherence of the text. It also offers readers and, to a lesser extent, writers an opportunity to explore different solutions, moving from one topic to another and constructing their own additional contents. This gives rise to a “layered” reading and writing experience (Bolter 2001). As Carolyn Guyer and Martha Petry highlight in their hypertext fiction “Izme Pass”, which was first published in the magazine *Writing on the Edge* (spring 1991):

This is a new kind of fiction, and a new kind of reading. The form of the text is rhythmic, looping on itself in patterns and layers that gradually accrete meaning, just as the passage of

time and events does in one's lifetime. Trying the textlinks embedded within the work will bring the narrative together in new configurations, fluid constellations formed by the path of your interest. The difference between reading hyperfiction and reading traditional printed fiction may be the difference between sailing the islands and standing on the dock watching the sea. One is not necessarily better than the other.

### 3. Hypertextual Literature

Deconstruction touches upon the evolution of how writing is disseminated from manuscript culture to Gutenberg and the Internet, as well as how these media are implicated in the increasing liberation of the reader, both in terms of social access and the reading practice itself. (Gorman, *The Book of Kells*, 1999)

Hypertextual literature is a distinct *genre* encompassing other *genres* and subcategories. Instances where the hypertext is used as a narrative framework, not as a technological tool, are not uncommon, even within the traditional practice of writing that predates the computer's entry into the landscape of various writers. Proto-hypertextual print fiction refers to literary works that display characteristics related to hypertext, incorporating nonlinearity, compound storylines, and interrelated narratives. Alternative paths in the form of footnotes, annotations, and fragmented structures are often used to allow readers to navigate the text in a non-linear manner. These elements encourage readers to make connections, exploring different tracks, and engaging with the story in a non-traditional way. Some examples of print fiction predate the digital age and display similar characteristics from the rise of the 18th century novel, for example, Lawrence Sterne's non-linear novel *Tristram Shandy* (1760). There are also notable examples of proto-hypertextual print fiction and poetry from within modernist and postmodernist literature; these include, to name a few, Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939) and Raymond Queneau's *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* (1961), as well as major experimental works by Jorge Luis Borges (*The Garden of Forking Paths*, 1941), Georges Perec (*Life: A User's Manual*, 1978), and Italo Calvino (*Il castello dei destini incrociati*, 1969; and *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, 1979). The structure of Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*, for instance, is the combination of many interconnected stories and their framing "main" narrative. This model encourages nonlinearity and reader participation. Another interesting example is Julio Cortázar's *Hopscotch* (1963), which offers multiple readings, where readers can choose their own sequence of chapters, thereby developing potentially infinite narrative experiences. In his *Lezioni americane* (published posthumously in 1988), Calvino calls hypernovels those complex novels that result from many intersecting stories and universes (2001, 131).

Despite the shift in medium and in reading possibilities, the conceptual continuity with this type of hypernovel is still strong and evident in the first-generation literary hypertext, particularly in the shared attempt to challenge the linearity of the structure. The non-linearity of a hypertext stems from the fact that its textual blocks can be related to one other in different ways. The text thus becomes a "dynamic network of relations" (Bolter 2001, 234), where meaning is derived from the internal organization of the novel itself. This is in line with Calvino's definition of the "contemporary novel as encyclopaedia, as a method of knowledge, and above all as a network of connections between facts, between people, between things in the world!" (1980). The network paradigm is a recurring theme in various structuralist and post-structuralist theories that refuse a linear perspective.

The first-generation hypertext fiction is associated with the so-called Storyspace School, the first offline hypertext composition platform and software program developed for producing, editing, and reading hypertext fiction, established in the 1980s by Jay David Bolter, and Michael Joyce. First-generation hypertexts are hypertextual narratives that have moved beyond the book form to explore the multimediotic possibilities offered by the machine. The primary characteristic of these hypertexts, in terms of their purely formal level, is that they have a structure that would not allow their reproduction in a printed book. They are dynamic fictions that require using a computer and a mouse to navigate across links.

The experience of the Storyspace School, which remained the only authorial hypertext system until 2009, is first and foremost associated with Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl; Or, a Modern Monster* (1995). Mirroring the *ante litteram* hypertextual labyrinth of Borges's *Garden of Forking Paths*, *Patchwork Girl*, it displays a non-linear structure where the reader can choose among a range of different reading experiences. Unlike its "authoritative" source, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), the protagonist of Jackson's narrative is Shelley's herself, who through bringing the inanimate matter to life ultimately manages to complete the construction of a female monster and becomes its lover.

*afternoon – a story*, by Michael Joyce, can be considered another milestone in the scenery of hypertextual works. First published in 1987 on a floppy disk, it has been available for purchase directly from the publisher's website, Eastgate Systems, since 1992<sup>2</sup>. Each of the 500 pages and more that make up the story are contained within the application window and marked with a title. Each page contains a short text, composed mainly of the protagonist's thoughts, without a precise temporal placement, allowing each node to be self-contained and conceptually connected to the others. In one of the readings, for example, Peter, the protagonist, begins his afternoon with the terrible suspicion that the destroyed car in the accident he witnessed a few hours previously could have belonged to his ex-wife, and that he might have been witness to her and their son Andy's death. However, the meaning of the work changes depending on the path chosen by the reader, which makes it impossible to find a single plot inside any one hypertext. Interestingly, *afternoon* is also enriched with intertextual elements, as confirmed by the references to the *Odyssey*, the Grimm brothers' *Kinder und Hausmaerchen*, and Goethe's *Werther*, whereas Peter's interior monologues – which embody his confused and disordered feelings – clearly evoke Joyce's *Ulysses*.

The novels of the so-called "Storyspace school" were first presented to the public as a demonstration of the hypertext authoring system mentioned previously, which was announced in 1987 at the first Association for Computing Machinery Hypertext conference. Today, Storyspace is still used both to create stand-alone hypertexts and to export them to the web. Storyspace is based on a hierarchical tree editor (outline), although the paragraphs are displayed in boxes that can be freely arranged and visually connected. Other hypertext fiction works written in that period used HyperCard, a software specifically created for developing and reading hypertext novels. Hypertext fictions are currently written in HTML language.

<sup>2</sup> After Michael Joyce's piece, Eastgate Systems continued to follow the trend of hypertext fiction with a series of other pieces including Sarah Smith's *The King of Space* (2008) and Stuart Moulthrop's *The Victory Garden*. Published in 1991, *The Victory Garden* is considered another pioneering piece in the field of electronic fiction, focusing on the story of a group of revolutionaries in a near-future dystopian society. It explores topics of resistance, political activism, and the power of language, through a nonlinear structure, allowing readers to navigate the story and make choices that affect the outcome. It incorporates hyperlinks, embedded multimedia, and interactive elements to engage readers in an immersive and non-linear reading experience.

The advent of the World Wide Web in 1993 clearly opened new possibilities for hypertext literature, increasing its reading options due to its “public” and open nature, as compared to offline and other more “limited” modes of consumption, such as those that had been developed by the Storyspace School. In addition, diverse and multiple semiotic systems, such as text, sound, graphics, and animation, were able to converge for the first time in the same hypertext or, more precisely, hypermedia. New patterns of mono- and multi-linear interactivity were developed, which were capable of implementing different levels and interpretive paths, where readers are literally guided through a text. Hypertextual elements appear incorporated into more linear storylines in their use of multilinear structures, so as to avoid puzzling readers. The connectivity, adaptability, and multimodality of the Web all provide an ideal environment for multilinear fiction.

Robert Arellano’s *Sunshine 69* (first published in 1996 by Riding the Meridian, <<https://the-next.eliterature.org/works/512/0/0/>>) is the first hypertext fiction novel published in the era of the World Wide Web. In the novel, the reader explores “the pop-cultural shadow-side of 1969—from the moon landing to the Manson murders, from a Vietnam veteran’s PTSD to a rock star’s idolatry, from the love-in at Woodstock to the murder at Altamont—by relating intermixed stories and emphasizing graphics and music” (from *Electronic Literature Directory*, ELO<sup>3</sup>, <<https://the-next.eliterature.org/works/512/13/0/>>) through a non-linear table of sections and perspectives.

Other examples produced across the period from the Storyspace School to the development of web-based, reader-friendly hypertextual forms include Brian Kim Stefans’s *The Dreamlife of Letters* (2000), Jim Andrews’s sound and visual poem, “Nio” (2001), and a few pillars of electronic literature, such as Michael Joyce’s *Twelve Blue* (1996)<sup>4</sup>, Stuart Moulthrop’s *Reagan Library* (1999), Judd Morrissey’s *The Jew’s Daughter* (2000; with contributions from Lori Talley), Talan Memmott’s *Lexia to Perplexia* (2000), Caitlin Fisher’s *These Waves of Girls* (winner of the 2001 ELO’s fiction award), as well as Kate Pullinger’s *Inanimate Alice* (2005-2016)<sup>5</sup>. All these works were later collected in the eponymous ELO Volume I, which was published in 2006<sup>6</sup>,

<sup>3</sup> The Electronic Literature Organization (ELO), founded in 1999 in Illinois by novelist Robert Coover, electronic author Scott Rettberg, and Internet business leader Jeff Ballowe, is an international organization aiming to promote the creation of electronic literature.

<sup>4</sup> After his first hypertext fiction, *afternoon, a story*, Joyce authored *Twelve Blue* (1996), his first web hypertext, adopting several frames and image-maps.

<sup>5</sup> *Inanimate Alice* certainly represents another interesting example of an online hypertext that refers not only in its title but also in its content to another work of the English literary canon, namely Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). It is a multimodal digital fiction about the life and experiences of aspiring game designer Alice Field and her digital, imaginary friend, Brad. Structured into 10 episodes that cover Alice’s life from the age of eight to 25, the fiction follows the *Bildungsroman* of its protagonist, both in terms of content and formal complexity. From the first four episodes (the first published in 2005), authored by writer Kate Pullinger and digital artist Chris Joseph, to the sixth episode in 2016, we witness the expansion of the authorial team, which includes digital artists and game designers following the principles of multiple and collective authorship. In contrast to first-generation hypertext fictions, *Inanimate Alice* also combines text, musical compositions, images, games, and virtual reality experiences.

<sup>6</sup> ELO currently includes 4 volumes, published respectively in October 2006 (<https://collection.eliterature.org/1/>), February 2011 (<https://collection.eliterature.org/2/>), February 2016 (<https://collection.eliterature.org/3/>) and June 2022 (<https://collection.eliterature.org/4/>). The collections include interactive, animated poems, drama, and fiction. The works use Shockwave, Flash, JavaScript, interactive programming languages (TADS and Inform) and HTML.

Mark C. Marino's *a show of hands* (2008) is another relevant example of an adaptive hypertext novel using the Literatronic system, where hypertextual elements appear incorporated into storylines that become more linear in their use of multilinear features, aiming to avoid disorienting the reader. This adaptive system is designed to provide users with an immersive experience. The software also includes tools to facilitate the user's understanding of the traversed text, such as the percentage of pages read, the recommended steps, and the most widely interpreted passages, thereby enabling personalised reading and writing experiences able to stand in competition with those of the authors themselves (Fauth 1995; Morgan and Andrews 1999; Millard et al. 2005; Rustad 2009; Bell 2010).

The already mentioned connectivity, adaptability, and multimodality of the web provide an ideal environment for multilinear fiction, conferred and supported by the development of user-generated content of Web 2.0. A case in point is *Twine*, a software launched by Chris Klimas in 2009 to create an interactive narrative that follows the model of "storygames" or "gamebooks". Developed on an open-source platform, *Twine* facilitates the use of a node map that reproduces the hypertext structure by showing the pages of the gamebook and their connections. Anna Anthropy's *Rise of the Videogame Zinesters* (2012) helped *Twine* obtain the status of "fringe mainstream", to the extent that it became more than an independent gaming platform. The hypertext fiction published on *Twine* turned into a manifestation of the queer community and its related e-narrative (Bernardi 2013; Friedhoff 2013; Harvey 2014; Kopas 2014). Concepts like those of collective intelligence and the democratisation of content strengthened the potentialities offered by the very structure and process of multi-reading paths (O'Reilly 2007; Jenkins 2006a; 2006b). *Queers in Love at the End of the World* (2013) by Anthropy and *With Those We Love Alive* (2014) by Porpentine are two examples of the numerous games launched on *Twine* that focus the reader/player's attention on topics such as love, gender, sexuality, or mental illness.

#### 4. *Electronic Literature in Ireland*

In hypertext, everything is there at once and equally weighted. It is a body whose brain is dispersed throughout the cells, fraught with potential, fragile with indecision, or rather strong in foregoing decisions, the way a vine will bend but a tree can fall down. (Jackson 1997, <<http://web.mit.edu/comm-forum/papers/jackson.html>>)

Given the substantial amount of electronic literature somewhat pertaining to the Irish context, the following pages can but offer only a partial analysis of the works considered. Therefore, my attempt is to capture briefly some useful data, and can still be useful for future investigation in this rich field of study. In my attempt to provide an overview of electronic literary works about or related to Ireland, as well as written by Irish authors, I took into consideration a number of sources and platforms, even though the field of electronic works is vast and constantly evolving.

The websites of Irish universities, research centres, and cultural institutions represent an important opportunity to follow digital collections or online exhibitions dedicated to Irish literature and culture, which are either born-digital or which have been digitised. Some notable examples include the **Trinity College Dublin Digital Collections** and the **National Gallery of Ireland**. The main collections held at the Irish Art Digital Archive & Library of the National Gallery comprise the *Irish Art Archive*, which collects materials on Irish art history, and the *Source Stories* collection, an anthology of stories on art history, as well as the *Yeats Archive*, with more than 13,000 records, all searchable through Source.

**The National Library of Ireland (NLI)** is one of the main venues for digital material, with their vast collection of print materials that have been made available through its Digital Library. Digitized materials include manuscripts, photographs, maps, prints, drawings, newspapers, and other archival items, which provide valuable sources for those interested in Irish history, culture, and literature. In addition to capturing the websites of galleries, libraries, archives and museums across Ireland and a very useful archive of websites of Irish literary organisations and festivals<sup>7</sup>, the Digital Library also collects companions to digital literary studies in Ireland<sup>8</sup>. For the purposes of the current essay, the most interesting sections are those storing digitised and born-digital collections. Among the principal digitised collections, “The 1916 Rising Collection” includes

<sup>7</sup> Among Irish literary organisations and festivals: A Poem for Ireland, <<http://apoemforireland.rte.ie/>>; Chapters.ie, <<http://chapters.ie/>>; Borris House Festival of Writing and Ideas, <<http://festivalofwritingandideas.com/>>; Hinterland Festival, <<http://hinterland.ie/>>; International Festival of Literature Dublin, <<http://ilfdublin.com/>>; International Literature Festival Dublin, <<http://ilfdublin.com/>>; Irish Gothic Journal, <<http://irishgothicjournal.homestead.com/>>; The Irish Literary Society, <<http://irishlitsoc.org/>>; Irish Writer’s Centre, <<http://irishwriter-scentre.ie/>>; Limerick Literary Festival, <<http://limerickliteraryfestival.com/>>; Wild Words, <<http://wildwords.ie/>>; Listowel Writers Week, <<http://writersweek.ie/>>; Bram Stoker, <<http://www.bramstoker.ie/>>; Bram Stoker Festival 2013, <<http://www.bramstokerfestival.com/>>; Contemporary Irish Writing, <<http://www.contemporaryirishwriting.ie/>>; Cork Poetry Festival, <<http://www.corkpoetryfest.net/>>; Cúirt, <<http://www.cuirt.ie/>>; Dalkey Book Festival, <<http://www.dalkeybookfestival.org/>>; Dalkey Book Festival, <<http://www.dalkeybookfestival.org/>>; Dromineer Literary Festival, <<http://www.dromineerliteraryfestival.ie/>>; Dublin Book Festival, <<http://www.dublinbookfestival.com/>>; Dublin City of Literature, <<http://www.dublincityofliterature.ie/>>; Dublin City of Literature, <<http://www.dublincityofliterature.ie/>>; International DUBLIN Literary Award, <<http://www.dublinliteraryaward.ie/>>; Dublin One City One Book, <<http://www.dublinonecityonebook.ie/>>; Dublin One City One Book, <<http://www.dublinonecityonebook.ie/>>; Dublin Shakespeare Society, <<http://www.dublinshakespearesociety.ie/>>; Dublin Writers Festival, <<http://www.dublinwritersfestival.com/>>; Franco Irish Literary Festival, <<http://www.francoirishliteraryfestival.com/>>; Hay Festival Kells, <<http://www.hayfestival.com/>>; Illustrators Ireland, <<http://www.illustratorsireland.com/>>; International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award, <<http://www.impacdublinaward.ie/>>; IMPAC Literary Award, <<http://www.impacdublinaward.ie/>>; Irish Book Awards 2016, <<http://www.irishbookawards.irish/>>; Irish Paris, <<http://www.irishmeninparis.org/>>; Irish Literature in Russian Translation, <<http://www.irlandskayaliteratura.org/>>; Literary Belfast, <<http://www.literarybelfast.org/>>; Literature Ireland, <<http://www.literatureireland.com/>>; Mountains to Sea, <<http://www.mountaintosea.ie/>>; Munster Literature Centre, <<http://www.munsterlit.ie/>>; Murder One, <<http://www.murderone.ie/>>; Poetry Ireland, <<http://www.poetryireland.ie/>>; Publishing Ireland - Foilsú Éireann, <<http://www.publishingireland.com/>>; Roddy Doyle, <<http://www.rododydoyle.ie/>>; Festival of Russian Culture, <<http://www.russianfestival.ie/>>; Seamus Heaney, <<http://www.seamusheaneyhome.com/>>; Stinging Fly, <<http://www.stingingfly.org/>>; Writing.ie, <<http://www.writing.ie/>>; Active Speech: Sharing Scholarship on Teresa Deevy, <<https://activespeech2021.org/>>; Childrens Books Ireland, <<https://childrensbooksireland.ie/>>; Claremorris Folk Festival, <<https://claremorrisfolkfestival.com/>>; E.R Murray, <<https://ermurray.com/>>; <<https://irishwomenswritingnetwork.com/>>; Kidsown, <<https://kidsown.ie/>>; Patrick Kavanagh Country, <<https://patrickkavanaghcountry.com/>>; Poethead, <<https://poethead.wordpress.com/>>; Listowel Writers’ Week, <<https://writersweek.ie/>>; Cúirt, <<https://www.cuirt.ie/>>; Donaghmede Literary Festival, <<https://www.donaghmedelitfest.com/>>; Dublin Book Festival, <<https://www.dublinbookfestival.com/>>, <<https://www.ennisbookclubfestival.com/>>; Hinterland Festival of Literature & Arts, <<https://www.hinterland.ie/>>; Howth Literary Festival, <<https://www.howthliteraryfestival.com/>>; Imagine Arts Festival, <<https://www.imagineartsfestival.com/>>; <<https://www.irelandreads.ie/>>; Irish Book Awards, <<https://www.irishbookawards.ie/>>; Poetry Ireland, <<https://www.poetryireland.ie/>>; Redline Book Festival, <<https://www.redlinebookfestival.ie/>>; Seamus Heaney, <<https://www.seamusheaney.com/>>; Tramp Press, <<https://www.tramppress.com/>>; West Cork Music Festival, <<https://www.westcorkmusic.ie/literary-festival/>>; Words by Water, <<https://www.wordsbywater.ie/>>; Writing.ie, <<https://www.writing.ie/>>.

<sup>8</sup> Among these Companions, it is worth remembering Claire Lynch, *Cyber Ireland: text, image, culture*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2014; Andrew Weanus, *Electronic Literature as Digital Humanities: Contexts, Forms, & Practices*, Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, an imprint of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc., 2021; Ray Siemens and Susan Schreibman (eds), *A companion to digital literary studies*, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013; Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, *Technology in Irish literature and culture in Technology in Irish literature and culture*.



photographs, letters, and other materials related to the Easter Rising. The “Yeats Collection” is a noteworthy compendium gathering a range of Yeats’s manuscripts, letters, photographs, and other items. The “National Folklore Collection” is one of the largest folklore collections in the world, containing digitized manuscripts, photographs, and audio recordings on Irish folklore and cultural heritage. NLI also hosts the famous “James Joyce Collection”, featuring a selection of James Joyce manuscripts, letters, photographs, and other materials about his life and works.

It is widely well known that digital library collections play a very important role in preserving works of electronic literature. In addition to the UK-based Digital Preservation Coalition and the Electronic Literature Organization’s PAD (Preservation / Archiving / Dissemination), the Digital Repository of Ireland (DRI) is a national service, launched in June 2015, for the long-term digital preservation of Ireland’s humanities, social sciences, and cultural heritage resources; it contains a number of important digitised collections, such as the “Oscar Wilde Collection” and the “Papers of John Millington Synge” (DOI 10.7486/DRI.rr17fk819).

The “Irish Film Poetry Archive” is an essential resource, with its poetic texts or speeches complemented by various media, such as videos and sounds. Film poetry is extensively associated with “digital poetry” and “multimedia poetry”, as the digital plays a main role in the connections between poetical and filmic elements. Irish poets and practitioners see film poetry as a very common experimental *genre*, as shown by the work of Doireann Ní Ghríofa and Pat Boran. The section “Irish Film Poetry Archive” at the DRI includes a selection of ten film-poems, which are briefly listed in the following in chronological order:

- “The Lammis Hireling” (2009), from Ian Duhig’s poem (2000), investigates the theme of superstition in 19th-century rural Ireland;
- “Red Line Haiku” (2015) by Brian Kirk, which was composed in 2013 as a series of Haiku during his travels on the Red Line (one of two lines of the Dublin light rail system), and was later enriched with a visual and audio component;
- “Chronosequence” (2018), by Doireann Ní Ghríofa, Peter Madden, and Linda Buckley, intertwining images of nature and ruins as the words of the poems are projected on a screen;
- “Going to the Well” (2018), a film based on a poem by poet and author Lani O’Hanlon, which tells the story of a group of women seeking water in three wells;
- “Marsh” (2018), from a poem by Cork poet, Paul Casey, read by Aidan Stanley, which is about the Carrafeen salt marsh in West Cork, an area where sea and land meet;
- “Recipe for the Bad Times, the Sad Surprise Times, the No Light Times” (2018), a film poem by Doireann Ní Ghríofa, with music and voice by Linda Buckley;
- “The Origin of Superlatives” (2019), a two-minute film poem composed and filmed by Colm Scully, featuring the craftspeople of La Colporteuse society in France;
- “Virginia Gave Me Roses” (2019), a film poem based on Lani O’Hanlon’s poem, filmed and edited by Fiona Aryan, and recited by Lani O’Hanlon, exploring “impermanence, female relationships and the rituals that sustain us in times of sorrow, loss and joy”;
- “Cur Síos” (2021), a 59-second film poem by Brian Mackenwells, which displays a roll of paper from a fax machine scrolling continuously across a typewriter to create a pattern, while a voice is reading the poem;
- “Lineage” (2021) by Sinéad McClure, a one and a half minute film poem on nature, climate change and habitat loss, while a voice recites the poems.

The **UCD Digital Library** gathers historical materials, photographs and art, as well as interviews and letters, which have been digitised and made available through open access, in-

cluding, to name a few, the “Papers of Michael Collins”, the “Letters of Roger Casement”, the “Press Photographs of Eamon de Valera in 1919-1979”, and the original material concerning the events of Easter 1916, taken from the UCD Archives and UCD Special Collections. The UCD Digital Library also collaborates with many Irish repositories to make primary source materials and research data freely accessible online. The Irish Virtual Research Library and Archive (IVRLA) is also worth mentioning for its digitisation project on digital Humanities and Social Sciences launched in January 2005 to optimise access to the cultural heritage repositories of the University College Dublin through digitisation technologies. The material, made accessible from a single virtual location, is organised in searchable collections, such as the collection entitled “Joyce’s Dublin”, which is a very interesting selection of podcasts and interviews related to James Joyce’s short story “The Dead”.

As far as cultural institutions are concerned, the previously mentioned Electronic Literature Organization (ELO) plays an essential role as a useful directory of electronic literature, which allows one to browse individual works, resources, featured articles, authors, publishers, and a glossary. ELO collaborates with Bloomsbury Publishing for the *Electronic Literature* open access series (<<https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/series/electronic-literature/>>), which focuses on the transformation of literature in the digital ecosystem. At present, the series includes three volumes entitled respectively *Electronic Literature as Digital Humanities* (2022), edited by Dene Grigar and James O’Sullivan, which provides a comprehensive report of born-digital literature; *The Digital Imaginary. Literature and Cinema of the Database*, edited by Roderick Coover, exploring the impact of digital technologies on current culture; and John Cayley’s *Grammalepsy. Essays on Digital Language Art* (2020), which investigates the cultural change from print literature to electronic literature and the ensuing revolution in reading.

ELO also boasts the publication of four anthologies gathered under the title *Electronic Literature Collection* (<https://collection.eliterature.org/>). The first volume of the collection was published in 2006 on the web and as a CD-ROM (with identical contents); it includes 60 e-lit works by international poets and scholars. *The Electronic Literature Collection*, Volume Two, was published in 2011 on the web and includes 61 e-lit works. It was later published in combination with the **Electronic Literature Collection**, Volume One, on USB Flash Drive.

Unlike its companion volumes, volume three (2016) of the *Electronic Literature Collection* suitably allows its addressees to select digital works by country or authors. By selecting Ireland, we can find Liam Cooke’s “poem.exe” (2014). This is a bot of micropoetry that collects poems in the form of haiku<sup>9</sup>. By surfing randomly across collections, the software chooses a single line from each collection to publish 3-4-line poems on Twitter and Tumblr every two hours, building on the cut-up method that Raymond Queneau employed in his *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* (1961).

The third volume of the Irish section of the *Electronic Literature Collection* also includes Irish Digital Poet John Pat Macnamara’s “Take Ogre”, a new version of Nick Montfort’s original work, *Taroko Gorge*, where “the gorge becomes an ogre, a shadow self haunting a fantasy-driven reinterpretation”. “Take Ogre” is also inspired by mediaeval fantasy and by *Dungeons and Dragons*, also in terms of its vocabulary (i.e., player, knight, queen, magician, sage, banshee, ogre). The work leads its users in their understanding of the creative process and its relationship with technology, “depicting a cluttered work desk filled with papers,

<sup>9</sup> “The bulk of the corpus it reads from consists of translated haiku by Kobayashi Issa; as a result, many of the poems are coloured by Issa’s personality, in particular his fondness for snails. [...]” (<<https://collection.eliterature.org/3/work.html?work=poem-exe>>).

books, and disks in front of a window at night. A laptop is prominently featured and displays only the same picture of the desk, echoing forward through infinite repetitions of the screen-within-a-screen” (<<https://collection.eliterature.org/3/work.html?work=take-ogre>>). “Take Ogre” is one of forty digital poems that create the larger digital narrative at <<http://www.digitalvitalism.com>>.

By selecting nationality as a filter and choosing “Ireland”, the fourth volume of the collection introduces us to “The River Poem” (2019) by Jeneen Naji. Calling on the literary tradition of writers like James Joyce, Lady Augusta Gregory, Oscar Wilde, Jonathan Swift, Kate O’Brien, Elizabeth Bowen, and many others, “The River Poem” employs Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* “as the training text for the AI’s learning algorithm, processing the work and generating the poetic verses from its prose”. *Finnegans Wake* actually turns out to be an ideal text, which is apt to be transposed to the digital medium, due to its language rich in neologisms, and its stream of consciousness style associated with multilinearity. The generated lines are “projected onto a 3D model of Dublin City, [...] flowing along the River Liffey” (<https://collection.eliterature.org/4/the-river-poem>). In her stimulating 2022 essay, published in the eleventh issue of *Studi irlandesi. A Journal of Irish Studies* – a part of which is devoted to Digital Humanities and Literature in Ireland –, Jeneen Naji illustrates how “The River Poem” is part of a bigger installation shaped by the Building City Dashboards, whose research project focuses on visualisations of the data projected onto 3D printed scale models of Dublin and Cork. “It is an example of a digital text”, she continues, “that is spatially situated in the same way that urban planning VGEs are but also incorporates some aspects of literary placemaking and multimodal communicative dimensions such as kinetic text and atmospheric audio”, emphasising that “Characteristics such as these can be found in the field of digital humanities in born-digital literary texts such as electronic literature and its sub-genre of digital poetry” (2022, 77).

ELO has also produced an open-source knowledge base called the ***Electronic Literature Directory*** (<https://directory.eliterature.org/>), which is one of the most functional research resources for electronic literature, with information about authors, creative works, critical writing, and platforms. Currently, the Knowledge Base, developed by the University of Bergen Electronic Literature Research Group, contains 3,899 creative works records, 5,031 critical writing records, 4,707 authors, 321 platforms, 99 teaching resources, 934 publishers and journals, 76 databases and archives, and 65 research collections, among which the ***Electronic Literature in Ireland Research Collection***. This collection features creative and critical works<sup>10</sup>, either born digital fiction<sup>11</sup> and poetry or remediated forms of print literature in the digital environment, mostly created by Irish scholars and practitioners, in both English and Irish. The organizations that took part in the project are Dublin City University, Maynooth University, National University of Ireland, Galway, Trinity College, Dublin, and University College Cork, and New Binary Press as a Publisher. The main purpose of the Collection,

<sup>10</sup> Critical writings concerning the Irish literary digital collection are limited to the years 2012-2017.

<sup>11</sup> “Digital fiction is fiction written for and read on a computer screen that pursues its verbal, discursive and/or conceptual complexity through the digital medium, and would lose something of its aesthetic and semiotic function if it were removed from that medium. Digital fiction as a genre thus does not include blogs, communitarian digital fiction, digital storytelling, and any other form of digital narrative that does not qualify as fiction. While we welcome the authorial democratization that Web 2.0 technology permits and wholeheartedly support research that seeks to understand it, life narratives are fundamentally nonfiction and therefore beyond our remit. It similarly does not include e-books or games we can’t ‘read’, or rather games where there is no dynamic relationship between the gameplay (rules) and its themes (representations) that we can read into, reflect on, or interpret” (Ryan 2010).

curated by Anne Sofia Karhio<sup>12</sup> with the collaboration of Michael J. Maguire, Jeneen Naji, and James O’Sullivan, is to understand

how Irish literary culture adapts itself to, or engages with, the changing technological and media landscape. However, it opts for a relatively wide definition of what is meant by “Irish” literature, acknowledging the permeability of geographical and cultural borders in the digital age. Works engaging with Irish themes or topics by non-Irish writers and literature of the Irish diaspora, for example, may also be included in this collection. (<<https://elmcip.net/research-collection/electronic-literature-ireland-research-collection>>, 05/2023)

Samantha Gorman’s 1999 reappropriation and readaptation of *The Book of Kells*, a Latin version of the Bible circa 800 AD is one of the most important creative works included in the collection. As Samantha Gorman declares in her artist statement, it was developed as a hypertext “weaving of historical study, literary theory, travel narrative, meditative prose, mystical contemplation, and academic inquiry [...]”. Gorman’s accomplishment as a literary gamer and e-lit writer was in Dublin, where she was introduced to the *Book of Kells*, while spending a summer at Trinity College. She claims that “reflecting on the original manuscript’s hypertextual melding of text and image, the icons of The Book prompt the texts of Deconstruction: lexias emerge from and are symbolized by designs on the manuscript’s folios. Overall, the work is a study on the original manuscript within the scriptorium of electronic media and methods”. Gorman studied with Professor of Creative writing Robert Coover, at Brown University, where she developed an interest in multimodal forms<sup>13</sup>.

The *Electronic Literature Knowledge Base* is also enriched by poetry. “Holes” is a ten-syllable digital poem, which has been published online daily by Graham Allen since 23 December 2006. Now in its sixth edition, “Holes” presents a new perspective on autobiographical writing focused on the author’s life. Stylistically, it is a born-digital text on landscape. Digital platforms are exploited in the project to contribute to the symbolic representation of the protagonist’s inner feelings, but also to challenge the very idea of landscape: “Inasmuch as the motif of landscape, in the Irish context in particular, has almost exclusively been understood as a visual metaphor of cultural and historical narratives, the aesthetics of the database can challenge narrative cohesion through alternative processes of accumulation and patterning”. The one-line entries, made up of ten syllables, are always preceded by the date, but they may vary in terms of rhythm and metre, and they are written and modelled as Twitter posts, or online diary entries. From the homepage users access photographs of rock surfaces and walls of different materials from close range, intended to show greater detail and to accompany the poem. Graham Allen is still working on the poem.

Irish history and Irish American family memories, displacement and survival, the role of art and its central place in the abolition of slavery are the main subjects of the Irish American electronic manuscript, Judy Malloy’s *From Ireland with Letters* (2012). Composed of a Prologue, six Cantos, and a coda (Canto 8), the manuscript combines the stories of Walter Power, an Irish slave who was captured by Cromwell’s soldiers and sold in the Massachusetts Bay Colony when he was 14 years old (The Goodfellow, 1654), and his successor, Hiram Powers, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century

<sup>12</sup> Anne Karhio’s online volume *Digital Art in Ireland. New Media and Irish Artistic Practice* was published in 2022 by Cambridge UP.

<sup>13</sup> In collaboration with Danny Cannizzaro, Samantha Gorman coauthored *Pry, a novella*. It is an electronic literature interactive novel sold as an app by Apple for phones and tablets.

Irish American sculptor. Powers grew up in Vermont, but he eventually migrated to Italy, where he became a fervent abolitionist advocate. The 8 Cantos are all written in a different structure and tempo but they are held together by the overarching themes. *From Ireland with Letters* allows the readers to move independently across the story, through clicking autonomously on each lexia and finding their own paths.

Judy Malloy's "Scholars Contemplate the Irish Beer" (2012) is a generative poem that brings readers to Ireland, and to its poets, musicians, and fairies, where all of them become part of the real and mystical brew that moves from St. James Gate.

*Huckleberry Finnegans Wake* (2013), by Talan Memmott, Eric Snodgrass, Sonny Rae Tempest, and Michael J. Maguire<sup>14</sup>, is another interesting e-lit text of the collection. It is a performance work combining Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, where both texts are rich in regional dialects and neologisms; however, once they are combined, they give way to a fantastical environment, devoid of specificity, except for the Liffey and the Mississippi rivers running through both. *Huckleberry Finnegans Wake* stands as a sort of comparative and deconstructive textual analysis that can be performed on one **text**, or on both texts combined. From another perspective, the work is creative, in that it is both generative<sup>15</sup> and performative. The performance utilizes various applications to generate a multimodal interpretation of the combined text with visual material, audio, and live readings drawn from different engines.

Michael J. Maguire's electronic literature work and website, "digitalvitalism.com" (2014) focuses on Irish digital poet John Pat McNamara, whose life and works have been deeply influenced by technology. Inside Digitalvitalism.com, users can experience McNamara's works and life.

Justin Tonra's "Eververse" (2019) sends biometric data to the poet's poetry generator via a fitness tracking device, worn by the poet himself. The generator, mostly using the Python programming language, allows the creation of poetic text (via NLG techniques) relying on biometric data. Text is eventually published in real time and it consists of a web interface showing the poetic text once it is fully generated.

<sup>14</sup> "Michael J. Maguire is arguably the nation's most prominent e-lit practitioner; he has certainly long been one of the stalwarts of the Irish community within the broader international cohort. [...] Maguire's ambitions were substantial, and he borrowed a large sum of money, as well as securing matching funding from investors, for the purposes of launching his own videogame development company, Táintechn Creative Studios. He designed several large-scale videogames, working with a small team to define all of the rules and mechanics, write all of the scripts, and develop many of the assets. With many of Táintechn's designs completed, he approached the European arm of Sony Computer Entertainment, which responded positively, proposing to make Michael's fledgling operation the first and only licensed PlayStation developer in Ireland. In 2006, finally returning to his own creative practice, Maguire used Tiddlywiki—something of a predecessor to Twine—to create *Bob Casio's Dead Cameraman*. In 2008, the exchanges bore some fruit, when Maguire founded the Irish Electronic Literature Community, a non-profit voluntary group concerned with the promotion of electronic literature throughout Ireland. It was in this same year that Maguire published "Promise: The Annals of the Four Webmasters" in *The New River* (Maguire 2008), a journal of digital writing and art, largely considered to be one of the first online journals dedicated exclusively to the publication of electronic literature. As a work of Irish e-lit, "Promise" was more than its authorship—steeped in Irish symbolism, it was one of the form's first works to truly be of Ireland" (O'Sullivan 2018, <<https://electronicbookreview.com/essay/electronic-literature-in-ireland/>>).

<sup>15</sup> "The term "generative poetry" is used to refer to any born-digital poetic project that uses code, algorithm, or other indeterminate means to generate poetic texts. In generative poetic works, a program or algorithm generates a poem or series of poems based on a lexicon or set of lines developed by the authors. This generation may run once, for a fixed period or a fixed number of times, or indefinitely, depending on the project" (<https://directory.eliterature.org/glossary/4964>).

“Greetings from...” by Paul O’Neill (2019) focuses on the author’s global research on Amazon Web Services (AWS). O’Neill charts new AWS data centres around the world through employing the Amazon Atlas ([www.wikileaks.org/amazon-atlas](http://www.wikileaks.org/amazon-atlas)) and the AWS infrastructure map ([www.aws.amazon.com/about-aws/global-infrastructure](http://www.aws.amazon.com/about-aws/global-infrastructure)).

The Electronic Literature Organization should also be considered for the publication of a number of volumes focusing on the development, main characteristics, guidelines, and best practices of electronic literature more generally. These include *Acid-Free Bits. Recommendations for Long-Lasting Electronic Literature* (2004) by Nick Montfort and Noah Wardrip-Fruin and *Born-Again Bits. A Framework for Migrating Electronic Literature* (2005) by Alan Liu, David Durand, Nick Montfort, Meerilee Proffitt, Liam R.E. Quin, Jean-Hugues Réty, and Noah Wardrip-Fruin. In 2007, ELO led to the publication of Joseph Tabbi’s *Toward a Semantic Literary Web: Setting a Direction for the Electronic Literature Organization’s Directory* (2007) and Katherine Hayles’s *Electronic Literature: What Is It?* (2007).

Online literary magazines and journals are often focused on Irish literature, and they publish contemporary works as well as showcasing emerging Irish writers. Notable examples include the peer-reviewed journal, “The Electronic Book Review”, with critical writing about digital literary works; “The Stinging Fly”, which is an independent and non-profit literary magazine, book publisher, and online platform; and “The Dublin Review”, a quarterly magazine of essays, memoir, reportage, and fiction.

*Elo 2015: the Ends of Electronic Literature* gathers some interesting theoretical essays on the topic and other contributions on Irish electronic literature, such as those by Karhio on Allen’s “Holes”, Maguire on Digitalvitalism.com, Nagij on “Multicultural translation in the digital space” and James O’Sullivan, who proposes a personal reflection on e-lit as a publisher. O’Sullivan was involved in many e-fictions and digital poems, such as “Holes”, which was the first work his New Binary Press published. Founded in 2012, New Binary also published Montfort’s generative work, *Round*, in 2013; *Duels — Duets*, a collaboration between Montfort and Strickland; *Remembering the Dead. Northern Ireland*, created by John Barber, a work to remember each one of the nearly 3,600 men, women, and children who died during the Troubles in Northern Ireland; *novelling*, completed in 2016 with video, design and coding by Will Luers, text by Hazel Smith, and sound by Roger Dean, which is a digital novel about the acts of reading and writing fiction. In *Elo 2015: the Ends of Electronic Literature*, O’Sullivan investigates how and why many publishers are supporting electronic literature, and why a conspicuous number of authors choose to self-publish their works, facing long-term sustainability issues and other technical challenges, in addition to financial constraints. Fallow Media is another Dublin-based publisher whose activity is centred around digital creative works.

##### 5. A Handful of Inconclusive Outcomes

Digital literature, as opposed to digitised literature, is an altogether new *genre* of literature; as such, it deserves critical attention by any readership (digitised literature accessible online is of course also worthy of mention and attention). As James O’Sullivan points out, “When something is truly digital, a lot is transformed: the multimodality of expression, the perceived agency of readers, the way that immersion and interactivity are deployed in the service of narrative” (2021, 405). Digital works need to be characterised by advanced technological features and a certain degree of literary quality. Authors have to address a number of technical and content requirements to be able to establish and to remain in dialogue with the chosen media. Narratology, the sociology of literature, textual criticism, media theory and structure (i.e.

linking, navigation), experimental writing and new media studies, as well as hypertext theory and critical code studies<sup>16</sup> are all called to action, and coalesce to shape an essential theoretical background for the analysis of works conveyed through different media.

Electronic literature in the Irish context is a still young and evolving field of development and enquiry. Also taking into account the number of possible examples that I have unintentionally neglected, the production of literary works that explore the potential of digital technologies does not appear to be fully explored in Ireland and, as such, has been little investigated, also so as to have it included as a *genre* within the Irish literary canon. Proponents of e-lit are for the most part both practitioners and scholars: this convergence of the two roles enables e-authors to write multimodal forms, to analyse them, and to gain the necessary competencies to teach what they have learnt or practised<sup>17</sup>. New generations of readers need to acquire the critical tools to be able to understand and to appreciate e-lit as a new *genre* with its own canon. This does not simply involve the ability to navigate multi-sequentially, or to generate one's own paths of reading or listening merely through the making of choices<sup>18</sup>, but rather the ability to adapt individual technological-digital skills while understanding and enjoying a particular text.

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<sup>16</sup> "Critical Code Studies (CCS) is an approach to code studies that applies critical hermeneutics to the interpretation of computer code, program architecture, and documentation within a sociohistorical context. CCS holds that the lines of code of a program are not value-neutral and can be analyzed using the theoretical approaches applied to other semiotic systems, in addition to particular interpretive methods developed specifically for the discussions of programs. Meaning grows out of the functioning of the code but is not limited to the literal processes the code enacts. Through CCS, practitioners may critique the larger human and computer systems, from the level of the computer to the level of the society in which these code objects circulate and exert influence" (Marino 2006).

<sup>17</sup> "The number of people with the time, training, and access to create these artistic works is quite small and were introduced to the form by another person, rather than a random web search. To an extent, electronic literature is a guild-based art form, one that requires mentoring just as it requires evangelists" (<<http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/2/1/000017/000017.html>>).

<sup>18</sup> This kind of active engagement by a readership is defined as ergodic literature.

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# Voices





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## Ireland's Response to Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence: An Interview with Orla O'Connor

*Deirdre Kelly*

Technological University Dublin (<[Deirdre.Kelly@tudublin.ie](mailto:Deirdre.Kelly@tudublin.ie)>)

### *Abstract:*

Orla O'Connor is the Director of the "National Women's Council of Ireland" (NWCI), the leading national women's membership organisation with over 190-member groups. She has held senior management roles in several non-governmental organisations for over 25 years. *Time* magazine recognised her as one of the 100 Most Influential People in 2019 for her role as Co-director of "Together for Yes", the successful national civil society campaign that was influential in Ireland voting overwhelmingly in favour of removing the Eighth Amendment from the Constitution, a landmark referendum, which led to the legalisation of abortion in 2018. In addition to campaigning for women's reproductive rights, Orla has spearheaded several other prominent campaigns related to women's rights, including pension reform, social welfare reform, and the introduction of quality and affordable childcare. To mark the annual international campaign of the "16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence" – which started on 25 November with the "International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women", and ended on 10 December, "Human Rights Day" – Orla was interviewed on 8 November 2022. O'Connor discusses recent Irish legislation and policy developments in relation to Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence (DSGBV), in particular, the government's ambitious "Third National Strategy" on the issue – the "Zero Tolerance Plan" – published in 2022. The following transcript has been edited for length and clarity.

**Keywords:** Domestic Violence, Legislative Changes, Gender-Based Violence, Sexual Violence, Violence Against Women

*DK: Do you think the government's approach to handling the funding crisis for domestic violence provision is sufficient? I'm thinking, for example, of the plans outlined in the "Third National Strategy" to invest 363 million euros to tackle Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence (DSGBV); to double the number of refuge spaces; and to improve services and supports for victims.*

OOC: Right now, it's not sufficient because we're coming from a low base in terms of funding. There has been a real crisis,

particularly in terms of refuge spaces. The “National Women’s Council” has been campaigning on this because it’s such a key issue for our members, particularly those working on domestic violence and providing frontline services. We’re very supportive of the new strategy on DSGBV and the commitment to providing appropriate refuge spaces and accommodation. That is very welcome. So is the commitment by the Minister that the funding will be in place. We’re not at the right place now at all, but we certainly are much more hopeful in terms of the new Strategy and the background work that’s going into what appropriate accommodation should look like. There’s a lot of work happening in partnership with frontline services that’s really positive. It’s definitely on the right track but we’re certainly not there yet and we’re not meeting the commitments of the Council of Europe’s Istanbul “Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence”, which Ireland ratified in 2019.

*DK: What do you think of the recent legislation on the plans for tackling DSGBV, such as the criminalisation of coercive control (Domestic Violence Act 2018) and of non-consensual distribution of intimate images (2020, known as Coco’s Law) and as you mentioned, the Zero Tolerance plan (2022)?*

OOC: Coercive control was a significant campaign by many members of the “National Women’s Council”. We feel that the legislation on this is a huge step forward in Ireland, but also in Europe, because now other countries are looking at how coercive control is working in Ireland in terms of adopting it. This was really important in terms of saying domestic violence is not all about physical violence and physical abuse. It’s also about emotional and psychological abuse, which is an inherent part of domestic abuse. Criminalisation of coercive control is a really positive change, one that we campaigned for and really welcomed. There are now cases coming forward and that’s really positive, but it’s also about the message and how we understand domestic abuse now.

Legislation in itself is good, but there needs to be a greater awareness of it. We certainly would have liked to see a much greater national awareness campaign around coercive control. We are seeing the government put in place much better awareness campaigns, but they need to go hand in hand with all legislation. For example, new legislation on stalking, you’ve mentioned Coco’s Law. Awareness campaigns have to happen both for the state agencies, but also for women so that they know that they can go and report these new offences and that supports are there.

*DK: You campaigned a lot in relation to the “Turn Off the Red Light Campaign” and then the “Criminal Justice Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking Bill” 2022. The “Third National Strategy” has outlined plans to provide better protection for vulnerable women against sexual exploitation. Do you think that this is sufficient and that it addresses the needs of people who are forced into prostitution?*

OOC: This is a really critical issue for us in the “Women’s Council” and for our members and particularly for the front-line services on both domestic and sexual violence. They were all part of “Turn Off the Red Light” and are part of working with us now in terms of both looking at the current legislation but also looking at the gaps. I think there is a really big gap in the support for women to move out of prostitution and out of the sex trade. That’s an area that we want to see more focus on. A key aspect to this is the fact that prostitution, the sex trade and commercial sexual exploitation are now included in the definition of gender-based violence in the new government strategy. That’s a huge step forward for tackling sexual violence and goes further than the Istanbul Convention. It now means that women in prostitution need to be

included in all of the areas of the Strategy – protection, prosecution, prevention and coordinated policies – in a way that they haven't been before. We see that as really important and significant progress, and it provides an important mechanism to address the gaps in terms of how we support women, and the wraparound services we need to provide, particularly as recent research by the Sexual Exploitation Research Programme (SERP) shows that over 90% of those in the sex trade in Ireland are migrant women. At the moment, there's no wraparound support that includes addressing the immigration status of women which is critical to supporting migrant women in prostitution.

*DK: You have worked a lot with the “Beyond Exploitation” civil society campaign.*

OOC: The “Beyond Exploitation” campaign includes the “Women’s Council”, “Ruhama” – the organisation that works with women in the sex trade – and the “Immigrant Council of Ireland”, working in partnership and then there are civil society organisations that support it. There are two key elements to “Beyond Exploitation”. One is the support for the equality model in terms of the criminalisation of men and secondly the support for women in the sex trade. There has been a lot of focus on legislation and there needs to be so much more work done now in terms of supporting women out of the sex trade.

In the National Women’s Council of Ireland (NWCI), we have done quite substantial research into what the public’s thoughts are on the issue of pornography and that needs to be included in our work on sexual violence to a greater degree. Often the issue of the sex trade in the media is framed in quite narrow terms between those who see prostitution as a form of work and then us, the “Women’s Council”, being categorised as those who don't. Our research shows that the public are actually very concerned about the harms of prostitution, about women in prostitution, and about how you support women out of it. The public are also concerned about tackling the causes of prostitution, such as poverty, immigration, trafficking. That's been really useful in “Beyond Exploitation” as well, because it brings the discussion out much broader than the very polarised way it's characterised in the media.

*DK: What is the relationship of NWCI with the “Immigrant Council of Ireland”?*

OOC: We work very closely with the “Immigrant Council of Ireland”. They are a member of NWCI and they're a really positive organisation, in the work they do with migrant women as well as on the whole issue of migration. We support their campaigns and they are also members of the Observatory on Violence Against Women, which is a network of national organisations and front-line services focused on ending violence against women.

*DK: What do you think the government have done or should be doing to promote the status and address the well-being of migrants, particularly migrant women in Ireland?*

OOC: There is so much more we can do to address the well-being of migrant women, migration status, employment opportunities, racism and institutional racism, issues in relation to direct provision, access to services and the representation of migrant women across all sectors of our society. There is also a critical need to support migrant women who have come to Ireland as a result of the Ukrainian crisis. The Immigrant Council and Community Work Ireland are supporting a civil society approach to supporting Ukrainian people in Ireland. We had called for a national emergency committee in the same way there was for COVID – that was cross-de-



partmental and that would have key leads – and that hasn't happened. Our members are really concerned, both in terms of the lack of support for Ukrainian women and children, but also in terms of the lack of that national approach which is leading to difficulties in communities. We need to be so careful around this because it's a really vulnerable space in terms of where the far right, for example, can move into. We need that national approach, but we also need much greater supports for organisations on the ground and we're very conscious of that. We recently had a members' meeting on this, and members noted that some of the accommodation wasn't suitable – particularly in areas where people were being housed in hotels – and that the supports weren't there, especially in terms of health supports for women. Women's organisations have been trying to fill that gap and that's really difficult, to meet health needs and translation needs.

A central issue for migrant women is the system of Direct Provision and we welcomed the “White Paper on Ending Direct Provision”, which has been put aside. The “White Paper” – published in early 2021 – made a number of commitments to improve the treatment and reception of asylum seekers in Ireland. There are many people in “Direct Provision” who should and could have been moved out into accommodation, but because of the housing crisis, that hasn't happened. There really is a crisis in terms of all these issues, both in terms of how we're handling the Ukrainian crisis, but also the issue of “Direct Provision” because it's tied with our housing crisis.

*DK: What do you think of the new “Higher Education Sexual Violence and Harassment Implementation” plan and the promise of an extra 1.5 million euros in funding, announced by Minister Simon Harris in October 2022?*

OOC: This is one of the areas that we, the NWCI, have been working on with the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. This started a number of years ago in the “Women's Council” because we had a European transnational project that started this work. While there was work taking place on campuses around consent and student campaigns, there was very little happening in terms of wider support at a leadership and governance level in Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and at a strategic level in the Department of Education. So the NWCI brought together the higher education institutions and the student bodies under the “National Advisory Committee” (NAC). That set the foundations for the work of the Department in developing a Framework for consent and supporting initiatives in HEI throughout the country. We're very positive about it. It's needed. However, there are issues that still have to be tackled and one of them is the power of the Department and the Higher Education Authority (HEA) over the universities to ensure that change is happening. They're all required to do action plans for how they're addressing this issue of harassment and sexual violence. But the HEA doesn't have the power to go in and investigate, to check that they're doing what they say they're going to do. Also, we want to see a more comprehensive approach so that in addition to including measures focusing on students we need to see the inclusion of all staff in HEI, everyone who's working on campuses, so as to achieve the zero tolerance approach.

*DK: Keeping with education, what do you think of the current plans to overhaul the “Relationships and Sexuality Education” (RSE) and the “Social, Personal and Health Education” (SPHE) in schools?*

OOC: Much needed. We really need a comprehensive RSE programme within both primary and secondary schools. The review that's happening at the moment is badly needed. We made submissions to it in relation to both primary school and second level. It's going to need

real leadership from the Department of Education to ensure that schools actually roll out a comprehensive programme because it's so *ad hoc* at the moment and there are so many different things happening in different schools. There's still no comprehensiveness about it and it's also very weak in many schools. It is significant progress that sex education is included in the Third Strategy on DSGBV and the commitments in the Strategy need to be reflected in the current Review. Including the issue of consent in the new curriculum will be important and also that it needs to start from primary school and continue to secondary and on to Third Level.

*DK: I'm already trying with my three-year old!*

OOC: I saw a fascinating video on social media. It was for children going into school to teach them about consent and they were very young. It was about how children want to be greeted in the school, so they pressed a button to signal if they wanted a high five, a hug, to shake hands or if they didn't want to be touched that day. This is so clever in terms of teaching consent from an early age, that the children get to choose and they get to choose in terms of touch as well. That's the type of thing that we need to do, and not just one day on sex education.

*DK: I read an interesting quote from you about Women's Health on your "National Women's Council" website in relation to your "Every Woman" campaign, about women's health taking up all the stages of a woman's life. How do you see the government's "Women's Health Action Plan" 2022-2023 fitting into that idea?*

OOC: It's important that the government have a "Women's Health Action Plan". This is one of the things that we campaigned for because for a long time, there have been men's action plans and there wasn't a focus on women's health. The reason the new plan is good is that it shows that the Department of Health and those working in health services see women's and men's health needs differently and that targeted measures are needed. So that is positive. The "Women's Health Action Plan" focuses on particular areas. It's not considering every area of women's health, but it does focus on particular areas and that is positive and if it was implemented would bring things forward. A lot of work went into the current "Health Action Plan" in terms of the 'radical listening exercise', which involved listening to the experiences of women and included a specific focus on the experiences of marginalised women. The plan commits to continuing to listen to women and responding to women's needs. I think that's really important and needs to happen. Women are in the best place in terms of talking about their health needs and what they need in terms of managing their own health and being given much more agency in terms of their health management. That needs to be in-built to policy development and delivery of services to a much greater degree so it's not just these once-off consultations. There needs to be a clear pathway for how that will be continued in the implementation of the Plan. You're right to raise the question of comprehensiveness. The "Women's Health Action Plan" targets particular areas where they think that change is possible and I can see that it makes sense pragmatically. Of course, we want to see progress on all areas of women's health.

*DK: What's your view of the scheme announced in 2022 to make contraception freely available to 17 to 25-year olds?*

OOC: I think it's really positive. That was one of our recommendations from the time of

the “Repeal the Eighth” campaign. It was part of the Joint Oireachtas Committee’s ancillary recommendations. When they recommended the constitutional change, sex education and contraception were seen as a way of reducing crisis pregnancies in the long term. For us in the “Women’s Council”, this is one positive step, but we obviously want to see that extended, and we also want to see the way in which contraception is made available to be more accessible. It needs to be universal contraception. Contraception that’s universally and freely available to anyone who needs it whenever they need it.

We’ve done a reiteration of “Every Woman”. We launched “Every Woman” about a year before the referendum, and we launched a new version focusing on issues of contraception and sex education and the reforms needed in our abortion legislation to ensure every woman can access abortion when they need it in Ireland. In relation to contraception, we recommend that contraception can be made available in pharmacies because they’re so much more accessible than going to your General Practitioner (GP), particularly with the shortage of GPs. Not all contraception can be made available in pharmacies but the contraceptive pill can be made available. It’s available in Scotland for example, and now in the United Kingdom. We want to see more accessibility as well as it being more universally available. It’s really important for those who need it. They should be able to get it in consultation with their doctor and it should be available to get in pharmacies.

*DK: What’s your view on the plans for the National Maternity Hospital?*

OOC: We campaigned for the hospital to be a secular hospital. We didn’t want it to be part of “Saint Vincent’s Healthcare Group”. We were very concerned about the whole approach. That campaign has gone on for a long time in terms of the hospital. There have been changes made and some of those are absolutely positive. But, ultimately, we will spend millions on a hospital that still won’t be a secular hospital. We have very few secular hospitals. There was a motion at our Annual General Meeting (AGM) about two years ago that really affirmed that, in terms of saying we needed to continue to campaign for secular health services and education and that’s very much our position. We still have concerns about the close relationship with Vincent’s, and the governance structure. There’s the issue of the influence of the church but also, this is very much a private body and we want to see public hospitals that are secular.

*DK: What do you think needs to be done about the perinatal mental health service?*

OOC: From all of our work, both in terms of women’s health and particularly in terms of mental health, there has been a real absence of perinatal services and support services. It’s positive to see the new developments in this area.

*DK: And a broader absence of mental health services?*

OOC: Absolutely. Yes. We’ve done quite a bit of work in terms of looking at issues around women’s mental health, but this issue of perinatal services really came up as part of that and looking at supports in relation to postnatal depression, but also looking at supports for women right through pregnancy and after pregnancy. It’s good that we’re seeing some focus on this, but this is something that’s really going to have to be worked on because, again, it’s one of those issues that we’re coming at from such a low base. But you’re right, the whole area of mental health is something that really needs radical reform.

*DK: What do you think of the domestic violence leave, proposed in the “Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill” 2022?*

OOO: That's really important. For practical reasons it's important in terms of providing leave for victims, for women who are going to court, but also for needing leave in terms of having space. The original “Private Members’ Bill” from Sinn Féin was ten days. The government have settled for five days. Our view is that it should be as long as possible. The 10 days made sense. In addition to the practicalities of it, it's also the message it sends out. We're talking about at least one in four women who will have experienced domestic violence and it absolutely affects every aspect of their life, including their working life. There's something really important about this leave highlighting the fact that this is happening to women. It affects their working life and it brings it more out into the open. In a way, so much of domestic violence and abuse is hidden and this leave moves away from feeling ashamed and instead encourages those affected to say ‘look, this is something that's happening and yes I need support for it’. It makes supports more accessible for people. There are lots of reasons why this is important as well as the practical aspect.

*DK: What did you think of the response of the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) to it?*

OOO: I have to say I thought their response, in terms of looking for proof, was very negative and unnecessary. It showed a real lack of understanding in terms of domestic violence and how difficult it is to come forward. Imagine how difficult it would be for a person to say to their employer, ‘this is what's happening to me’. Then imagine looking for proof. It almost assumes that somebody would be using the leave for another excuse. We know from all our work with women how difficult it is to say that they are victims of domestic violence. IBEC's response really showed very poor understanding, which was surprising as I think that we are at a point where there is a better understanding of domestic violence.

*DK: Particularly if you take into account the psychological abuse aspect of it, which is very difficult to prove anyway.*

OOO: Yes. I think that's very important about the leave. It's not just about appearances in court where you have to bring a letter, it's about recognising that this is really difficult and those affected may need time off to cope with it for different reasons.

*DK: In early November 2022, the Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee, announced the introduction of new laws on gender-based violence, such as the maximum sentence for assault causing harm, the family Court Bill, and said that they will hopefully be in place by the end of 2022. Do you think what they're suggesting is sufficient or do you think more needs to be done?*

OOO: I think these pieces of legislation are important. We've welcomed them. So have other services and organisations in the area because again, it moves us forward in seeing these offences as serious offences and also recognising the serious impact they have on people. We have this really good strategy now and it's important that those pieces of legislation go forward. It's also important that we look at the implementation of the whole strategy because there are so many different key pieces in it. That's going to be the real challenge for the department, for the Minister and for the government. This is an ambitious strategy and it's going to need work on all fronts across the four

pillars of the Strategy and the Istanbul Convention. Keeping the pressure on, keeping the momentum there, putting the resources in place, all of this is going to be a challenge. Our job, in the “Women’s Council”, is really to try and push this now and to hold them to account because in our view this is a really positive strategy. If that whole strategy was implemented, women would be in a much better place in Ireland in terms of both domestic and sexual violence and all forms of violence. But we know we’re also good in Ireland at coming up with strategies that we don’t necessarily go on to deliver. That is the challenge. Yes, these pieces of legislation are good, but within that wider context of needing to keep this moving on all fronts.

*DK: In your view, how could Ireland better fulfil its commitments under the Istanbul Convention?*

OOO: I think there are some key things that are now in the strategy, so that’s good, but there are aspects that we just have really been poor on. One very specific one is the data. This has been cited repeatedly. It was in our previous strategy and we still aren’t really in a better place. One positive thing on the data is that the “Central Statistics Office” will do the prevalence study on sexual violence and there’s a commitment to have a similar one on domestic violence. But the real gap is in the data that comes from the different agencies. For example, if I’m writing something now, I’m still quoting the “EU Fundamental Rights Agency” data. It’s years old. The data that comes from the Garda Síochána, from Tusla (“The Child and Family Agency”), from the courts, we still haven’t found a way to bring that together.

Data allows both the government and the department, but also us and civil society to analyse it, to see where we are making progress, where the gaps are. We know that there are high attrition rates, but we don’t exactly know where women are coming out of the system and what could be done to prevent that because we lack that data. It’s a fundamental part of the Istanbul Convention. The “Women’s Council” chairs the annual “Observatory on Violence against Women”, which brings together all the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) who work on violence against women. In November 2022, we launched the first Shadow report on “Greivio” for Istanbul, which says that Ireland is not meeting the requirements of the Istanbul Convention but if we did what was in the new strategy, then we would be meeting the requirements. The government has, through the strategy, met the requirements of Istanbul but the question is will they be implemented. Right now we’re not meeting Istanbul in lots of different areas and we certainly aren’t in terms of what they call the gold standard of data collection. We’re not meeting the refuge numbers that are laid out in Istanbul but that is now in the strategy. If what is in the strategy is implemented, then we will be meeting our requirements. One aspect that was important about the strategy and within Istanbul in terms of the policy coordination and the institutional pillars is the support for civil society and we have been weak on that in Ireland. One of the important parts of the strategy was that they used a co-design process. The strategy was co-designed with civil society and it was, I would have to say, probably one of the strongest collaborations I’ve seen in terms of working with our sector to tackle gender based violence. That co-design process is meant to follow through throughout the implementation of the strategy. That’s a real challenge. It’s easier to co-design when developing a strategy, but on implementation it is much more challenging. That will also be a really good marker in terms of how well we’re doing.

*DK: You’ve mentioned all these different fragmented areas that aren’t really coming together. Do you think the idea of assigning clearer departmental responsibility is important?*

OOO: Yes. In the aftermath of the murder of Ashling Murphy, there was a big call from civil society and front-line organisations about just how fragmented everything is. The govern-

ment made a significant decision that the Department of Justice would hold the responsibility and that is a positive step forward. We now have a lead department and that's really important. They are going to set up a new national agency. Only time will tell how that works out. That infrastructure is important and we hadn't seen that before. I think, in this area in terms of women's rights, we have reached a turning point. Unfortunately, this has come on the back of some horrible tragedies and murders of women. But it feels like there is a moment and a turning point in this area which is good and I think there is genuinely a very committed minister.

*DK: Making laws is one thing but what do you think needs to be done to change societal attitudes and ingrained sexual and gender stereotypes that influence violence against women?*

OOC: The cultural aspect of DSGBV is key and it's also the hardest bit to change. In the strategy, this is related to the part on prevention. Some of the awareness campaigns that the government are running look at how to start challenging those attitudes. I think there's different strands to it. As we discussed, sex education is key – primary, secondary and third level – but so are things such as training for statutory agencies. There's also the question of how we engage men in this. If we're talking about a society free from violence, how do we raise our boys? We have to take into account masculinities and what we are teaching boys. There are some interesting things happening in that space but they're quite sporadic. A lot of it is probably more school-based, with new programmes that have been developed by individuals. There needs to be more teaching about what it means to grow up as a boy in society in terms of understanding about gender equality, about patriarchy, but in a way that's age appropriate. That really needs to be incorporated into the SPHE. In terms of violence against women, we need the legislation that targets perpetrators. But then we also need to have as many programmes in place that talk about how we can change our culture. In the aftermath of Ashling Murphy's murder, various civil society organisations, including for example sporting organisations, contacted the "Women's Council" to see what they could do. There's definitely more of a desire to bring about change. But I do think we're struggling a bit figuring out how to bring about that societal change. I don't think we have all the answers aside from the educational aspect. And that's not enough because that's going to take too long. We have to make the difference now.

*DK: It's very hard to tackle those things in the media if there are specific stereotypes that are propagated again and again.*

OOC: There was an event on 4 November 2022, a Shared Island Dialogue that focused on tackling gender-based violence. Naomi Long – the Alliance Leader and former Minister for Justice for Northern Ireland – and Minister McEntee – the Justice Minister for the Republic – were present, along with civil society organisations. The author, Louise O'Neill, gave an address and she talked about this area of cultural change. She made the comparison with drink driving – and I've heard a good few people in the sector make that comparison – about how we had the legislation but also the cultural shift, and how we can do it in a similar way with gender-based violence. With drink driving, of course, there's the legislation and the penalty points, but it's also about what people think about it. It's just not accepted. People would say 'don't do that', and that's quite normal. So how do we get violence against women into the same space? We haven't found the answers as to how we achieve that cultural shift but there is a realisation that we need change on all fronts to transform society and a big part of that is engaging men and boys.



# Writings







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## Three Poems

*Ciarán O'Rourke*  
([<orourkeci@tcd.ie>](mailto:orourkeci@tcd.ie))

### *Introduction:*

In Ireland, it is common for poets to turn to ancient Greek and Roman mythology for inspiration, re-inventing the classics in a modern form. While writing my second book, *Phantom Gang* (The Irish Pages Press, 2022), I decided that I would try, similarly, to incorporate a series of myths or fables into the collection, but with the crucial difference that the poems would use day-to-day news stories as their source material, rather than ancient literature and legend. Once I had hit on this idea, I became somewhat obsessed with putting it into practice. When read in a certain way, after all, the “breaking news” we consume – almost by the hour, in our age of advanced capitalist connectivity – can be seen to contain just as much dramatic conflict, as many faltering protagonists and faceless monsters, as the greatest texts of the literary canon. And the stakes, being real, are very often higher. By attending to present history, in all its violence and contradiction, I felt that poetry could learn to free itself from old mannerisms and encapsulate our world.

Whether or not they fulfil that aspiration, the three poems below continue the investigations begun in *Phantom Gang* – albeit with an increasing focus on the ways in which nature (including the climate itself, as well as the life and habitats of non-human species) is re-shaped and sometimes destroyed by the innovations of empire and capital, those two inter-locking systems that have so defined modern world-history, and which continue to frame our individual lives.

Incidentally, the title of the first poem, “Pigs’ Meat”, is meant to indicate the theme of that piece, but it also harks back to the work of the English leveller, Thomas Spence. After Edmund Burke had condemned the “swinish multitude” of revolutionary France in 1790, Spence founded a journal of radical writing in retort, called *Pigs’ Meat, or Lessons from the Swinish Multitude*. I owe my awareness of this little-known periodical to a certain John Patrick Flynn, an anarchistic Irish librarian with a love of revelry and an omnivorous passion for subversive culture (and much besides), whom I first met over a decade ago while working as a book-stacker in the windowless vaults of the library of Trinity College Dublin. As ever, it is in such spaces and conjunctions, unlikely as they may seem, that radical ideas survive and poetry takes root. Long live the swine!

**“Pigs’ Meat”**

Last year, three hundred thousand pigs  
died out, in moving pens, before

the teeming abattoir, their pre-  
determined destination, could

chop their livid limbs to bits –  
in the USA, a boring

butcher’s nation. Trans-  
ported, head to rump, in cages,

and shuttle-trucked, en-masse,  
for days, the vast majority

of cases – veterinary  
minds surmise – gave in

to stress of heat, or frost,  
to mid-traumatic panic, pain,

arriving to the slaughter slain:  
a carcass, pre-deceased. The pig

a meditative creature, known  
to regulate high temperatures

by bathing in the mud, temp-  
eramentally disposed

to feeling understood, an amiable,  
romantic thing: a birthing sow

will slow-assemble  
detritus in a ring, weather-

beaten sticks and leaves,  
to formulate a mound (the hollow

cavity within, a canopy  
above) in which to settle,

lain a-side, waiting finally  
for cries, a tiny mewling in the dark –

in which all pigs, today, do end.  
When delivered to the factory,

a nearly million, furthermore,  
were drawn across the killing floor,

their shivered legs not knowing  
any longer how to walk.

**“A Battle”**

From Utah, USA, a skein  
of avid astro-physicists  
has engineered a scheme  
to battle the disasters  
of planetary heat –  
by mining on the moon  
a plume  
of trans-galactic dust,  
whose finely fired particles  
(flung by rocket-shot)  
will filter burning  
solar rays, and mitigate  
the horoscope  
of the torrid earth ahead –  
a bulletin and break-through  
quickenning the day,  
as deeper south, in red Chile,  
the coarsened air already  
shifts, re-altering its shape,  
a smoke-blown russet-brown  
the bare-kneed, running  
children breathe, as hill  
by hill the summer trees  
go up  
in rolling flames: a rapid  
cataract of fire,  
planting panic  
in its wake – as crops  
and cattle scatter  
under ash, or merely die –  
a raging vista  
garishly conveyed  
by a picture-man, in  
tactical retreat, his quick,  
consuming camera lens  
amazed, in brief, (before  
he leaves) by  
a ruminating ox:  
staring back, it stands  
in statuesque paralysis,  
left behind, unmoving,  
among the omnipresent fumes.

**“The Gift”**

Darkly shining, reindeer-rich,  
an iridescent province

glistening with stars,  
the Sámi north

was lately re-discovered  
by the rest: as a paradise

portfolio  
waiting to be seized,

its shrubbery concealing  
a fully laden seam

of rarest-earth  
deposits underground: thus

conjuring new markets  
for eco-industry

and bracketing  
the life-span

of fauna running free –  
in a region growing warmer

that Tacitus surveyed. Browsing,  
macroscopic, partially

afraid, he saw the Roman  
centre from the fringe:

the ancient  
amber slopes, he wrote,

were peopled and traversed  
by ragged, roaming tribes,

their bed the earth,  
their clothing only fur,

whose merry fingers  
plaited baldachins of wood

for shelter from the wind,  
their pleasure, every season,

to investigate the deer –  
better this by far, for them,

than groaning over labour  
in the sludge, from year

to year, or straining  
to domesticate

a station in the city,  
straddling the brink

of poverty and fear.  
Caring not for

either gods or goods,  
or the modern disciplines

of men, they kept a kind  
of happiness and gift

within themselves. They  
never wished for more,

he said in near-  
bewilderment, nor even

knew the meaning of *a wish*.



*Butcher's Dozen*

*La dozzina del macellaio*

by Thomas Kinsella

translated into Italian by Donatella Abbate Badin







## Nota della traduttrice A Note by the Translator

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*Butcher's Dozen*

I went with Anger at my heel  
Through Bogside of the bitter zeal  
– Jesus pity! – on a day of cold and drizzle and decay.  
A month had passed. Yet there remained  
A murder smell that stung and stained.  
On flats and alleys – over all –  
It hung; on battered roof and wall,  
On wreck and rubbish scattered thick,  
On sullen steps and pitted brick.  
And when I came where thirteen died  
It shrivelled up my heart. I sighed  
And looked about that brutal place  
Of rage and terror and disgrace.  
Then my moistened lips grew dry.  
I had heard an answering sigh!  
There in a ghostly pool of blood  
A crumpled phantom hugged the mud:  
'Once there lived a hooligan.  
A pig came up, and away he ran.  
Here lies one in blood and bones,  
Who lost his life for throwing stones.'  
More voices rose. I turned and saw,  
Three corpses forming, red and raw,  
From dirt and stone. Each upturned face  
Stared unseeing from its place:  
'Behind this barrier, blighters three,  
We scrambled back and made to flee.  
The guns cried Stop, and here lie we.'  
Then from left and right they came,  
More mangled corpses, bleeding, lame,  
Holding their wounds. They chose their ground,  
Ghost by ghost, without a sound,  
And one stepped forward, soiled and white:  
'A bomber I. I travelled light –  
Four pounds of nails and gelignite  
About my person, hid so well  
They seemed to vanish where I fell.  
Where the bullets stopped my breath  
A doctor sought the cause of death.  
He upped my shirt, undid my fly,  
Twice he moved my limbs awry,  
And noticed nothing. By and by  
A soldier, with his sharper eye,  
Beheld the four elusive rockets  
Stuffed in my coat and trouser pockets.

*La dozzina del macellaio\**

Me ne andavo, con la Rabbia addosso  
nel Bogside<sup>1</sup> pieno di amaro zelo  
– Gesù mio – in quel giorno di pioggia e di sfacelo.  
Un mese da allora. E ancora stagnava, pungente,  
un odore di mattanza che sporcava, persistente.  
Su quelle case e stradine – su tutto – aleggiava.  
Sui tetti sfondati e i muri sgretolati,  
fra mucchi di rifiuti e pile di detriti,  
sugli stanchi gradini, sui mattoni smangiati.  
E quando arrivai dove in tredici erano morti  
mi si strinse il cuore. Con un lamento per le loro sorti  
mi guardai intorno in quel luogo brutale di vergogna  
di rabbia, di terrore e di menzogna.  
Le mie labbra si fecero secche. In quel momento,  
avevo sentito in risposta un lamento!  
Laggiù in una spettrale pozza di sangue  
un fantasma contorto abbracciava il fango:  
“C’era una volta uno sbandato.  
Vide uno sbirro e fuggì spaventato.  
Qui giace uno, suoi il sangue e le ossa,  
che per le pietre tirate finì nella fossa”.  
Altre voci si udirono. Mi voltai e vidi  
tre cadaveri prendere corpo, rossi e lividi,  
tra il fango e le pietre. I volti levati  
guardavano ciechi da lì dove erano accasciati:  
“Dietro questo riparo, noi tre disgraziati  
cercavamo a tentoni vie di uscita.  
I fucili gridarono ‘Fermi’, ed eccoci qui ammazzati”.  
Poi da destra e sinistra sono arrivati  
altri corpi sanguinanti, zoppi, maciullati,  
premevano con le mani le ferite. In un silenzio tetro  
scelsero il loro posto, spettro dopo spettro.  
Si fece avanti uno, pallido e sporco:  
“Viaggiavo leggero, io. Ero un bombarolo.  
Addosso avevo due chili di tritolo  
e chiodi in quantità, tutto così ben nascosto  
che svanì, sembra, quando caddi sul posto  
per le cartucce che segnarono la mia sorte.  
Un medico indagò le cause della morte.  
Mi sollevò la camicia, aprì la patta,  
per due volte mi torse il corpo tutto,  
e non notò nulla. Poi un soldato accorto  
scorse quattro razzi sfuggiti all’attenzione,  
infilati nelle tasche della giacca e dei calzoni.

Yes, they must be strict with us,  
Even in death so treacherous!  
He faded and another said:  
'We three met close when we were dead.  
Into an armoured car they piled us  
Where our mingled blood defiled us,  
Certain, if not dead before,  
To suffocate upon the floor,  
Careful bullets in the back  
Stopped our terrorist attack,  
And so three dangerous lives are done –  
Judged, condemned and shamed in one.'  
That spectre faded in his turn,  
A harsher stirred, and spoke in scorn:  
'The shame is theirs, in word and deed,  
Who prate of Justice, practise greed,  
And act in ignorant fury – then,  
Officers and gentlemen,  
Send to their Courts for the Most High  
To tell us did we really die.  
Does it need recourse to law  
To tell ten thousand what they saw?  
The news is out. The troops were kind.  
Impartial justice has to find  
We'd be alive and well today  
If we had let them have their way.  
But friend and stranger, bride and brother,  
Son and sister, father, mother,  
All not blinded by your smoke,  
Photographers who caught your stroke,  
The priests that blessed our bones, spoke  
And wagged our blood in the world's face.  
The truth will out, to your disgrace.'  
He flushed and faded. Pale and grim,  
A joking spectre followed him:  
'Take a bunch of stunted shoots,  
A tangle of transplanted roots,  
Ropes and rifles, feathered nests,  
Some dried colonial interests,  
A hard unnatural union grown  
In a bed of blood and bone,  
Tongue of serpent, gut of hog  
Spiced with spleen of underdog.  
Stir in, with oaths of loyalty,  
Sectarian supremacy,  
And heat, to make a proper botch,  
In a bouillon of bitter Scotch.

Eh, sì, con noi si dev'essere rigorosi  
perfino nella morte siamo proprio insidiosi"!  
Si dileguò, e un altro prese la parola:  
"Da morti, noi tre cospiravamo in segreto.  
Ci stiparono in un veicolo blindato  
dove ci insozzò il nostro sangue mescolato.  
Di sicuro, se già non ci avessero ammazzati  
sul pianale del furgone saremmo soffocati.  
Un colpo alla schiena sventò vigliaccamente  
l'attacco terroristico. Così ignobilmente, finirono  
tre vite pericolose, di netto giudicate,  
condannate e infine svergognate".  
A sua volta quello spettro si dileguò.  
Un altro si mosse e con duro sprezzo parlò:  
"Svergognati loro per le parole e gli atti,  
loro che predicano giustizia e razzolano fra gretti misfatti  
agendo con impulsi rozzi e triviali –  
poi, da veri gentiluomini e ufficiali,  
si rivolgono alle Corti perché il Giudice Supremo  
ci faccia sapere se siamo morti davvero.  
C'è mai bisogno di rivolgersi alla legge  
per raccontare ciò che a nessuno sfugge?  
Ciò che videro gli occhi di diecimila astanti?  
La notizia è ufficiale. Le truppe furono clementi.<sup>2</sup>  
Una giustizia imparziale deve accertare  
che saremmo ancor vivi se li avessimo lasciati fare.  
Ma amico e straniero, sposa e fratello,  
padre, madre, figlio e sorella,  
tutti quelli che il vostro fumo non ha accecato,  
i fotografi che ripresero il vostro attentato,  
i preti che benedissero le nostre salme, hanno parlato  
e in faccia al mondo il nostro sangue hanno schizzato.  
La verità si saprà e l'infamia vi coprirà."  
Si fece rosso in volto e poi svanì.  
Pallido e cupo, uno spettro faceto lo seguì:  
"Prendete un mucchietto di gemme stentate,  
un groviglio di radici trapiantate,  
corde e fucili, comodi nidi piumati,  
un pizzico di interessi coloniali seccati.  
Formate un'unione dura e innaturale  
in un letto di ossa e sangue. Budella di maiale  
si aggiungano a una lingua di serpente.  
Usate la bile degli oppressi come condimento.  
Mescolate con una noce di giuramento  
di fedeltà e una dose massiccia  
di supremazia settaria: avrete un bel pasticcio.  
Riscaldate quindi con acre brodo scozzese.

Last, the choice ingredient: you.  
Now, to crown your Irish stew,  
Boil it over, make a mess.  
A most imperial success!  
He capered weakly, racked with pain,  
His dead hair plastered in the rain:  
The group was silent once again.  
It seemed the moment to explain  
That sympathetic politicians  
Say our violent traditions,  
Backward looks and bitterness  
Keep us in this dire distress.  
We must forget and look ahead,  
Nurse the living, not the dead.  
My words died out. A phantom said:  
'Here lies one who breathed his last  
Firmly reminded of the past.  
A trooper did it, on one knee,  
In tones of brute authority.'  
That harsher spirit, who before  
Had flushed with anger, spoke once more:  
'Simple lessons cut most deep.  
This lesson in our heart we keep:  
You condescend to hear us speak  
Only when we slap your cheek.  
And yet we lack the last technique:  
We rap for order with a gun,  
The issues simplify to one –  
Then your Democracy insists  
You mustn't talk with terrorists.  
White and yellow, black and blue,  
Have learned their history from you:  
Divide and ruin, muddle through.  
We speak in wounds. Behold this mess.  
My curse upon your politesse.'  
Another ghost stood forth, and wet  
Dead lips that had not spoken yet:  
'My curse on the cunning and the bland,  
On gentlemen who loot a land  
They do not care to understand;  
Who keep the natives on their paws  
With ready lash and rotten laws;  
Then if the beasts erupt in rage  
Give them a slightly larger cage  
And, in scorn and fear combined,  
Turn them against their own kind.

In aggiunta, l'ingrediente essenziale: voi.  
Per coronare lo stufato irlandese, poi,  
Quel guazzabuglio fate bollire e traboccare,  
Ecco qui un successo imperiale"!   
Si allontanò accennando una capriola  
piegato dal dolore, nel temporale  
i capelli morti incollati alla fronte:  
il gruppo rimase in silenzio nuovamente.  
Mi pare sia ora il caso di spiegare,  
che i politici, così sensibili a interpretare,  
dicono che sono le nostre tradizioni violente,  
la nostra amarezza, lo sguardo distolto dal presente  
che ci affliggono in questo aspro frangente.  
Dovremmo dimenticare e pensare al futuro,  
curare i vivi, lasciar perdere i morti, di sicuro.  
Le parole mi si spensero in bocca. Disse allora un fantasma:  
"Qui giace uno che esalò l'estremo fiato  
rammemorando i metodi del passato.  
Lo fece fuori un semplice soldato,  
con brutta autorità, sul ginocchio piegato".  
Parlò di nuovo quello spirito ostinato  
che poc' anzi si era infervorato:  
"Tanto più semplici le lezioni, tanto più incidono nel vivo.  
Questa lezione nel cuore la trascrivo:  
voi vi degnate di ascoltare le nostre parole  
solo se vi diamo uno schiaffo che duole,  
eppur ci manca la tecnica che ci vuole:  
per noi l'ordine s'impone col fucile,  
e tutto diventa semplice e banale –  
ma la vostra Democrazia insiste  
a non trattare con i terroristi.  
Bianchi e gialli, o nero pesto,  
hanno imparato la storia dal vostro testo:  
"dividi e rovina, crea confusione".  
Noi parliamo attraverso le nostre lesioni.  
Guardate dunque questo scompiglio  
Vada in malora il vostro nobil piglio".  
Si drizzò un altro spettro, labbra secche, smorte,  
che ancora non aveva parlato forte:  
"Maledetti i furbi e gli animi ignari,  
maledetti i galantuomini intenti a rapinare  
una terra che non si curano di capire;  
riducono i nativi a cani ammaestrati  
con furia di frusta e decreti bacati  
e se poi la bestia esplode per la rabbia  
le concedono una più ampia gabbia  
e combinando paura e avvilito  
fan sì che si scagli contro la loro propria gente.



The game runs out of room at last,  
A people rises from its past,  
The going gets unduly tough  
And you have, surely, had enough.  
The time has come to yield your place  
With condescending show of grace  
– An Empire-builder handing on.  
We reap the ruin when you've gone,  
All your errors heaped behind you:  
Promises that do not bind you,  
Hopes in conflict, cramped commissions,  
Faiths exploited, and traditions.'  
Bloody sputum filled his throat.  
He stopped and coughed to clear it out,  
And finished, with his eyes a-glow:  
'You came, you saw, you conquered... So.  
You gorged – and it was time to go.  
Good riddance. We'd forget – released –  
But for the rubbish of your feast,  
The slops and scraps that fell to earth  
And sprang to arms in dragon birth.  
Sashed and bowler-hatted, glum  
Apprentices of fife and drum,  
High and dry, abandoned guards  
Of dismal streets and empty yards,  
Drilled at the codeword 'True Religion'  
To strut and mutter like a pigeon  
'Not An Inch – Up The Queen';  
Who use their walls like a latrine  
For scribbled magic – at their call,  
Straight from the nearest music-hall  
Pope and Devil intertwine  
Two cardboard kings appear and join  
In one more battle by the Boyne!  
Who could love them? God above...'  
'Yet pity is akin to love,'  
The thirteenth corpse beside him said,  
Smiling in its bloody head,  
'And though there's reason for alarm  
In dourness and a lack of charm  
Their cursed plight calls out for patience.  
They, even they, with other nations  
Have a place, if we can find it.  
Love our changeling! Guard and mind it.  
Doomed from birth, a cursed heir,  
Theirs is the hardest lot to bear,  
Yet not impossible, I swear,

Troppo a lungo questo gioco è durato,  
 il popolo risorge dal proprio passato,  
 la partita è diventata assai più tosta  
 è giunto il momento di abbandonar la posta.  
 Anche voi ne avrete avuto abbastanza.  
 E' ora che ve ne andiate con la sprezzante eleganza  
 di un costruttore di imperi che cede il passo.  
 A noi il raccolto di quello che seminaste, uno sconquasso.  
 Alle vostre spalle, una montagna di sbagli:  
 promesse che non vi legano, veri abbagli;  
 speranze contraddittorie, credenze calpestate,  
 sterili commissioni, tradizioni dimenticate".<sup>3</sup>  
 La bocca piena di saliva e sangue,  
 si fermò e tossì, scatarando, ansimante,  
 e continuò con gli occhi fiammeggianti:  
 "Veniste, vedeste, conquistaste...  
 Bene. Vi abbuffaste. E venne il momento in cui ve ne andaste.  
 Beata l'ora! Vi dimenticheremmo volentieri, con sollievo,  
 non fosse che gli avanzi delle vostre bisbocce  
 caduti a terra – scarti, croste e cocci –  
 si ergono, figli di un drago, fino ai denti armati.<sup>4</sup>  
 Con bombetta e fascia, eccoli, in volto scuri,  
 gli apprendisti con pifferi e tamburi<sup>5</sup>  
 piantati in asso, lasciati lì a custodire  
 strade desolate e deserti cantieri.  
 Si addestrano al grido "La Vera Religione"  
 pavoneggiandosi e gorgogliando come un piccione  
 "Non un Centimetro sarà Ceduto. Viva la Regina."<sup>6</sup>  
 Usano i muri imbrattandoli come una latrina  
 di magici scarabocchi – attingendo a manate  
 dal mondo del varietà; Papa e diavolo abbracciati,  
 due re s'affrontano, da un mazzo di carte ripescati,  
 in una nuova battaglia del Boyne!<sup>7</sup>  
 Chi li può amare? Solo Nostro Signore..."  
 "Ma la pietà è cugina dell'amore",  
 disse il tredicesimo corpo, lì appresso sdraiato,  
 con un sorriso sul volto insanguinato,  
 "Anche se nel cuore risvegliano apprensione  
 per quei loro musci duri e modi da villani  
 la loro dura sorte richiede comprensione  
 anche loro hanno un posto fra le nazioni  
 (basta trovarglielo). Amore per i fratellastri!  
 Colmiamoli di cure, quasi fossero dei nostri.  
 Dannati dalla nascita, eredi maledetti,  
 toccò a loro la sorte dei reietti,  
 eppure non disperata, sul mio onore,

If England would but clear the air  
And brood at home on her disgrace  
– Everything to its own place.  
Face their walls of dole and fear  
And be of reasonable cheer.  
Good men everyday inherit  
Father's foulness with the spirit,  
Purge the filth and do not stir it.  
Let them out. At least let in  
A breath or two of oxygen,  
So they may settle down for good  
And mix themselves in the common blood.  
We all are what we are, and that  
Is mongrel pure. What nation's not  
Where any stranger hung his hat  
And seized a lover where she sat?  
He ceased and faded. Zephyr blew  
And all the others faded too  
I stood like a ghost. My fingers strayed  
Along the fatal barricade.  
The gentle rainfall drifting down  
Over Colmcille's town  
Could not refresh, only distil  
In silent grief from hill to hill.

se solo l'Inghilterra si togliesse di torno,  
a meditare in patria sul proprio scorno.  
– a ciascuno il suo, ogni cosa al suo posto.  
A contemplare i muri di paura e di dolore  
mantenendo (per quanto possibile) il buon umore.  
Ogni giorno brave persone diventano eredi  
delle colpe dei padri e anche delle loro fedì,  
spurgano la sporcizia e non la fanno rimescolare.  
Liberateli. Lasciate che almeno  
arrivi loro una boccata d'ossigeno  
in modo che una volta per tutte si sistemino  
e si mescolino al sangue comune.  
Siamo tutti quello che siamo, in conclusione,  
puri come puri sono i bastardi. Non vi è nazione  
dove non giunse un forestiero  
che, appeso il cappello al chiodo, fiero,  
si prese la prima donna in vista, senza darsi pensiero.”  
Tacque e si dileguò. Un soffio di Zefiro  
e pure gli altri si dileguarono.  
Rimasi lì come un fantasma. Le dita  
accarezzavano la funesta barricata.  
Cadeva una leggera pioggia sulla città di Colmcille<sup>8</sup>  
che non portava refrigerio, ma di colle in colle  
stillava in silenzio un sordo dolore.

## NOTE ON THE POEM

*Butcher's Dozen* was not written in response to the shooting of the thirteen dead in Derry. There are too many dead on all sides.

The poem was written in response to the Report of the Widgery Tribunal. In Lord Widgery's cold putting aside of truth, the nth in a historic series of expedient falsehoods – with prejudice literally wiggled out as Justice – it was evident that we were suddenly very close to the operations of the evil real causes.

I couldn't write the same poem now. The pressures were special, the insult strongly felt and the timing vital if the response was to matter, in all its kinetic impurity. Reaching for the nearest aid I found the aisling – that never quite extinct Irish political verse form – in a late, parodied guise, in the coarse energies and nightmare Tribunal of Merriman's *Midnight Court*. One changed one's standards, chose the doggerel route, and charged...

The poem was finished, printed and published within a week of the publication of the Widgery Report, and it had the immediate effect I wanted. A regrettable longer term effect has been the loss of friendships and the rejection of my work by English readers.

## NOTA SUL POEMETTO

*La dozzina del macellaio* non è stato scritto in risposta all'uccisione dei tredici di Derry. Ci sono troppi morti da entrambe le parti.

Il poemetto è stato scritto in risposta al Rapporto del Tribunale Widgery. Nel freddo e noncurante rifiuto della verità da parte di Lord Widgery, l'ennesimo esempio di una serie storica di falsità di comodo – con il pregiudizio letteralmente paludato da Giustizia – era evidente che eravamo improvvisamente molto vicini all'operare delle vere cause del male.

Adesso non riuscirei più a scrivere la stessa poesia. Le pressioni erano speciali, l'offesa fortemente sentita e il tempismo vitale affinché la risposta potesse incidere, nonostante tutta la sua imperfezione cinetica. Cercando la risorsa più immediata, trovai l'*aisling* – quel genere di poesia politica irlandese mai del tutto estinto – nella sua forma tardiva e parodistica, ossia nella rozza vitalità e negli incubi del *Tribunale di mezzanotte* di Merriman. Cambiai i miei parametri, scelsi la strada della filastrocca rimata e via all'attacco...

La poesia fu completata, stampata e pubblicata entro una settimana dalla pubblicazione del Rapporto Widgery, e sortì l'effetto immediato che desideravo. Una conseguenza spiacevole a più lungo termine è stata la perdita di amicizie e il rifiuto del mio lavoro da parte dei lettori inglesi.

\* La traduzione è stata condotta sul testo proposto da Carcanet nella "Bloody Sunday 50th Anniversary Edition" del poemetto pubblicata nel 2022.

<sup>1</sup> Bogside è un quartiere a maggioranza cattolica situato nella seconda città più popolosa dell'Irlanda del Nord, Londonderry (meglio conosciuta con il suo nome storico di Derry). Nel corso degli anni, il Bogside fu teatro di frequenti attriti, spesso violenti, a causa degli eventi storici legati al conflitto nordirlandese noto come "The Troubles" (1970-1998). Nel 1969 la cosiddetta battaglia di Bogside portò alla trasformazione del quartiere in un'area autogovernata definita Derry libera (Free Derry) sotto il controllo del movimento nazionalista. Fu a Bogside che ebbe luogo il tragico evento detto la Domenica di sangue (Bloody Sunday) che occasionò la scrittura di *Butcher's Dozen*. Durante una manifestazione pacifica per i diritti civili, i soldati britannici spararono sui manifestanti disarmati uccidendone tredici (un quattordicesimo morì per le ferite un mese più tardi) e ferendone una quarantina. Bogside è ora diventato una meta turistica ricca di murales a tema politico e monumenti commemorativi che ricordano i tragici eventi del passato.

<sup>2</sup> Kinsella si ispira alla "ricetta" della pozione infernale delle streghe del *Macbeth*, per descrivere in maniera grafica e sarcastica lo storico progetto di oppressione della popolazione nativa a favore dei coloni protestanti dell'Ulster messo in atto dalla Gran Bretagna fin dal Rinascimento e proseguito in varie forme fino ai giorni nostri. Mentre gli elementi grotteschi

della pozione delle streghe shakespeariane sottolineano le forze soprannaturali e malvagie che manipolano Macbeth, le valenze quasi culinarie della ricetta britannica di oppressione in *Butcher's Dozen* hanno delle corrispondenze storiche ben precise. Si parla di “interessi coloniali”, di “nidi piumati”, ossia di posizioni di rendita e delle prerogative dei padroni inglesi, (“feathered nests”), di “radici trapiantate” come furono quelle dei coloni scozzesi (v. anche il “brodo scozzese”) trasferiti in Irlanda ai tempi di Cromwell nelle terre che erano state dei nativi irlandesi. “L'unione dura e innaturale” allude in primo luogo all'Act of Union del 1801 che abolì il Parlamento irlandese e fece sì che Irlanda, Scozia, Galles e Inghilterra formassero il Regno Unito. Ma vi è anche un'allusione alla creazione nel 1921 di uno stato indipendente, l'Irlanda del Nord (Ulster) che rimase parte del Regno Unito e dove, nonostante la consistente minoranza cattolica, vigeva “la supremazia settaria” dei protestanti. Il controverso “giuramento di fedeltà” che i deputati del nuovo stato indipendente, la Repubblica d'Irlanda, Eire, dovevano prestare al re fu un'altra delle cause di divisione e guerra civile che seguirono la Partition del 1921 (la divisione dell'isola in due stati, uno indipendente e l'altro parte del Regno Unito). Il pasticcio o guazzabuglio a cui Kinsella allude si riferisce indubbiamente ai Troubles, il traboccamento di una lunga politica coloniale cosparsa di errori e ingiustizie, ma anche ai disastri che precedettero gli anni 70.

<sup>3</sup> In questo e nei versi precedenti Kinsella si riferisce agli anni del primo Novecento dalla rivolta di Pasqua alla guerra d'Indipendenza e alla nascita della Repubblica ma anche alla Partition. Il ritiro degli inglesi non andò del tutto liscio ed ebbe varie conseguenze spiacevoli, dalla guerra civile ai Troubles.

<sup>4</sup> Con disprezzo, Kinsella si riferisce alla minoranza belligerante dell'Irlanda del Nord (gli Unionisti, detti anche Lealisti per la loro fedeltà all'Inghilterra) come a uno scarto disgustoso dell'impero. I loro nuclei militarizzati, spesso sostenuti dalle forze militari britanniche, vengono sarcasticamente definiti come “draghi” armati di tutto punto (con chiara allusione al drago di San Giorgio).

<sup>5</sup> Tra le classi operaie protestanti e lealiste sorsero varie confraternite e logge paramilitari come l'Ordine di Orange, o gli “Apprentice Boys of Derry” (gli apprendisti del poemetto) discendenti dai coloni scozzesi e inglesi giunti in Irlanda nel XVII secolo e lealisti sfegatati. Tradizionalmente questi gruppi inscenano una parata nell' anniversario della battaglia del Boyne, e pure in altre occasioni, in cui marciano vestiti di bombetta, fascia arancione e guanti bianchi seguendo una banda di pifferi e tamburi. Spesso queste parate generarono tensioni e attriti con i cattolici repubblicani soprattutto quando esibivano il loro trionfalismo in zone di prevalenza cattolica. Le “marching bands” rivestono un importante ruolo nella società dell'Ulster.

<sup>6</sup> Slogan degli Unionisti. “Non un centimetro” si riferisce al rifiuto dei protestanti, al momento della Partition, di cedere un seppur minimo lembo del territorio dell'Irlanda del Nord che permettesse a comunità cattoliche di essere incluse nel perimetro della Repubblica.

<sup>7</sup> Kinsella allude ai famosi *murales* nell'Irlanda del Nord (soprattutto di Belfast e Derry) diventati simboli delle divisioni politiche e religiose passate e presenti della regione. I due re a cui si allude, rappresentati come figure in un mazzo di carte, sono il protestante Guglielmo III di Orange e il cattolico Giacomo II Stuart il quale, appoggiato dai francesi, era sbarcato nella cattolica Irlanda per tentare di restituire il regno d'Inghilterra alla casata degli Stuart. Giacomo e il suo partito vennero definitivamente sconfitti nella battaglia sul fiume Boyne in Irlanda, momento simbolico dell'orgoglio protestante.

<sup>8</sup> La città di Derry ha come patrono San Colmcille, conosciuto anche come San Columba, una figura storica e religiosa di grande importanza nella tradizione irlandese e scozzese, fondatore di numerosi monasteri fra cui quello di Iona.

## Postfazione

*Donatella Abbate Badin*

### *1. Bloody Sunday, le inchieste e i rapporti*

La domenica del 30 gennaio 1972, durante il periodo dei conflitti nell'Irlanda del Nord conosciuti come "The Troubles", a Bogside, un quartiere della città di Derry, una manifestazione pacifica per i diritti civili e l'uguaglianza dei cittadini cattolici fu brutalmente repressa dalle forze armate britanniche. I soldati aprirono il fuoco sui manifestanti disarmati, uccidendo 13 persone (un'altra morì dopo un mese) e ferendone gravemente altre 15. La maggior parte delle vittime erano giovani uomini, molti dei quali furono colpiti alla schiena mentre cercavano di fuggire dai colpi di arma da fuoco. A questa tragica giornata venne dato il nome di "Bloody Sunday", la domenica di sangue.

In seguito all'ondata d'indignazione suscitata dagli eventi, vi fu un'inchiesta ufficiale condotta dal giudice britannico, John Widgery, che pubblicò il suo rapporto il 19 aprile 1972, discolpando l'esercito inglese con la giustificazione che i soldati avevano aperto il fuoco contro manifestanti armati che li avevano attaccati. Le conclusioni del rapporto furono oggetto di forti critiche: la responsabilità delle forze armate britanniche veniva minimizzata, non si era tenuto conto delle affermazioni dei testimoni oculari che contraddicevano la versione ufficiale dei fatti, e anzi risultava che le prove di colpevolezza dei militanti fossero state spesso inquisite.

Il caso del "Bloody Sunday" rimase aperto per molti anni, fin quando una nuova inchiesta avviata dal governo britannico condusse alla pubblicazione nel 2010 del Saville Report nel quale venne riconosciuto che la responsabilità delle morti e delle ferite inflitte ai manifestanti, riconosciuti pacifici e disarmati, era da attribuirsi all'esercito britannico. Il Primo Ministro, David Cameron presentando il Saville Report alla Camera dichiarò: "Ciò che accadde nella 'Domenica di sangue' è ingiustificato e ingiustificabile. È semplicemente sbagliato" ("What happened on Bloody Sunday was both unjustified and unjustifiable. It was wrong", Kinsella 2022, 27). Nonostante il riconoscimento dell'ingiustizia patita dalle vittime, rimase tuttavia una certa insoddisfazione in quanto vennero denunciati e puniti solo gli esecutori diretti ma non gli ufficiali superiori che diedero gli ordini.

### *2. Thomas Kinsella: Butcher's Dozen*

Gli eventi del 30 gennaio 1972, e soprattutto la pubblicazione del Widgery Report pochi mesi dopo, stimolarono il poeta Thomas Kinsella, che fino a quel momento si era tenuto lontano dalla politica, a comporre e pubblicare nel giro di una settimana un pamphlet satirico intitolato *Butcher's Dozen* (*La dozzina del macellaio*). L'opuscolo fu la più significativa reazione artistica agli avvenimenti di quella giornata a Derry e divenne, come si può constatare dai necrologi pubblicati nella stampa dell'Isola, la composizione più nota al grande pubblico del poeta irlandese mancato nel 2022. Più che dall'ingiustificabile carneficina, il poemetto fu ispirato, secondo Kinsella, dall'ipocrisia del rapporto ufficiale che seguì il massacro, "l'ennesimo esempio di una serie storica di falsità di comodo" (245). Il titolo completo della prima edizione (omesso dall'edizione del cinquantenario) è infatti *Butcher's Dozen, A Lesson for the Octave of Widgery*, che indica sia la causale (il rapporto di Widgery) sia il tempo liturgico di una settimana che segue una importante festa cattolica.



“La poesia fu composta in tempi brevi e pubblicata come semplice opuscolo al costo di dieci penny a copia: l'economicità e la rozzezza facevano parte del suo effetto, come in una ballata di strada”, scrisse Kinsella spiegando come, data l'urgenza di mettere fra le mani di tutti questo suo testo scottante, egli avesse deciso di sfruttare l'esperienza acquisita presso la Dolmen Press per stamparlo lui stesso dando così inizio alla sua casa editrice personale, la Peppercanister Press, che da quel momento venne utilizzata per la pubblicazione di sequenze di poesie brevi o di poemetti più lunghi che potevano veder la luce in attesa di essere raccolti in volumi antologici editi da più prestigiose case editrici. Fu un metodo di lavoro caratteristico del poeta che si rivelò molto proficuo.

Il titolo, *Butcher's Dozen*, ha origine in un amaro gioco di parole: il termine “a baker's dozen”, la dozzina del panettiere, si riferisce all'antica usanza di regalare un pane a chi ne comprava dodici (un po' come il nostro 3x2). Il tredicesimo morto della strage è l'omaggio offerto dalla brutalità dell'esercito. Il sarcasmo del titolo pervade tutto il testo che percorre l'intera gamma dall'ironia all'invettiva. Inizialmente il poemetto si sofferma sulle menzogne degli inquirenti che circondano l'esame delle salme per allargarsi poi a una denuncia della sistematica e secolare ingiustizia della Gran Bretagna nei confronti dell'Irlanda.

La poesia, impegnata e violentemente polemica, trae le sue origini dalla tradizione irlandese. *Butcher's Dozen*, infatti, parzialmente ispirato a *The Masque of Anarchy*, scritto da P.B. Shelley dopo il massacro di Peterloo, attinge soprattutto a fonti irlandesi antiche. Nel verso e nelle rime si ritrovano echi di Swift, e più particolarmente lo stile della satira di Brian Merriman, *The Midnight Court*, scritta in irlandese e pubblicata per la prima volta nel 1780. La struttura portante è quella dell'*aisling*, un genere di poesia visionaria tradizionale, che raggiunse il suo apice nel XVIII secolo. Nell'*aisling* tipico, una donna, personificazione dell'Irlanda, compare in sogno al poeta lamentandosi della situazione sotto il dominio inglese e invitandolo a lottare per la libertà e l'indipendenza. Anche *Butcher's Dozen* consiste in una serie di visioni in cui compaiono non delle belle donne ma bensì i fantasmi dei dimostranti trucidati i quali narrano con dettagli macabri le circostanze della loro morte e soprattutto le menzogne con cui queste vennero riportate dagli scrutatori ufficiali. A partire dalle parole del quinto spettro, tuttavia, il discorso dei caduti si allarga per toccare sarcasticamente l'eredità dell'imperialismo, il disastro del post-colonialismo e infine la situazione in Irlanda del Nord dove i membri dei gruppi lealisti vengono ridicolizzati. Il tredicesimo morto, e in parte anche la voce narrante, cercano di concludere con una visione più equilibrata, meno carica d'ira e rappresentano anche i più militanti degli unionisti dell'Irlanda del Nord come vittime del sistema. Si intravede un atteggiamento più conciliante e una timida proposta di rappacificazione e integrazione fra le due comunità a condizione che la Gran Bretagna si ritiri dall'Irlanda del Nord, evento che il poeta descrive come una boccata d'ossigeno. L'accenno alla città di Columcille nei malinconici versi finali, quando i fantasmi si sono ritirati ed il poeta si ritrova solo sotto la pioggia, ci rimandano a un tempo lontano della storia di Derry che precede le divisioni settarie.

### 3. Stile

La forma adottata da Kinsella per *Butcher's Dozen*, ritenuta rozza o ingenua, stupì i suoi ammiratori poiché fino a quel momento egli era stato considerato un fine stilista. La scelta deliberata di un verso che egli definì “an immediate doggerel”, ossia una serie di ottonari a rima baciata con un ritmo cantilenante, venne ritenuta poco sofisticata, in quanto questo tipo di verso si ritrova soprattutto in poesie amatoriali, umoristiche, infantili o in ballate di strada. L'intento di Kinsella nell'uso di questa forma bassa o scherzosa è, invece, di mettere in luce l'aspetto satirico

del poemetto e di porre in contrasto la rozzezza e l'umorismo del verso con la drammaticità e complessità del contenuto. Per questo motivo anche nella traduzione si è voluto mantenere l'uso di rime o allitterazioni seppure spesso ovvie, forzate o banali. In varie interviste che Kinsella concesse anni addietro alla traduttrice, egli espresse soddisfazione per le proprie scelte stilistiche ritenendo che fossero la risposta più giusta date le circostanze, esattamente quello che era necessario in quel caso ("era esattamente quello che ci voleva"; "it was exactly what was needed", Badin 1996, 175).

La composizione e pubblicazione di *Butcher's Dozen* rappresentò un importante momento di svolta per il poeta, come egli ripetutamente ebbe a dichiarare. Non solo portò alla creazione della Peppercanister Press, ma la scrittura dettata dall'urgenza del momento determinò un cambiamento di stile con l'abbandono dell'"inutile eleganza" dei suoi esordi e l'adozione di ciò che più tardi chiamò la "dual tradition", la duplice tradizione, ossia la coesistenza nella sua produzione di modelli stilistici della tradizione inglese e di altri modelli derivanti dalla letteratura scritta in irlandese, in parte dimenticati e al cui recupero Kinsella contribuì notevolmente. La composizione di *Butcher's Dozen* cambiò completamente la sua carriera portando a ciò che egli definisce una liberazione dei suoi mezzi di comunicazione. Anche dal punto di vista politico egli non esprime ripensamenti: la sua visione dell'Irlanda divisa in due rimase la stessa che ai tempi dei Troubles come messo in evidenza dalle ultime interviste. Riteneva l'Irlanda del Nord una società ingiusta e non gli pareva che vi fosse stato niente di male nell'averlo detto in occasione di quell'esplosione di brutalità.

In occasione del cinquantenario del massacro, la casa editrice Carcanet ha pubblicato una nuova edizione commemorativa di *Butcher's Dozen*. Oltre alla ristampa del poemetto, il volume include un breve prologo contenente alcuni estratti significativi del Saville Report, un epilogo tratto dal discorso del Primo Ministro David Cameron alla Camera e una breve nota di Kinsella, il suo ultimo scritto prima della morte sopravvenuta pochi giorni prima della pubblicazione. L'attaccamento di Kinsella a *Butcher's Dozen* è confermato dalla figlia Sara che narra come egli nel suo letto d'ospedale attendesse impazientemente l'arrivo del prototipo del volume. L'unico rimpianto che Kinsella espresse nella nota finale per la seconda edizione riguarda la perdita dell'amicizia di alcuni amici e colleghi inglesi o dell'Irlanda del Nord che vennero irritati da questa pubblicazione o non la compresero. Altrimenti, fino all'ultimo egli espresse soddisfazione per il successo dell'opera riconfermando che ebbe esattamente l'effetto immediato che era nelle sue intenzioni. Giustamente quindi, anche se i suoi ammiratori lo ricordano per opere ben più raffinate e complesse, l'autorevole quotidiano *The Irish Times* diede l'annuncio della sua morte "salutando il poeta rinomato per il *Táin* e per *Butcher's Dozen*" ("a poet renowned for *The Táin* and *Butcher's Dozen*"; Smyth 2021). A questo poema rimane legato il suo nome.

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## Recensioni / Reviews

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Frank McGuinness, *May Twenty-Second*, Oldcastle, The Gallery Press, 2022, pp. 126. £ 19.50. ISBN: 978-1-91133-833-8.

Frank McGuinness, *Dinner with Groucho*, London, Faber and Faber Ltd., 2022, pp. 54. £ 9.99. ISBN: 978-671-38096-1. (The play, directed by Alison McKenna, was first staged by “b\*spoke theatre company” at The Civic, Dublin, on 27 September 2022, and subsequently at Belfast International Arts Festival and the Arcola Theatre, London.)

### 1. May Twenty-Second

At the heart of Frank McGuinness’s latest collection of poems is what even by his challenging standards is an astonishing achievement: a group of some twenty-three short, tightly-packed lyrics (57-68) inspired by Goya’s album, entitled *The Witches and Old Women*. One can easily guess which of Goya’s particular images has prompted which poem, but it is not the descriptive power that is at once enticing, shocking, freeing, but the wild exuberance of each imaginative outpouring. There is a total entering into the spirit of each sketch, an inhabiting (possession?) quite devoid of any judgemental distance; instead, a reader is immersed in the sensory freedoms found by those women that lie beyond the decision to deny all traditional codes of behaviour or belief, any limitations to be imposed on experience. Rather the poems embrace the maelstrom that constitutes human awareness at any given moment in time, the sheer *range* of sensual, intellectual, emotional possibilities and stimuli with no holding back. The rhythms push the reader powerfully onward, not relaxing their hold, as an irresistible wildness takes over: “spread the word, hell is dead, roar it from steeples” (62). But we are not exclusively in the world of Goya’s images or any traditional expression of diabolism. We are not allowed the comfort that would come with such historical placing; instead, rapidly glimpsed allusions hint at cultural, political, private (gay), local (Irish), historical analogies that bring a wide-ranging inclusiveness to the poems despite their lack of an easily definable focus. When one embarks on a poem, anything might happen; the direction is fierce, but the objective is elusive; the conclusions are emphatic, but never expected. The collection is preceded by an epigraph from Lorca celebrating how “there is no straight road in this world”, only “a

giant labyrinth/of crossroads intersecting” (56). McGuinness enters that labyrinth fearlessly, relishing the tangential turnings, the byways (more than the highways). When Theseus entered the classical labyrinth, he held the safeguard of Ariadne’s thread; throughout McGuinness’s sequence there is a safeguard offered by the shared form of each poem: twelve meticulously observed pentameters (unrhyming) give a sense that the anarchy is worth pursuing confidently for the rewards that will be discovered, even if there is no obvious sense of an ending. Maybe the experience of complete release is its own reward; maybe that is the witch’s gift.

To turn to the other four parts of the collection after coming to terms with “Dancing with Goya” is to appreciate the degree to which these new poems mark a significant change in McGuinness’s vision and approach. Though the subjects fall into categories familiar from McGuinness’s earlier work, they are treated with a new freedom matched with more penetrating insights. Rather than confront a subject head-on and uncompromisingly, these poems explore their chosen theme from ever-changing perspectives. Again, the transience and multiplicity of factors contained within a time-span are now recorded meticulously; it is like a kind of poetic impressionism. Consider “Jocasta” (17-18), a monologue pitched between direct address and inner rumination: steadily the facts that define her myth are intimated, though not in any chronological sequence: rather what is explored is a mind searching the past to fuel a present anger, as that mind, increasingly aware of being a mere toy in the hands of the gods, accepts how she and Oedipus are inexorably “heading to the noose, the neck and the eyes” (18). That final line is precise and decisive, but it is reached through a powerful empathy for the emotional traumas that are layered within her psyche, much of it showing Jocasta repeatedly the victim of cruel circumstance. Her mind can settle on nothing to bring ease or respite: time only adds to the horrors. This is tragedy less as social event than as accumulating pains in the depths of self.

Repeatedly the poems fuse present and past(s) to show the complexity of such selves within the flow of time. In “Chaos 1945” (119) historical event and a private family anecdote capture, in their frank juxtaposition, how they might bizarrely come to be held in suspension within human memory, where there is no sense of either being privileged as superior in importance within the processes of recall. “The October Devotions, 1962” (106-107) explores how a traditional celebration was that year cut through by the all-too-human fear generated worldwide by the Cuban missile crisis, so the abiding memory is not of spiritual uplift but of streets “empty, waiting” (107). The assassination of Lyra McKee is strangely evoked through seven meditations (32-35) on how such a tragedy might be evoked through the vision and cinematic language of seven notable contemporary film directors. The implication is that, for all their particular genius, no one of them, any more than McGuinness himself, could give an appropriate response or adequate artistic expression to such wanton carnage. Daringly, each poem is couched in lines of varying syllables (frequently thirteen, fourteen or fifteen), but usually of five stresses, making for an effect that intimates a prose poem that is never quite realised; this is a most difficult metre technically to sustain, if one is to avoid a flat-footed pedestrianism. The effect here in this sequence is profoundly disturbing; however, brilliantly each director’s style is evoked, the impact, given the metre, seems off-kilter, humbling, too self-conscious for all the depth of feeling clearly at work. Where lie our priorities? How can one *celebrate* a wasted life, however powerful the impulse to do so, while the vocabulary, the imagery and symbolism that form an artist’s personal style are readily to hand?

In a lighter vein another sequence, “Meryton” (98-104), affectionately challenges Jane Austen’s assured confidence in how she chooses to present several of the minor figures that people *Pride and Prejudice*. Here are the likes of Caroline Bingley, Aunt Phillips and Sir William Lucas, but with their portraits expanded in a manner that saves them from being reduced simply to

caricature. Mrs. Bennett twitters like her prototype, but we are invited to see her in older age, conscious of how risible she must appear still fretting, “wittering on” but “saying nothing” (98). That she *knows* she is irritating to husband, family and acquaintance, best seen by them as a figure of fun, brings a poignant dimension lacking in Austen. There is suppressed anguish too in the loss of her husband’s affection. Was their one-time passion only for him a means to secure “an entailed estate” (98)? Equally kindly is the view of Sir William Lucas struggling to remain the buoyant self of the novel, despite increasingly suffering from flatulence which keeps him outside the politest society. And Lady Catherine de Bourgh and Darcy’s mother in “Sisters” are presented cheerfully as ambitious, go-getting Sligo belles, marrying in hope of acquiring estates and houses, whose social graces and cultivated snobbery mask a determined cupidity, fuelled by a wish to escape the confines of an Irish background. In all six case studies, a degree of human weakness brings a darker element to the characterisation, enriching Austen’s artistry and broadening her canvas by placing each within the contexts of aging, disappointment, failings, frailties and a carefully structured resilience. They too are caught in the complexities of time but freed from the limitations of Austen’s mocking approach.

Another group of poems, spread throughout the collection, interrogate issues of gender-definition. There is Mark Smeaton, the brilliant Tudor performer, “adept at viol and virginals/a master of flute and organ” and dancer of rare ingenuity, who to escape the label of “Sodomite” bragged of a heterosexuality he did not possess to ingratiate himself with ruthless nobles bent on destroying Anne Boleyn; they used him despite knowing him to be a lying informer, then “cut the strings”, leaving him “a scarlet silence” (46). The poem moves through the violently contrasting facts of Smeaton’s career but always filtered through his sensibility, his exulting in his matchless expertise, the luxury of lying to inhabit a masculinity out of dread of his truth to self, and the final painful recognition of that self as “soft boy crying for his mother” (46). The capturing of a period sensibility and the period pressures moulding the awareness of an outsider (socially and sexually), as he tries to find his *place* in his world, is deftly achieved, but all within the perspective of the writer’s modern sensibility and its sympathies. There is no reaching after a rhetoric of horror or shock, which would be wholly misplaced; only an honest recording of the facts (the levels of internal and social duplicity are especially well envisaged) that profoundly respects Smeaton’s complex identity, its failings and its strengths.

The career of the self-promoting fantasist, “Vicky de Lambrey” (90-92), is an ideal subject for McGuinness, fascinated by the glitter-ball effect of endlessly shifting facets of a personality. Registered as male at birth (David Lloyd-Gibbon) but transforming into “a beautiful self-possessed woman” (Vicky) (91), when financially down on his/her luck; a commoner who assumed the role of a scion of the Rothschild family (successfully, until the family paid him “to do a runner”, 90), a gourmand who was a shameless thief, a pragmatist who posed as a fortune-teller and spy: the selves were in endless flux prompted by changing circumstance and need. In all seriousness, Yeats voiced a wish to “remake” himself (“An Acre of Grass”, line 14), to develop new powers and authority as he faced old age; but this is a re-making of the self that knows no bounds, or defined purpose, beyond survival and the exuberance of discovering new creative potentials. De Lambrey embraces the status of outsider enthusiastically: the poem rollicks along, never settling into a focus for long, even into the role of “the soul of the party” (92). Through ten stanzas, we share in a consciousness without shame or conscience, intent only on the need to *be*, beyond gender, class-consciousness, morality, nationhood, conventions of any kind: totally, confidently alone. It is a wonderful, liberating feat of the imagination: this too is a dancing with Goya’s witches.

Just how bold the concept and execution of “Vicky de Lambray” it becomes clearer if one compares that poem to “Caroline Blackwood” (112-114), another portrait of an outsider, but one not celebrating complete independence rather one seeking to sever all ties with “our big house” (112) and an over-bearing, titled mother, intent on imposing her own values on her daughter’s upbringing. This is a far more limited and circumscribed objective: the poem runs to eight stanzas but noticeably the first four continually circle about Blackwood’s conflicted feelings for her mother (“revere her as a she-devil”; 112), as if in truth she cannot break away fully, or needs the very fact of her mother to justify her own alterity. The remaining stanzas (and most of the first stanza too) outline her mode of escape which invariably relates to a man, not trust in herself. Lucien Freud confirms her own opinion of her mother yet the language chosen shows the extent to which he denigrates Blackwood too; Israel is a musician but the child born of their union is still-born, denying Blackwood a chance at motherhood. Independence then becomes a matter of fighting legally for her financial rights to fund her lifestyle, till the advent of Robert Lowell, “my last husband” (113), who nonetheless left her to her by-now alcohol-raddled state (“I perfume rooms with bottles, / giving birth to vodka noggins”; 113). There is none of de Lambray’s joy in being alone: instead of independence, sadly, a cycle repeats itself of searching for new forms of dependence. The opening of the final stanza defines the degree to which she fails to escape a searing conscience about all this activity: “Can I be blamed for flitting...?”; 113. Blackwood throughout her monologue is framing an elegy for her life (“There are always yesterdays...”; 113); no energy is left for questing onward; the poem is no manifesto for needful change. In these constant attempts to remake herself, it is the circumstances only which change, not the motivating psyche. McGuinness need not intrude to make a critique; Blackwood does that herself and devastatingly.

It has been worth dwelling in detail on some eleven of the fifty-seven or so poems in *May Twenty-Second* to explore a new-found complexity resulting from McGuinness’s setting each subject within an intricate time-frame and the meticulous matching of each with a particular verse technique and metrical patterning. What results are new approaches to personal freedom that are nonetheless subtly contained by the chosen forms and warmed in each case by a sensitive compassion. Liberties are found to have their price, but the chance, given to the reader, to inhabit and explore these private worlds in imagination and experience their degree of success or failure is in itself freeing. That time is of the essence has a unique validity in this collection and is the source of its abundant riches.

## 2. *Dinner with Groucho*

The quotation from Lorca in *May Twenty-Second* about a lack of straight roads and the presence instead of endless labyrinths is an apt introduction to McGuinness’s latest play, which too claims as its subject, “confusions – contradictions – lovely labyrinths at the root of our lives” (47). *Dinner with Groucho* fizzles with outbursts of brilliance and flashes of insight. The result garnered an absolute firecracker of a performance from its cast of three. It is rare for a play to keep an audience absolutely on the edge of their seats for its entire duration, not knowing where dialogue or situations might swing next and all at a thrilling pace. Tangential shifts of direction, style, modes of delivery, and tempo have one constantly on the alert. McGuinness has seized on a brief moment of cultural history and elaborated wildly: the given fact is a meeting for dinner that did actually occur between T.S. Eliot and Groucho Marx in 1964, the culmination of a sporadic correspondence between the men that began three years earlier with Eliot writing a fan letter to Groucho, expressing admiration for his wit and sense of fun. Eliot

was to die a year later; Marx in 1977. Little is known about their encounter, so McGuinness gives his imagination free rein, proposing a restaurant-venue that may be in London, maybe on the verge of the hereafter. It could be heaven or could be hell (both men as artists have experienced a long after-life, subject to changing taste and values); their table is presided over by the Proprietor or is she perhaps God, encouraging the men to recognise their true destinies and sit in judgment on themselves? Both men are edgily nervous: the conviviality frequently sounds like a tactic for avoiding intimacy. They admit “We did not get what we expected of each other” and Groucho clarifies that he “expected better”, while Eliot responds that he “expected stranger” (28). The repartee has a brittle humour from the first, and there is a decided sense of them playing up to each other: *performing* for an admirer. Steadily we come to appreciate how they share a distaste for fame and reputation that can touch on derision, particularly in Eliot (“I know my limitations...a mug’s game – poetry”; 30-31), which explains why he prefers to introduce himself not as a celebrated poet but as a successful publisher.

The text is a gift for actors in its demands (all three performers rose admirably to the challenges): the tone shifts rapidly between the lyrical and the abrasive, from witty hilarity to heartfelt self-questioning, as the play moves effortlessly between comedy, which is viewed ultimately as “innocent, insane defiance” and tragedy seen as necessarily “paying the bill” (45). This matches the men’s searching intellects, shifting between self-presentation and a sense of weariness at the routines their lives have become: “the act is winding down” (the words are Eliot’s but the image is drawing on Groucho’s vaudeville world). “You have seen all I can do – I hope you find it amusing” (26). Lamely, they try to bolster each other’s confidence only to find they are quickly reiterating their epithets of praise and in no time they are “finished” (26), for this routine at least. Questioning why they have allowed their lives to take the shape they have (“Then for what – done your bit for what”, 27), Eliot confesses “I have earned my right to silence”. Marx questions this, wanting further insight into Eliot’s meaning, seemingly lacking in understanding; but shortly in the play he will quote Marianne Moore’s poem “Silence” in its entirety, as “the story of my life” with its assertion that the “deepest feeling always shows itself in silence” with Moore’s own self-correction here: “not in silence, but restraint” (44). For Moore there should be no settled home (“Inns are not residences”). Both men reveal sadly how difficult it is to sustain Marianne Moore’s state of mind (that forever questing confidently onward); even the restaurant, while welcoming, is still only a transient point of rest. Significantly, both men constantly summon ideas about King Lear lost in the storm, but deride the thought of Shakespeare’s protagonist as a role-model, fantasizing dismissively about his relations with his daughters and with his mother. The dialogue abounds in cultural cross-references (Beckett, Shakespeare, Dante, Coleridge, Pinter, Hopkins, Marie Lloyd) defining the scope of the men’s intellectual awareness, and both make the allusions readily. One wonders if McGuinness is perhaps testing through his characters and dramaturgy the ongoing validity of T.S. Eliot’s apology for the technique he deployed throughout *The Waste Land*: “These fragments I have shored against my ruins”.

But it would be wrong to see the play as descending into maudlin self-criticism. Both actors are required to show the gamut of their technical accomplishments: they sing, they dance (including a hilarious Charleston choreographed by David Bolger of CoisCéim); Tom Eliot (played by Greg Hicks) performs acrobatics; Groucho (Ian Bartholomew) ventriloquises with a wine glass and later with a plastic chicken; Tom resorts to magic and conjures cigars from behind Groucho’s ears, pulls a vast multicoloured silk cloth from Groucho’s pocket after placing there a modest handkerchief, and produces an egg from thin air, which he then transforms into the plastic hen. All this is required of the men while primarily they need



to focus on that undertow of darker feeling, as both artists recognise their descent into old age and confront an artistry now completed. While Tom welcomes efficiency in publishing over creativity in poetry, Groucho, after numerous appearances as comedian, sees himself as confined to residing in his audiences' memories as an endless shape-shifter: "I am a master of disguise" (40), always travelling "under cover" (40), never embracing a secure identity. Tom and Groucho are spurred on in these judgments by the Proprietor (played with teasing ambiguity by Ingrid Craigie) who must similarly be in command of a broad vocal and emotional range, being required by turns to adopt a tone suggestive of a séance (calling on an invocation from Euripides' *Alceste*), of music-hall gaiety, an intimate familiarity with Jacobean court life and its eating habits, an injured dignity, obsequiousness, even the staccato rhythms of one undergoing a fit. She finally orchestrates the shift to the play's more spiritual level with a surprisingly aggressive, feminist denigration of Hamlet's soliloquy "To be or not to be", as "all that piffle" (46), preferring an admission that "Our past is our present is our future" (46), where time and the individual life are seen as a continuum, all present in any given moment. *Dinner with Groucho* (like *May Twenty-Second* before it), expertly demonstrates the power and meaning of such vision. It is rare for a play of (often metaphysical) ideas to be so consistently zany in its modes of presentation and the cast worked at the top of their calibre, attentive to each other's performances to get the balance right allowing them, individually and as an ensemble, confidently to take risks at top speed. *Dinner with Groucho* is both theatre and *play* at their exhilarating best.

Richard Allen Cave

Doireann Ní Ghríofa, *A Ghost in the Throat*, Dublin, Tramp Press, 2020, pp. 326. € 16. ISBN: 978-1-9164-3426-4.

A good translation, to be such, needs a "decelerated reading" (40). Reading and translating are the two focal points that enclose the prose debut of Doireann Ní Ghríofa. *A Ghost in the Throat* is an autofictional novel that takes as its basis a mostly random series of encounters with a text from the Irish poetic tradition, the *Caoineadh Airt Uí Laoghaire* [Lament for Art Ó Laoghaire], an autobiographically-tinted poem composed by Eibhlín Dubh Ní Chonaill upon discovering that her husband, Art Ó Laoghaire, had been assassinated. The protagonist of the novel, who coincides perfectly with the author Ní Ghríofa (in this text the words "author", "narrator" and "protagonist" will be used indiscriminately to refer to the same person), runs into the poem for the first time when she is just a child attending school: "I was a child, and she [Eibhlín] had been dead for centuries" (10). At this point, the young Ní Ghríofa was introduced to the lament through the Irish schooling system, without being able to be emotionally moved by it: "[h]er story seems sad, yes, but also a little dull. Schoolwork. Boring" (11). The second time she comes across it, she is an adolescent attending high school, but this time the meeting is "luckier". Indeed, Ní Ghríofa "develop[ed] a school-girl crush on this *caoineadh*" (*ibidem*), a symbiosis of feelings with the ancient Irish writer: "[w]hen Eibhlín Dubh describes falling in love at first sight and abandoning her family to marry a stranger, I love her for it, just as every teenage girl loves the story of running away forever" (*ibidem*). The third encounter is the most random, but also the most crucial to the novel and the life of the author: during a car ride, her "eye tripped over a sign for Kilcrea" (15), the cemetery where Eibhlín buried her assassinated husband. Thus, Ní Ghríofa decided to undertake a third re-reading of the *Caoineadh*, which

highlighted new elements of the poem for the author: “I was startled to find Eibhlín Dubh pregnant again with her third child, just as I was” (17). It is this reading that brought Ní Ghríofa to feel the desire to make her own translation of the lament.

Reading, re-reading and translating are intertwined, giving life to “a liquid book” (Patel 2022), a literary microcosm made of a mother’s milk and blood. Maternity is one of the main points around which the novel is built. Ní Ghríofa tells the story of a multifaceted maternity. On one hand, it appears to be strongly desired, considering the fact that she has given birth to four children; on the other hand, she tells the story of a very suffered experience of maternity: “in the milking parlour”, the fourth chapter of the novel, emblematically represents this suffering, narrating the difficult birth of her fourth child, during which the only source of support is the *Caoineadh* that she keeps under her pillow. Ní Ghríofa also presents to the reader a vision of maternity as an obsession and as a job, as can be seen by the care that she dedicates to her four children, placing them at the centre of her daily life. She also puts forward the idea of maternity lived as an experience of solidarity: “[i]n choosing to carry a pregnancy, a woman gives of her body with a selflessness so ordinary that it goes unnoticed, even by herself. Her body becomes bound to altruism as instinctively as to hunger [...] Sometimes a female body serves another by effecting a theft upon itself” (2020a, 35).

Maternity is what ties Doireann and Eibhlín hand in glove. Referring to her third re-reading, the narrator-protagonist writes “I had never imagined her as a mother in any of my previous readings” (17). It is upon this third encounter that Ní Ghríofa starts assiduous bio-bibliographic research on Eibhlín’s and her family’s lives: “She wanted to know more of Eibhlín Dubh’s life, to go beyond the poem and learn of this stranger’s girlhood and old age. She wanted to see what became of her children and grandchildren. She wanted to find her burial place and to lay flowers on her grave” (Ní Ghríofa 2020b). Even though she acknowledges that she does not have the right academic preparation to conduct such research, “I may not be an academic, but I believe that I can sketch her years in my own way” (2020a, 75), she is able to trace an almost forgotten genealogy through the reading and studying of any kind of text, “graveyard inscriptions [...], clergy and baptismal records in church ledgers, microfilm, letters, lists of student registrations, depositions, examinations, a transcribed family history written into a Bible” (Corser 2023, 124).

The text, in its broader sense, carries out a central role in the novel. To-do lists are one of the text typologies that follow the reader throughout the novel and the protagonist is almost obsessed with them, as her life directly depended on the tick that signals the accomplishment of one of the tasks: “I keep my list as close as my phone, and draw a deep sense of satisfaction each time I strike a task from it. In such erasure lies joy” (2020a, 6-7). The rhythm of her daily life is marked by the flowing of her pencil on the paper. Beyond her daily life, Ní Ghríofa’s literary and spiritual life is animated by a constellation of texts. The reading and re-reading of a text from the Irish poetic tradition such as the *Caoineadh Airt Uí Laoghaire*, which curiously belongs to the oral tradition and was transcribed only later by others, is what brings the author to deal with a myriad of texts. Through her bio-bibliographic research and translation of the poem, Ní Ghríofa succeeds in giving a new voice to a woman who, by chance or due to a systemic repression, had lost it, by letting her speak through herself, like a ghost in the throat, “inviting the voice of another *woman* to haunt my throat a while” (10; my emphasis).

It is important to emphasise the word “woman” because women are what the novel is about. Ní Ghríofa does what she calls an “act of repair, or the attempted act of repair, I should probably say” (Patel 2022). She tries to patch the damages made by history, by a world made by men (for other men) whose actions ended up silencing entire generations of women. “This is a female text”

is the sentence that emblematically opens and closes the novel. *A Ghost in the Throat* is a female text, written by a woman for other women, not to be read only by them, but to do them justice, just as Eibhlín's lament does, a text also composed by a woman for other women and whose survival is solely due to their capability and necessity of passing down orally their tradition. As the author herself said during an interview for *The Paris Review*, her aim was to give one of the possible multiple interpretations of the experience of femininity and of a female text, acknowledging that her perspective is the "perspective of a middle-class, cis, white woman living in Ireland" (Sasseen 2021). Not only does Ní Ghríofa give life to another female text, but she also writes a feminist text. She fights against a patriarchal system through the use of words, using the text as a means of witness. She retrieves women and female texts destined to be forgotten by a forced condition of subordination. She does not carry out her fight through what she calls "feminist rage (which I absolutely do have)", but, as already said, through "acts of repair" (Patel 2022).

*A Ghost in the Throat* is also a novel about writing, a text that reflects on itself, on its own structures. Writing and translating are considered as a continuous "stitching and re-stitching" (2020a, 40) of the curtains of one's "stanzas", a word which also means "room" in Italian, letting the reader grasp a veiled reference to W.B. Yeats<sup>1</sup>. Ní Ghríofa builds parallels between translation, writing, the decoration of a room and house chores: each stanza corresponds to a room, which needs to be taken care of in every minute detail:

For months I work methodically, deliberating between synonyms, stitching and re-stitching the seams of curtains until they fall just so, letting my eye move back and forth between verbs, straightening the rugs, and polishing each linguistic ornament. Like my housework, the results of my translation are often imperfect, despite my devotion. I forget to swipe the Hoover under a chair, or I spend hours washing windows and still leave smears. (*ibidem*)

However, the metareflexion goes much deeper. Indeed, the novel has an autofictional nature. An autofictional novel is a text where the protagonist, the narrator and the writer share the same name and surname, where elements of reality and fiction intertwine and where there is stylistic and linguistic experimentation (Effé, Lawlor 2022). All three of the conditions are perfectly realised in this novel. Firstly, the homonymy is evident from the very first pages through the use of the first-person narrator and the reference to poems that can be easily recognized as Ní Ghríofa's<sup>2</sup>. Secondly, the experimentation is realised through the continuous interpolation of extracts from texts of every register: "parts of the *Caoineadh*, but also domestic lists, instructions for making paper dolls, and even, at one point, reproduced images of nineteenth-century handwriting. The text of *Ghost* is often fragmented, and its form varies from chapter to chapter" (Corser 2023, 126; italics in the original). Thirdly, the author does not mingle reality and fiction in terms of content, but of structure. As a matter of fact, the structure of the novel is revealed in the last chapter, in the very last words, when Ní Ghríofa's narration goes back, circularly, to the beginning of the text.

This time, I won't let myself begin by writing Hoover or Sheets or Mop or Pump. Instead, I'll think of new words, and then I'll follow them. As I turn the bend towards home, I find that I already know the echo with which that first page will begin.

*This is a female text.* (2020a, 282; italics in the original)

<sup>1</sup> The allusion here is to the expression "stitching and unstitching" in W.B. Yeats' poem "Adam's Curse" (Yeats 1989, 132).

<sup>2</sup> Doireann Ní Ghríofa is a bilingual Irish-English poet.

Such a revelation, that the text that has just ended was already in the mind of the author from the beginning, traps it in the autofictional genre. Indeed, such a discovery at the end changes the whole interpretation of the novel, which becomes, in the eyes of the reader, a self-conscious text, a text that, rather than hiding its own structure, prefers to self-evidently exhibit it. Such a condition reveals the autofictionality of the novel.

That is how *A Ghost in the Throat* brings together, under the light of a feminist autofiction, a variety of themes such as maternity, the Irish tradition, reading, writing, translating. In writing an autofictional female text, Ní Ghríofa manages to tie her life, maternity, and literary experience together with Eibhlín's and that of all the women whose voice and whose texts have been suppressed.

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*Alberto Mini*

William Wall, *La ballata del letto vuoto*, traduzione di Stefano Tettamanti, Roma, Nutrimenti, 2022, pp. 240. € 17.00. ISBN: 978-8-8659-4902-3.

Il capitalismo è stato l'acqua nella quale ho nuotato  
da quando sono nata e non l'ho mai messo in discussione  
(Wall 2022, 44).

*La ballata del letto vuoto* segna il felice ritorno di William Wall (Cork, 1955-) nel panorama letterario italiano, dopo il precedente romanzo *Il turno di Grace* (Nutrimenti, 2021), uscito nella traduzione di Adele D'Arcangelo in piena pandemia, circostanza che, purtroppo, ha impedito all'autore di fare un ciclo di presentazioni nel nostro paese, penalizzando la diffusione di un'opera di forte sensibilità e ispirazione poetica, che avrebbe meritato senza dubbio maggiore visibilità.

Wall, che è anche autore di racconti e di numerose raccolte poetiche, tra cui segnaliamo Le notizie sono, apparso nel 2012 per i tipi della faentina Mobydick nell'ispirata traduzione di D'Arcangelo, è, a differenza di molti suoi colleghi di lingua inglese, uno scrittore 'europeo' per formazione culturale e letteraria. Non a caso nel suo pantheon figurano non pochi autori italiani. Dante, in primis, cui Wall ha dedicato la splendida "We read The Inferno at the Beach", una delle poesie della sua raccolta più recente *Smugglers in the Underground Hug Trade. A Journal of the Plague Year* (Inverin, Doire Press, 2021). E, per quanto riguarda il Novecento e gli inizi di questo secolo, tra i suoi preferiti si impongono i nomi di Alberto Moravia, Cesare Pavese, Natalia Ginzburg, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Elsa Morante, Francesca Melandri e Paolo Cognetti.

Ma, nella Ballata del letto vuoto, apparso prima in Italia e solo nell'aprile del 2023 in Irlanda col titolo di *Empty Bed Blues* (Dublin, New Island Books, 2023), ripreso da una celebre canzone di Bessie Smith, le incursioni all'interno dell'impianto narrativo sono un omaggio ad autori di lingua inglese, in particolare Shakespeare (*Amleto e Macbeth*) e il Joyce dell'*Ulisse*, di cui Kate, una delle due protagoniste del romanzo, è una specialista. Incursioni che non presuppongono tanto una pretesa metaletteraria, quanto una saldatura, che risulta felicemente riuscita, coi temi che di volta in volta si sviluppano nel libro, quasi ad esprimere e a sottolineare la contaminazione e il dialogo tra generi letterari di epoche diverse. E, a questo proposito, è bene ricordare un'intervista rilasciata il 7 aprile 2022 da Wall ad Annalisa Volpone, autrice del saggio "La funzione Joyce nel romanzo occidentale"<sup>1</sup>, dove l'autore confessa di essere stato talmente influenzato dall'autore dell'*Ulisse* negli anni universitari e di aver trovato la sua voce così "overwhelming" da essersi spinto a un tipo di scrittura che assomigliava a una sorta di pastiche joyciano, ma di avere in seguito capito che quei tentativi non erano sostenibili: l'unica strada era l'affrancarsi completamente da quel modello, da quello stile, che ora Wall può serenamente evocare nel suo romanzo, una volta consumato ed elaborato il parricidio.

Il plot ruota attorno alla vicenda di Kate che, appena vedova, scopre la doppia vita e il tradimento del marito, che l'ha lasciata in un mare di debiti in quell'Irlanda che, dopo i fasti della cosiddetta *Celtic Tiger*, dove il Pil volava a due cifre, si ritrova a fare i conti con una crisi che Wall aveva già prefigurato in *This is the Country* (London, Hodder/Sceptre) un suo romanzo del 2005 di forte impatto sociale.

A Camogli, in Liguria, dove Kate si trasferisce alla ricerca di una verità che intuisce essere dolorosa, troverà la forza di reagire e costruire una nuova vita, grazie all'amicizia con Anna Ferrara, ex staffetta partigiana e figura di rilievo della sinistra italiana.

Da due solitudini e da due diverse sconfitte, una esistenziale, l'altra politica, nascerà un sodalizio basato sulla solidarietà che consentirà a Kate di riscrivere la propria esistenza.

Le parole chiave e i temi dominanti di questo romanzo sono l'amore, il tradimento, l'impegno e gli ideali politici, la critica del capitalismo finanziario, il debito sovrano, la Resistenza partigiana, uniti a una riflessione sulla letteratura, la traduzione, il valore del linguaggio.

William Wall si conferma scrittore *engagé*, capace di interrogarsi su alcuni temi cruciali della nostra epoca con una grande forza ideale, sullo sfondo di un paesaggio, quello ligure, dove il mare, descritto con grande maestria, diviene lo scenario su cui si stemperano le angosce e si disegna un percorso salvifico per entrambe le protagoniste: per Kate, che si affranca da un possibile naufragio esistenziale; per Anna, che ridà un senso alla sua passata militanza politica, non scevra di sconfitte, nel ruolo pedagogico nei confronti di Kate.

<sup>1</sup> Annalisa Volpone, "La funzione Joyce nel romanzo occidentale", in Massimiliano Tortora, Annalisa Volpone (a cura di), *La funzione Joyce nel romanzo occidentale*, Milano, Ledizioni, 2022, 245-268.

In un finale a sorpresa ambientato in Francia, ricco di colpi di scena, Wall, tra momenti drammatici ma anche divertenti, riesce a creare situazioni di autentica suspense, dispiegando tutto il suo talento di narratore fino all'epilogo che ci rivela il segreto custodito da Anna.

*Daniele Serafini*

Gerard Manley Hopkins, *Poesie 1875-1889*, a cura di Viola Papetti, Torino, Einaudi, 2022, pp. 290. € 17. ISBN: 978-88-06-25105-5.

Giovane di vivace intelligenza, di famiglia tradizionalmente e orgogliosamente anglicana, nel 1863 Gerard Manley Hopkins si reca a Oxford per frequentarvi l'università. Ha diciannove anni e si è già distinto nella scuola secondaria per la sua intelligenza e preparazione nel campo degli studi classici. A Oxford viene in contatto con docenti e coetanei che ruotano attorno a un'idea della fede e della religione ispirata dalle riflessioni di un prete anglicano, John Henry Newman, tese a restituire alla chiesa anglicana quella spiritualità che si era molto attutita nel tempo. Newman, che aveva fondato nel 1833 il cosiddetto Oxford Movement, nel frattempo si era convertito al cattolicesimo ed era stato nominato cardinale. La stimolante atmosfera di discussioni, dibattiti, vivaci conversazioni quotidiane, il contatto con la vulcanica personalità del Cardinale e una crisi religiosa governata da una non comune razionalità, lo conducono infine, nel 1866, alla conversione al cattolicesimo, una scelta fortemente contrastata dalla famiglia. Il giovane non soltanto non torna indietro sulla sua decisione, ma sceglie di farsi gesuita. È una scelta meditata, che cambierà completamente il corso della sua vita. Con grande disciplina e una volontà di ferro si sottoporrà a una vita di sacrificio, di umile attività pastorale in luoghi lontani dai grandi centri industriali e culturali del Paese, prevalentemente nel Galles. Infine, negli ultimi cinque anni della sua vita, ricopre il ruolo di docente universitario di classici greci e latini in Irlanda, dove morirà di tifo nel 1889 a soli quarantacinque anni.

Fedele all'impegno pastorale che si è volontariamente imposto, Hopkins decide di non dedicarsi più alla poesia, distrugge quanto ha scritto fino a quel momento, per cui quasi tutta la sua produzione giovanile è perduta: rimangono alcune poesie complete, che non erano in quel momento in suo possesso, e molti frammenti. Passano circa sette anni, finché alla fine di dicembre del 1875 *The Times* riporta la notizia di un naufragio avvenuto alla foce del Tamigi, in cui una nave proveniente dalla Germania e diretta in America si è arenata in una secca durante una tempesta e la metà dei passeggeri, anche a causa del ritardo dei soccorsi, è affogata. Fra coloro che non si sono salvati ci sono cinque suore che fuggivano dalle persecuzioni dei cattolici decretate dalle cosiddette Falk Laws. Il racconto di questa tragedia e del coraggio e della dignità con cui le suore hanno affrontato la morte lo commuovono al punto da indurlo, anche con l'incoraggiamento dei superiori, a ritornare sulla sua decisione di abbandonare del tutto la poesia. Il risultato sarà un poemetto, un'ode, di trentacinque ottave, intitolato "The Wreck of the Deutschland" (Il naufragio della Deutschland), che sostanzialmente rappresenta l'inizio di un'attività creativa più originale, più complessa e sofferta di quanto prodotto in gioventù. Quindi, non a caso, proprio da questa sequenza, Viola Papetti fa iniziare il suo lavoro di traduzione e di puntuale analisi e commento di un sostanzioso corpus, che include molte delle poesie che Hopkins continuò a inviare soprattutto all'amico Bridges fino quasi alla fine dei suoi giorni. Quello che ci è pervenuto, infatti, è dovuto alla generosità e lungimiranza di Bridges, che ebbe l'accortezza di conservare le lettere indirizzategli dal poeta, contenenti non solo le poesie che di volta in volta Hopkins sottoponeva al suo giudizio, ma anche le sue osser-

vazioni – spesso in dura polemica con l'amico – sui principi della sua poetica e il significato da attribuire a certi vocaboli e locuzioni di sua invenzione, come *inscape*, *instress* o *sprung rhythm*, che hanno dato a lungo filo da torcere ai successivi commentatori e che Viola Papetti, nelle sue note esemplari, chiarisce con lucidità a lettori esperti e meno esperti. Per la verità Bridges si decise a pubblicare tutte le poesie in suo possesso solo nel 1918, quasi trent'anni dopo la morte dell'amico. Tuttavia, l'opera ebbe un'immediata risonanza e ha continuato a esercitare il suo fascino soprattutto sui poeti di lingua inglese.

La poesia di Hopkins, indubbiamente, non è facile: il poeta mette in atto una serie di strategie tese a trasformare il testo scritto quasi in uno spartito musicale, in cui a ogni parola, a ogni sillaba è attribuito un valore di intensità e durata e il verso è governato da un ritmo variato, che non deve discostarsi molto da quello della lingua parlata. Per ottenere ciò, Hopkins si serve di una tecnica in parte derivata dal gallese *cynghanned*, ma che egli definisce *sprung rhythm*, che più che sul numero delle sillabe si affida al numero degli accenti, i quali si appoggiano sulle sillabe delle parole portatrici di significato o a cui si vuole attribuire particolare enfasi. Nelle intenzioni di Hopkins, che nelle lettere ai suoi corrispondenti, Bridges in particolare, si affanna a teorizzare con acribia, questa tecnica conferisce ai versi una speciale qualità musicale, che la lettura ad alta voce metterà in evidenza. Se questo non fosse sufficiente, di molte parole viene modificata la funzione, altre vengono create ex novo e la sintassi tradizionale viene di frequente sconvolta. Quando, però, si entra nella logica e nel meccanismo che la realizza, la sua poesia acquista un'iconicità straordinaria, una forza modulata, capace di passare in meno di un verso dalla violenza alla tenerezza, dalla disperazione all'accettazione, dalla descrizione alla contemplazione. Il lettore che sappia seguire le sue istruzioni e interpretare i segni diacritici, che Hopkins in parte prende in prestito dalla musica, riuscirà a offrire all'ascoltatore la sensazione di un "recitar cantando".

Difficile definire questo poeta, inquadralo in una categoria. Definirlo poeta religioso, pur se la componente religiosa fa parte di una sensibilità che coglie nei vari aspetti e momenti dell'esperienza individuale la presenza e l'orma del divino, sarebbe riduttivo e fuorviante, perché Hopkins resta sempre stupito e ammirato della bellezza fisica del mondo e dell'universo con una sensibilità che tuttavia non scivola mai nel languore decadente di altri suoi contemporanei; e non è mai astratto, ma sempre consapevole dell'affanno di un'umanità che per generazioni si è trascinata nel tempo con fatica ("[g]enerations have trod, have trod, have trod" (v. 5, p. 44), che Papetti traduce "[g]enerazioni hanno calpestato, calpestato, calpestato" (v. 5, p. 45), perdendo il suono di passi pesanti dell'originale), dell'umiltà paziente di artigiani, soldati, contadini, perfino del fratello laico della Compagnia di Gesù, che per tutta la vita svolse il compito di aprire e chiudere la porta del collegio di Palma nell'isola di Maiorca, Sant'Antonio Rodriguez.

Tradurre poesia è sempre un azzardo perché non si tratta soltanto di trasferire da una lingua a un'altra contenuti e concetti, ma di tenere conto di tutti quei tratti soprasedimentali (altezza del suono, intonazione, ritmo), che spesso rappresentano la sostanza, anche in termini semantici, di un testo poetico.

Viola Papetti si è misurata con il difficile compito di riprodurre nella nostra lingua polisillabica e ulteriormente dilatata dall'uso di locuzioni preposizionali quella, asciutta, contratta, di volta in volta scarna ed esuberante, talvolta oscura e criptica, del gesuita inglese. Come osservato precedentemente, il senso della sua poesia emerge soprattutto dalla vocalità, vibra nell'accostamento di suoni vocalici e consonantici, nella varietà dei ritmi, nelle coerenze del macrotesto. Papetti sceglie di liberarsi di molte locuzioni preposizionali, di ridurre la polisillabicità della lingua, di forzare il vocabolo italiano al limite delle sue possibilità espressive; infine, in presenza di parole usate più volte dal poeta in contesti diversi, sceglie di usare lo stesso

vocabolo, col risultato di rendere il lettore avvertito dell'unicità dell'ispirazione poetica. Ad esempio in "The Wreck of the Deutschland", tredicesima strofa, il turbine nevoso che spingerà la nave al suo tragico destino è sintetizzata così nel penultimo verso: "Wiry and white-fiery and whirlwind-swivelled snow" (v. 103, p. 10), si tratta di perifrasi descrittive e compendiose che si riscontrano nell'antica lirica anglosassone e gallese che Hopkins conosceva bene. Viola Papetti traduce "filosa e di bianco fuoco accesa e da turbine attorta la neve" (v. 103, p. 11). In una poesia successiva, di tutt'altro carattere, "Inversnaid", Hopkins usa di nuovo quell'aggettivo "wiry" (v. 11, p. 108), e la traduttrice a sua volta fa ricorso allo stesso aggettivo italiano, "filos[o]" (v. 11, p. 109). Si può certo obiettare al resto del verso una eccessiva espansione rispetto alla sintesi dell'originale, ma si deve dare atto che a un parallelismo la traduttrice risponde con un altro parallelismo: due participi passati (accesa/attorta) e due inversioni verbo/complemento, che trasferiscono in italiano la furia della tempesta, seppur di colore diverso. Un altro esempio: in "The Starlight Night", il poeta, estasiato dalla bellezza della notte stellata, esorta il lettore/ascoltatore e insieme sè stesso a stupirsi di fronte al nugolo di stelle sospeso nel cielo, che è reso sinteticamente con "fire-folk" (v. 2, p. 46). Papetti traduce "fire-folk" con "fuoco-folla" (v. 2, p. 47), che ha un suono diverso, ma conserva, nell'allitterazione di "f", nella preservazione dei suoni liquidi (folk/folla) e nella velare (k/c), una fedeltà sostanziale all'originale.

Altre volte la traduzione non può che essere volenterosa, proprio per l'impossibilità di rendere conto nella nostra lingua dell'accumulo di accorgimenti fonici su cui l'originale soprattutto si regge. Un esempio lo si può trovare in una strofa, la seconda di dieci, di "Penmael Pool":

You'll dare the Alp? You'll dare the skiff?-  
 Each sport has here its tackle and tool:  
 Come, plant the staff by Cadair cliff;  
 Come, swing the sculls on Penmaen Pool. (vv. 5-8, p. 32)

Osi l'alpe? Lanci lo skiff?-  
 Ogni sport qui trova attrezzo è strumento:  
 su, pianta il rampone sulla rupe di Cadair;  
 su, ruota il remo nel laghetto di Penmaen. (vv. 5-8, p. 33)

Si confrontino i due testi: le parole ci sono tutte! Cosa manca allora? Proprio ciò a cui Hopkins teneva di più: il ritmo, il suono, il gioco delle rime, le allitterazioni.

Si tratta di una poesia leggera, scritta nell'agosto 1876 per il libro degli ospiti di un hotel in Galles, in cui ogni strofa mette in evidenza qualcosa di bello, di attraente nell'hotel e nel paesaggio tutto attorno, che Hopkins rende desiderabile proprio per la musicalità dei versi. La traduzione riporta tutto a dati di fatto, l'emozione e il desiderio sono scomparsi. Non si può far carico di ciò alla traduttrice. La scelta, per esempio, di conservare a ogni costo le rime alternate e tutti gli accorgimenti ritmici che il poeta mette in atto, sarebbe risultata intollerabile e non avrebbe salvato il messaggio. Forse è proprio per questa oggettiva difficoltà che non compare nell'antologia una delle ultime poesie, a cui peraltro Hopkins teneva in modo particolare, "The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo", per la quale, in una lettera a Dixon, uno dei suoi più importanti corrispondenti, annotava: "I never did anything more musical" (p. 241)<sup>1</sup>, e che più che letta prevedeva che venisse cantata da un coro, come aveva fatto in precedenza Beethoven con i versi di Schiller.

<sup>1</sup>Catherine Philips, ed. (1991), *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Selected Letters*, Oxford, Oxford UP.



Hopkins non è stato tradotto, se non parzialmente, in Italia, mentre moltissimi sono gli studi critici che gli sono stati dedicati, come si desume dalla “bibliografia essenziale”, peraltro piuttosto corposa, cui Viola Papetti dedica una sezione a conclusione di un’articolata introduzione in cui oltre a una dettagliata biografia del gesuita inglese si offre al lettore un’analisi tecnica ed estetica della sua poesia. Ma ciò che caratterizza e dà particolare valore a questa edizione sono le note a commento delle singole poesie, che non si fermano – come solitamente accade – alla chiarificazione di luoghi particolarmente oscuri del singolo componimento, ma riportano frammenti dei commenti, giustificazioni e precisazioni sulla sua poesia, tratti dalle lettere di Hopkins ai suoi corrispondenti, a cui si aggiungono note critiche della curatrice, che riprendono, ampliano e contestualizzano alcuni concetti già esaminati più in generale nell’introduzione. Per ragioni di spazio, queste note sono stampate in caratteri piccoli, seppur tipograficamente chiari, e con spaziatura minima, il che può rappresentare un problema per quanti abbiano problemi di vista.

Il volume contiene in appendice la recensione di Giorgio Manganelli del volume di Alberto Castelli, *Liriche religiose inglesi*, in cui lo studioso si sofferma, in cinque compendiose pagine, sulla storia del cattolicesimo inglese nell’Ottocento, “antivittoriano e antiromantico” (p. 280) con una punta di “follia del barocco” (p. 281), alla cui base Manganelli individua “una saldis-sima razionalità” (*ibidem*). A Hopkins il critico dedica solo una mezza pagina, che però va letta all’interno dei presupposti teorici di cui si è detto. Eppure, in poche fulminee righe Manganelli individuava – nel 1948 – l’essenza del linguaggio del gesuita inglese, “estatico ed abbagliante”, “oscuro non torbido” (p. 282), e la concentrazione del suo pensiero che gli suggeriva sorprendentemente l’accostamento a un Tommaso Campanella, “non da amare, da temere!” (*ibidem*). Accoglierlo più da vicino, anche per effetto di antologie critiche come questa, avrà nel frattempo attenuato quel timore, accresciuto l’amore.

*Giuseppe Serpillo*

Anne Fogarty, Marisol Morales-Ladrón (eds), *Deirdre Madden. New Critical Perspectives*, Manchester, Manchester UP, 2022, pp. 280. £ 80. ISBN: 978-1-5261-1892-9.

Among the contemporary Irish writers whose voices resonate in the landscape of fiction and who certainly deserve more exhaustive critical attention, Deirdre Madden features conspicuously. An important and highly admired author, Madden has devoted herself to the art of fiction, and, unlike other writers, exclusively to the novel form. Over the span of more than thirty years, she has explored the time of the Troubles, the post-Troubles period and the changes of contemporary Ireland, shedding light on the themes of violence, trauma, memory, dislocation, identity, as well as the role of art and the artist. She is a writer who cannot be easily classified and who resists the label of Northern Irish writer: as she claims in the interview closing the present volume, she feels “profoundly European”, having travelled extensively across Europe and lived in different countries for many years. This has had a strong impact on her relationship with Ireland: “I understood Ireland better for having lived in Europe, and I love Ireland” (234).

The collection of essays edited by Anne Fogarty and Marisol Morales-Ladrón, *Deirdre Madden. New Critical Perspectives*, is a long-awaited contribution that fills a gap in the field of Irish critical studies, as so far a great variety of essays has appeared in international collections and academic journals, but no specific study of her fiction has been published. The title itself is self-consciously revealing of the novelty embedded in the undertaking of this work by experts in Irish studies, as the time has come for a diversity of critical perspectives in the analysis and

assessment of Deirdre Madden. These are all new essays especially commissioned for the volume, and the individual studies offer a variety of broad cultural and scientific approaches covering her *oeuvre* as a whole and creating a stimulating ensemble focussing on the complexity of her fiction.

The volume has a tripartite structure, each part dealing with a specific thematic facet. Notably, they are framed by a Preface by Frank McGuinness and the concluding interview, which acts as an apt synopsis or compendium of the contents of the volume.

The title of Frank McGuinness's Preface, "Deirdre Madden: a jagged symmetry", plays with oxymoron and antithesis and paves the way for the present book. The Preface points out Madden's "original voice" (xiii), which is actually the purpose of the whole volume whose essays explore the uniqueness of Madden's fiction. Touching in particular the novels *Hidden Symptoms*, *Nothing is Black* and *Authenticity*, it provides an overview of themes and issues – the North, identity, art, failure, torments – as well as cross-references and intersections with other writers, notably Virginia Woolf, Jean Rhys, as well as Jane Austen for the use of details. The colloquial opening – "She knows her stuff, Deirdre Madden" (*ibidem*) – highlights the rootedness in everyday life that characterises her fiction. McGuinness emphasises the "strong fabrics" of her novels (*ibidem*) and his lexical choice etymologically recalls the skill of making and the artist's work, from the Latin "faber", maker, thus underlining Madden's self-conscious concern with art. McGuinness's use of the word "stuff" is repeated in the second line and recurs in the final paragraph, a stylistic choice that creates a circular pattern. Madden is a writer obsessed with time in a variety of ways: past, present and future constantly, but, as McGuinness claims, she is also a writer of her time. Secrets abound in her fiction often to remain undisclosed. Complexity of themes and plots and narrative control characterise Madden's work whose greatness for McGuinness lies in her awareness that "some things can never be repaired" (xiv).

In the "Introduction", editors Anne Fogarty and Marisol Morales-Ladrón emphasise Madden's peculiar and exclusive devotion to the novel form. Defined as a "distinguished and sophisticated" novelist (1), she has published eight novels, three books for children and edited a collection of Irish short stories. A brief round-up of Madden's novels, prizes and recognitions anticipates the intertwining of themes in her fiction, her Troubles and post-Troubles novels, in which "the problems of existence" and "philosophical questions about the meaning of life" (2) recur constantly. Furthermore, the analysis of a variety of anthologies published between 1985 and 2017 help to contextualise Madden's position in the cultural climate of contemporary literature in Ireland, North and South, showing the marginalization of female writers from which also Madden has suffered, in spite of the reputation she has obtained internationally.

In particular, part of the "Introduction" is devoted to the existing critical reception of Madden's work, with specific references to at least a dozen published essays whose approaches and standpoints are analysed thoroughly as a form of assessment, but also as a springboard for the "new critical perspectives" the volume provides. This acts as a form of presentation of the essays contained in the volume and of the parts in which the collection is organised.

The essays of the three thematic sections occasionally intersect, thus providing an exhaustive overview and a diversity of viewpoints. Part I is concerned with "Memory, trauma, and the Troubles" and is devoted to the Troubles novels; Part II turns to "Art and objects", thus focussing on Madden's *Künstlerromane*, while Part III looks at "Home and place" in Madden's fiction. The topics thus cover in detail different and multifarious aspects of the writer's *oeuvre*.

The four essays in Part I take into account the Troubles novels *Hidden Symptoms* and *One by One in the Darkness* as trauma novels, and in their diversity of approach and analysis tackle the impact of the legacy of the Troubles on families and individuals, as well as the role of memory in the process of recent losses. In her sensitive essay, Stephanie Lehner deals with

memory and temporality in *Hidden Symptoms* and *One by One in the Darkness*, adding also the Celtic Tiger novel *Time Present and Time Past*. Characters are haunted by the past and by past memories, and memory images call into question the passing of time. She engages in the relevance of the visual quality of Madden's fiction and in photographs in particular, which in the three novels work as a form of memory relationship to the past. She states that Madden's Troubles novels are pervaded with Benjamin's concern with the past in the exploration of temporality, memory and in the creation of memory images. Lehner exploits the notion of "imagetext" to introduce the visual element as a marker for the irretrievable past and the acceptance of the pastness of the past.

*Hidden Symptoms* and *One by One in the Darkness* are also discussed in Elizabeth Chase's contribution, which sheds light on the issue of loss and memory concentrating on the ethics of remembrance. Chase claims that Madden's novels go beyond political themes and making reference to Levinas's work on ethics and the attention to human reality, she points out that small domestic objects are emblematic of "everyday pain" (36). The topic of the trauma Theresa goes through at the death of her twin brother in *Hidden Symptoms* returns in *One by One in the Darkness*, in which the Quinn sisters respond differently to the trauma of their father's killing. The memories of the dead are a way to commemorate the past and Madden chooses the everyday, the little things, as the ethical relationship between individuals.

Catriona Clutterbuck examines the issue of loss in *Hidden Symptoms*, but rather than sharing the negative conclusions of other critics, she considers the novel a true *Bildungsroman*, as it explores a "journey towards healing" (50), no matter how hard and demanding. Referring to Thomas Attig's studies of grief and mourning, Clutterbuck contends that a state of loss can be conducive to a process of transformation and self-discovery. She describes Theresa's entrapment in her private sorrow after the death of her brother in a route from grief to "coming to terms with loss" (55) and accepting her dead brother's faults. Interestingly, Clutterbuck pays great attention to the presence of mirrors in the novel, which she considers "synonyms for artworks" (57), thus anticipating the relevance of art and works of art in later novels by Madden. With *Hidden Symptoms* Madden starts to engage with the exploration of loss as a path towards a full acceptance of reality.

*One by One in the Darkness* is the object of Brian Cliff's analysis in terms of class and multiplicity, which turn out to be interconnected in the background of Northern Ireland's political divide. These are part of the "ambivalent qualities of the novel" (66) and describing class and class tensions allows Madden to avoid Northern Ireland's political range and commonplace elements of the Troubles fiction. Cliff takes into account these issues, which come to the fore in the Quinn family with the parents' social division: humble Charlie and middle-class ambitious Emily. Class turns out to be central in the context of the Troubles as a feature of diversity and multiplicity within the Northern Catholic community. Madden exploits class issues to emphasise the sense of insecurity of a specific historical time. The same sense of uncertainty emerges in the narrative choice of clarifying the effects and consequences of events rather than events *per se* – Charlie's murder for example is not described but continues to reverberate in the family's traumatised minds.

Part II, "Art and objects", is engaged with Deirdre Madden's *Künstlerromane* and the author's deep concern with art and the role of the artist. The five essays display particular attention to *Authenticity*, but also consider *Nothing is Black* and *Molly Fox's Birthday*, where figures of artists and issues of creativity predominate.

In this line, Sylvie Mikowski focuses on objects as realistic elements and as elements pertaining to the creative process in a variety of novels, especially *Nothing is Black*, *Molly*

*Fox's Birthday* and *Authenticity*. With a wide range of references to realist novels, both English and French, Mikowski sharply shows Madden's production as part of the realist tradition, in which objects are a way for constructing characters. In the mimetic stance, what they possess, where they live, the clothes they wear are signifiers for personality. In her attention to social changes, Madden sees in the need to accumulate things a sign of materialism as a result of economic development. In *Nothing is Black* the contrast between Claire's sparse life in Donegal and Nuala's obsessive shopping and stealing is the tangible feature of a materialistic life she intends to criticize. However, objects are also possessed with a specific aesthetic principle which becomes part of artistic production. Therefore, Mikowski claims, objects are also connected to creativity in Madden's work. A case in point is represented by Julia's artistic installations in *Authenticity*, a novel that remarkably investigates artistic creation and reflects on the capacity of the artist to reach a higher level of truth and authenticity. Through the choice of characters of visual artists as in *Nothing is Black* or actors as in *Molly Fox's Birthday*, Madden's *Künstlerromane* are self-reflecting and provide insight into Madden's own reflection on her own writing.

Two essays focus on *Authenticity* from different perspectives. Heather Ingman's analysis follows the steps of her critical research interests in recent years, concentrating on ageing and the passing of time in the novel. After contextualising the critical background of ageing studies and especially ageing studies in Irish writing, she chooses to discuss issues of identity and authenticity exploring the life of the artist. In particular, Ingman considers the different ways in which three specific characters in the novel, Dan, William and Roderic, face the ageing process and the passing of time.

*Authenticity* is also the centre of Hedwig Schwall's detailed psychoanalytic reading of the novel focussing on the psychological aspects of creativity. She defines *Authenticity* as a *Künstlerroman par excellence*, in which all the artists featured wish to find their own way as artists facing their traumas and looking for their unconscious through objects connecting them to their childhood experiences. Schwall resorts to Bollas's theory of objects relations and follows her analysis with the reaction to received objects of art and to produced objects of art. With particular attention to Julia's installation, Schwall points out that Madden's novel represents the individual's attempt to find their real self.

In the section dedicated to art, Teresa Casal characteristically goes back to the Northern Ireland novels to address the ethical question of the role of art in depicting sectarian violence. The title of her contribution takes up a double question that obsesses Theresa in *Hidden Symptoms*. The ethical question "what can we do?" is accompanied by the aesthetic question "What does art do?" in front of violence perpetrated by man on other human beings. Her analysis of the Troubles novels, *Hidden Symptoms* and *One by One in the Darkness*, is followed by *Molly Fox's Birthday*, written after the Good Friday Agreement. All of them imply that the reader is ethically and aesthetically challenged to consider both the process of grieving following trauma as well as "kinship with perpetrators of sectarian violence" (145) The reader's aesthetic experience cannot be separated from the novels' ethical sources.

Animals and objects are the concern of Julie Anne Stevens, whose study looks at Madden's children's books in the context of her adult fiction. Childhood and childhood memories feature in novels such as *Time Present and Time Past* and *Remembering Light and Stone*, and her children's books display cross-connections with her novels in terms of episodes, images, objects and animals. Thus, Madden reuses elements of her adult fiction in *Snakes' Elbows*, *Jasper and the Green Marvel* and *Thanks for Telling me, Emily*, such as the little cat as well as a Japanese fan Aisling used to possess as a child in *Remembering Light and Stone*.

Stevens opens her study making reference to publications for children in the twentieth century, in particular Edith Somerville's *The Story of the Discontented Little Elephant* and Elizabeth Bowen's *The Good Tiger*, whose worlds return in Madden's children's books. Robert Louis Stevenson's essay "Child Play" is analysed in order to contextualize children's perception. Animals have a central position – cats, dogs, parrots, owls are talking animals in the tradition of children's literature. However, Madden's animals are like objects, they can be easily transported and easily bought and sold, thus becoming commodities. Madden's venture into the world of children's books highlights the essential quality childhood and memory bear in her *oeuvre*, which characterises Stevens's essay as a relevant investigation of Madden's production.

The essays in Part III are concerned with home, in an extended sense, and place. As Madden herself mentions in the interview closing this section, home is a wide conception, ranging from country to language, house, possessions, landscape (235), and the choice of this topic in the volume highlights the centrality of home in her fiction.

Jerry White reads in the 1994 novel *Nothing is Black* an introduction to the changes and modernisation Ireland undergoes in the 1990s in relation to the European Union and to the impact the Celtic Tiger period will have on the country. White considers the novel "quasi-prophetic" (165) in the way it portrays a new middle class relying more and more on consumerism, a gradual secularisation and internationalisation. The character of Anna hailing from The Hague and choosing to come to Donegal is emblematic of a new European perspective, while Nuala looks at both foreign tourists and locals when opening a fashionable restaurant in Dublin. Claire, a painter, has moved to rural Donegal in search for a new way of seeing. The three main characters have all left home looking for a different kind of stability.

On the other hand, Elke D'hoker examines the different notions of home, the different forms home may take and the way in which they are deployed in Madden's novels. Pointing out the centrality of the issue of home in her fiction, D'hoker takes into account a variety of novels concerned with critical thinkings of home referring to the theoretical work of Mallet, Bachelard, Blunt and Dowling among others. Different notions and definitions of home as place, land, but also experiences and emotions underlie her "spatial imaginaries" of home (181), which may point out images of loneliness and alienation for example in *Hidden Symptoms*, whose opening image of the Bavarian barometer epitomises an unhomely home. Unhomy homes are extended to the city divided by sectarian violence, and homelessness is even more evident in *The Birds of the Innocent Wood* in which the destruction by fire of the house leaves Jane homeless. Home as house, family, neighbourhood, city, land, country and motherland (185) is variously present and variously developed in Madden's fiction, and D'hoker shows that home moves from rejection in *Hidden Symptoms* to the exploration of new forms of home in *Remembering Light and Stone*, *Molly Fox's Birthday* and *Authenticity*. Notably, if home is both fragile and solid at the same time (193), D'hoker also detects a feature of the unfamiliar in the issue of home; quoting from *One by One in the Darkness* she discusses the use of the word uncanny (189). This anticipates the following essay by Anne Fogarty on the "architectural uncanny" in Madden's fiction.

In fact, Fogarty sharply connects the issue of home to Gothic traits, themes and effects in *The Birds of the Innocent Wood* and *Remembering Light and Stone*. She examines the presence of Gothic patterns in both novels, which she considers "ambiguous and perplexing" (200) because haunted by family secrets which remain unexplored and/or unexplained. Without being Gothic novels *per se*, *The Birds of the Innocent Wood* and *Remembering Light and Stone* display hauntings, secrets, doublings or the divided self, and in particular houses, whether they be cottages, farms or flats, as the site of the "architectural uncanny", as introduced in the title of her essay.

Madden's Gothic traits are "protean" (*ibidem*) according to Fogarty, because intertwined with other themes and forms of narration; she claims that the Gothic is meant to emphasise the darkness of modern-day life and the sense of non-belonging of the main character. Thus, the uncanny house embodies the alienation of the heroines.

In the final essay of Part IV Derek Hand turns his attention to *Authenticity*, *Molly Fox's Birthday* and *Time Present and Time Past* in relation to the Celtic Tiger novel. He claims that the three novels respond to the Celtic Tiger period, characterised by speed, transformation and materialistic prosperity in a challenging way, relying on "stillness" (216) in plot and form, reflection on identity and attention to art and its nature with a focus on the private. For Hand, the novels consider and reflect on "living lives" (215) in relation to art as an essential aspect of existence.

*Deirdre Madden. New Critical Perspectives* closes with an interview and a full bibliography. "In conversation with Deirdre Madden" is the title Marisol Morales-Ladrón gives to what really is a conversation with its fluid rhythm and quiet pace. It opens with references to brief biographical details to move to Madden's childhood in a rural area in Northern Ireland, which did not entirely shelter her from the crudest features of the Troubles, bombs, barricades, road blocks, check points and helicopters. Memories of the Troubles as a child are split between the country and the city, they remain alive, and with her novel *One by One in the Darkness* – she says – "I wanted to bear witness to that time" (232). Madden discusses her move to Dublin to study at Trinity and her extensive travelling throughout Europe, which helped her to understand her country better. Literary influences and the prominence of art in her novels are accompanied by reflections on family and family ties, home, and her personal relation to objects – "a portal to the past" (239). Space is devoted to her method of work, her fascination with writing in longhand and the "paraphernalia" (236) of writing, such as notebooks and pens; her interest in visual arts and crafts lead her to consider writing as "an artisan activity above all" (237), an act of making. Interestingly, the pattern of the interview reflects the organization of the entire volume, thus creating the same circular pattern that characterises Frank McGuinness's opening Preface.

In its variety of essays, marked by critical sensitivity and careful and detailed analysis, *Deirdre Madden. New Critical Perspectives* is a very welcome and significant contribution, it provides an insight into the hues and varieties of Madden's work, thus highlighting the work of a writer whose work covers a wide range of issues with a typically subtle tone. It is therefore an essential tool for the academic working on Irish fiction and for the student looking for clear exposition and substantial investigation.

*Giovanna Tallone*

George Bernard Shaw, *Teatro*, a cura di Francesco Marroni, Firenze-Milano, Bompiani, 2022, pp. 3313, € 70. ISBN: 978-88-301-0454-9.

Da profondo conoscitore della società e della letteratura vittoriana ed edoardiana, Francesco Marroni ha portato a termine un impegnativo progetto editoriale su un eminente vittoriano / anti-vittoriano, George Bernard Shaw, curando per Bompiani un corposo volume, *Teatro*, che raccoglie tredici tra le più significative commedie del drammaturgo irlandese, insieme alle relative, lunghe e controverse *Prefaces*. Richard Ambrosini, Raffaella Antinucci, Benedetta Bini, Elisa Bizzotto, Fiorenzo Fantaccini, Loredana Salis, Enrico Terrinoni, insieme allo stesso Marroni – tutti specialisti di studi edoardiani, vittoriani, e/o irlandesisti – hanno contribuito al volume con note introduttive, note ai testi e nuove traduzioni (a fronte dei testi originali).

La scelta dei *plays* ha una sua *ratio* che privilegia la prima produzione shaviana, pur comprendendo i capolavori dell'età matura, fino ad arrivare a *Saint Joan* (1923). La raccolta si apre con gli esordi drammaturgici. Le prime raccolte di commedie sono presentate integralmente: i *Plays Unpleasant – Widowers' Houses* (1885-1892), *The Philanderer* (1893), e *Mrs Warren's Profession* (1893) – i *Plays Pleasant – Arms and the Man* (1894), *Candida: A Mystery* (1894) e *The Man of Destiny* (1895) – i *Three Plays for Puritans – The Devil's Disciple* (1897), *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1898) e *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* (1900).

Per tutte e tre le raccolte sono presenti anche le verbose e “farraginose” – come ebbe a definirle James Joyce sul *Piccolo della Sera* (Marroni, p. xxviii) – prefazioni a posteriori, i *tutorials* del *predicatore*, intesi a fornire la giusta “lettura” del nuovo teatro di idee: come nota Marroni nella sua introduzione generale al volume, “con [...] spirito militante, [...] con la tensione creativa dell'artista-filosofo, [...] Shaw scrive le sue prefazioni [...] che [...] rivelano quanto fosse ossessivamente interessato a orientare l'interpretazione delle sue opere e, ancor più, ad esercitare una sorta di controllo poliziesco sulla loro ricezione” (p. xxvi).

Nel volume non potevano chiaramente mancare gli altri capolavori shaviani: *Man and Superman: a Comedy and a Philosophy* (1901-1903), introdotta dall'*Epistola dedicatoria* e seguita dal *Manuale del rivoluzionario*; *John Bull's Other Island* (1904) di ambientazione irlandese, con due prefazioni ed una breve epigrafe; *Pygmalion* (1912) con la breve introduzione e il lungo brano in prosa in chiosa; *Saint Joan* (1923).

Le oltre 3300 pagine (tale mole rende il volume non troppo agevole da leggere) di *Teatro* di George Bernard Shaw sono corredate da una densa introduzione generale al volume dello stesso Marroni e, per ciascuna commedia, da un'accurata introduzione, da note e da apparati critici a cura di ciascun traduttore. Il testo originale che viene riprodotto a fronte delle nuove traduzioni è quello dello specialista Dan H. Laurence edito per la prestigiosa collana Penguin Classics.

*Teatro* di George Bernard Shaw è strutturato con coerenza e uniformità. Ogni nota introduttiva segue lo stesso schema: una sezione in cui viene narrata la vicenda, una per la storia del testo, una per le prospettive critiche e una per la fortuna sulle scene. Tutte sono seguite da almeno una fittissima pagina di riferimenti bibliografici. Ogni curatore introduce il testo contestualizzandolo nella temperie culturale, sociale e politica che lo ha ispirato, e dà conto della fortuna delle rappresentazioni e/o eventuali pubblicazioni tanto nel contesto anglofono coevo e più recente, tanto in quello italiano.

Notevole il lavoro di recupero delle informazioni relative proprio alle varie rappresentazioni dei *plays* e alla fortuna del teatro shaviano in patria (quale patria?) ed in Italia. Le sezioni dedicate alle rappresentazioni delle opere di Shaw sono accurate e dettagliate. Tutte le introduzioni danno conto degli allestimenti delle singole opere, menzionando sempre i debutti sulle scene, gli eventuali problemi legati alla censura, e le rappresentazioni successive più prestigiose e degne di nota, e le traduzioni italiane. I curatori riportano anche le produzioni televisive della RAI (ad esempio Marroni, p. 776; Bini, p. 373; Salis p. 1105) e quelle per la BBC (Bini, p. 372; Ambrosini, p. 613, per citarne alcuni). Ambrosini segnala anche il collegamento alla pagina *youtube* sulla quale si trova quella che definisce come tra le più godibili e recenti rappresentazioni di *Arms and the Man* (datata 1989). Ove presenti, vengono menzionati anche i radiodrammi, come quello di cui dà conto Fiorenzo Fantaccini per *La conversione del Capitano Brassbound*, allestito per celebrare il centenario della nascita di Shaw, il 29 maggio del 1956 sul secondo programma della radio, introdotto da una presentazione di Gabriele Baldini (p. 1549). Impossibile, chiaramente, dare il giusto credito a tutte le indicazioni relative a questo meticoloso lavoro di recupero.

Oltre a delineare la fortuna degli allestimenti dei drammi, tutte le prefazioni concorrono ad illustrare la natura del teatro Shaviano, e le componenti che lo caratterizzano. Ricorrono

riferimenti all'influenza della "modernissima drammaturgia di Ibsen" (Bini, p. 365) che porta Shaw, autore nel 1891 del saggio *La quintessenza dell'Ibsenismo*, "a quell'anticonformismo volutamente immorale il cui obiettivo sono i condizionamenti di una società che non si mette in discussione" (Salis, p. 197). Proprio al modello di Ibsen si può ascrivere l'epilogo di *Pygmalion*, un finale anti-romantico, a volte osteggiato dal pubblico e dalle compagnie teatrali (cf. Antinucci, p. 2644).

Non mancano riferimenti puntuali agli altri modelli e fonte di ispirazione dell'arte e del pensiero shaviano, da Wagner a Carlyle da Bunyan a Nietzsche. Si può leggere Shaw come Nietzsche *sui generis* che mette in scena "superuomini e superdonne ai quali si deve l'evoluzione del genere umano" (Bizzotto, p. 1281), manifestazioni di quella *life force* "che l'autore riconosce negli individui che aspirano costantemente a migliorare se stessi" (*ibidem*). Nietzsche è "modello da imitare" in quanto "filosofo iconoclasta [che] non temeva di denunciare le ipocrisie dei potenti, una sorta di controparte moderna della figura di Socrate" (Marroni, p. 1729). Tra gli altri modelli, viene identificato un altro eminente vittoriano, John Ruskin, non a caso allievo di Carlyle, al quale (più che a Nietzsche) va probabilmente ascritta la visione Shaviana del superuomo, visione che emerge in particolare dall'idea del culto degli eroi, tra i quali si identificano Dante e Shakespeare (cf. il saggio *Ruskin's Politics* del 1921). E proprio Shakespeare viene contrapposto però a John Bunyan, quando "in occasione della versione teatrale del *Viaggio del pellegrino*, portata sulle scene di Londra nel dicembre 1896, Shaw scrisse una recensione che esaltava la grandezza di Bunyan a detrimento del valore di Shakespeare" (Marroni, p. xxvi), uno dei tanti paradossi shaviani che segnano lo stile del drammaturgo. Allo stesso modo, si può leggere Shaw come Wagneriano. Wagner viene visto come grande innovatore e indirettamente come predicatore. Il drammaturgo anglo-irlandese sostiene nel *The Perfect Wagnerite* (1883) che *l'Anello del Nibelungo* sia un riferimento alla classe operaia, dove lo gnomo che ruba l'anello altro non è che la rappresentazione della borghesia che usurpa il frutto del sudore della *working class*. Del resto, quello che Shaw diceva di Wagner si può attribuire a Shaw stesso: "Wagner can be quoted against himself almost without limit"<sup>1</sup>. Il paradosso, tanto caro a Shaw, contagia anche la lettura dei modelli.

Dalle pagine introduttive dei drammi emerge la figura dello scrittore militante e riformatore (p. xxvi), del predicatore (che ha come riferimento il già citato John Bunyan) e, soprattutto, come Shaw stesso si definiva, del moralista: "I am a moral revolutionary interested [...] in the struggle between human vitality and the artificial system of morality, and distinguishing, not between capitalist and proletarian, but between moralist and natural historian"<sup>2</sup>. Moralista e politico impegnato, Shaw trova nel teatro "un veicolo straordinario di satira e di denuncia" (Salis, p. 1096) contro "gli incancreniti stereotipi della moralità borghese [dimostrando] l'inadeguatezza dei codici etici e religiosi vigenti e la manchevolezza delle soluzioni convenzionali" (Fantaccini, p. 1539). Del resto, come sostenuto nella prefazione a *Mrs Warren's Profession*, l'arte altro non è che uno strumento in mano al moralizzatore: "I am convinced that fine art is the subtlest, the most seductive, the most effective instrument of moral propaganda in the world" (p. 384).

I curatori del volume danno largo spazio anche alla controversa questione del femminismo shaviano, presentando le donne delle commedie, spesso protagoniste della scena, come manifestazione dell'avversione per quella che viene definita la "womanly woman" (p. 56; p. 366). Così, la Signora Warren, protagonista di uno dei primi drammi, si distanzia dal classico cliché della *fallen woman*, o donna con un passato, e rappresenta invece la rivendicazione di

<sup>1</sup> G.B. Shaw (2021), *Major Cultural Essays*, ed. by David Kornhaber, Oxford, Oxford UP, p. 203.

<sup>2</sup> Cit. in Eric Bentley (1960), *Bernard Shaw*, London, Methuen and Co, p. 72.



una posizione di donna ricca e, per così dire, in carriera. Un attacco ad una società che non permette alle donne di avere una professione allo stesso tempo dignitosa e appagante, e che le renda indipendenti. Si tratta però di un femminismo che non ha mancato di suscitare critiche e polemiche, come quelle relative alla rappresentazione del personaggio di Giovanna D'Arco, definita da T.S. Eliot nel 1924 come "una riformatrice borghese [...] collocata su un gradino di poco più alto rispetto a quello occupato dalla suffragista signora Punkhurst" (citato da Terrinoni, p. 2903) e descritta, più recentemente, da Gainor<sup>3</sup> come "rappresentante mascolinizzata, ovvero poco femminile, della *New Woman*" (Terrinoni, p. 2903).

Tra le letture proposte dalle prefazioni dei curatori non può mancare quella anti-colonialista, rintracciabile chiaramente in *John Bull's Other Island*, dove il personaggio di Larry Doyle, definito come "il più sottile studio sulle emozioni dell'esule irlandese prima di Joyce" (Fantaccini, p. 2271), fornisce una analisi della condizione della colonia *next door* vista dalla prospettiva distaccata di chi ha saputo abbandonare *l'altra isola* (come lo stesso Shaw, del resto). Questo, sebbene Shaw parlasse in termini diversi della propria *irlandesità*, considerandola come chiave di lettura esterna rispetto alla società inglese (e non irlandese). Nascere in Irlanda dà il vantaggio di poter avere uno sguardo esterno, e dunque obiettivo, sull'Inghilterra, ma con il completo dominio della lingua. Allo stesso tempo, però, emigrare da Dublino consente di avere la stessa lucidità nei confronti della *Other Island*.

La lettura anti-coloniale vale anche per altri *plays*, come *Caesar and Cleopatra*, interpretato come riferimento al coevo (rispetto alla composizione del dramma) conflitto tra Egitto Britannico e Sudan (Bizzotto, p. 1284) e in cui la menzione "Egypt for the Egyptians" (p. 1360) richiama per analogia la frase "Ireland for the Irish". Allo stesso modo, anche *Candida* si presta ad una lettura anti-coloniale, proponendo la microeconomia e i rapporti di potere all'interno della famiglia come specchio della macroeconomia del capitalismo globale che ha prodotto il colonialismo con le conseguenti nefandezze provocate dal proliferare degli stereotipi di genere e razzisti<sup>4</sup>.

L'apparato critico e paratestuale fornisce dunque una esauriente panoramica sul percorso intellettuale e artistico dell'autore, dalle posizioni politiche fabiane e socialiste, alla questione morale, dall'idea di arte drammatica come anti-idealista e anti-romantica, alle teorie dei *natural leaders*. *Teatro* di George Bernard Shaw ripropone in Italia un grande autore in veste linguistica nuova. La scelta delle opere drammatiche più rappresentative e delle relative prefazioni offre una visione d'insieme su uno dei più grandi drammaturghi a cavallo tra Ottocento e Novecento. Da questo bel volume emerge la figura dell'iconoclasta e del moralista, dell'eretico vittoriano anti-vittoriano che pur di scioccare adottava posizioni estreme, incappando talvolta anche in sviste madornali, come il primo giudizio su Mussolini e Hitler. Emerge comunque "l'immagine di una personalità straordinaria, che, con la sua prosa impeccabile ed efficace, con i plurimi universi creati dalla sua immaginazione sempre in movimento, ebbe l'ambizione di mettere in scena la relatività di tutte le cose" (Marroni, p. xxxv).

*Fabio Luppi*

<sup>3</sup> J.E. Gainor (1991), *Shaw's Daughters: Dramatic and Narrative Constructions of Gender*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. T.C. Davis (1998), "Shaw's Interstices of Empire: Decolonizing at Home and Abroad", in Christopher Innes (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to George Bernard Shaw*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, p. 219.

Alan Titley, *Arriva Godot: Tragicommedia in due atti*, cura e traduzione dall'irlandese di Rosangela Barone, Fasano, Schena Editore, 2022, pp. 127. € 15. ISBN: 978-88-6806-303-0.

Arriva Godot, proclama il titolo della *pièce* scritta in gaelico da Alan Titley, romanziere, drammaturgo, accademico e presentatore televisivo irlandese. Godot arriva alla fine del primo atto (il sottotitolo, che ripropone quello della versione inglese che Beckett fece di *En attendant Godot* è “Tragicommedia in due atti”). Verso la fine del secondo atto però muore, fulminato sulla sedia elettrica, ma poi resuscita, vestito alla Groucho Marx, e se ne esce di scena a bordo di un'automobile. Dopo di che arriva il Ragazzo, quello che già nel testo beckettiano diceva che Godot non era potuto venire (“ma verrà domani”), e ripete la stessa fatidica frase a Vladimiro ed Estragone. I quali, stupefatti, dicono che ciò non è possibile, che lo hanno visto, che gli hanno parlato. Sta a vedere che colui che si è presentato come Godot non era affatto Godot. Le cose stanno come diceva Beckett: oggi non è potuto venire, verrà domani. O dobbiamo credere, invece, che il Ragazzo si è sbagliato, che Godot era venuto davvero?

Titley aveva scritto a Beckett per informarlo della prossima messinscena di *Arriva Godot* al Peacock (la sala teatrale più piccola dell'Abbey Theatre) e aveva ricevuto da Beckett una cortese risposta, con l'augurio di una buona riuscita dello spettacolo. Non è affatto detto, tuttavia, come riconosce Titley stesso, che la conoscenza non particolarmente profonda che Beckett aveva del gaelico gli avesse potuto consentire di capire bene il testo di *Tagann Godot* (questo il titolo originale di *Arriva Godot*).

La *pièce* di Titley comincia là dove quella di Beckett finisce. Anche questa volta il tentativo di impiccagione fallisce, ma per ragioni diverse: all'ultimo momento, come in un *melodrama*, prima che Estragone possa tirare la corda per impiccare Vladimiro, arriva il Ragazzo, il quale annuncia che Godot sarà lì “tra un paio di minuti”. Anche questa volta, per il momento, non sarà così. Al suo posto arrivano invece (metamorfosi del duo beckettiano di Lucky e Pozzo) tre farseschi personaggi, due uomini e una donna, la quale è vestita come una valletta della televisione, oppure, a scelta, in costume da bagno. Per l'ingresso di Godot, sempre che sia lui, bisognerà aspettare ancora un po'.

Nella “tragicommedia” di Titley l'aspetto commedia è particolarmente insistito, con diverse concessioni alla farsa e alla pantomima. E soprattutto, con moltissimi riferimenti a personaggi, versi, canzoni appartenenti alla cultura irlandese, che, nei limiti del possibile, Rosangela Barone ha reso con grande abilità (e apparato di note a piè di pagina) nella sua traduzione italiana di *Tagann Godot*.

Per il lettore italiano, la possibilità di conoscere la *pièce* di Titley è frutto delle competenze linguistiche e dall'amore per Beckett e per la lingua gaelica di una studiosa che alla cultura irlandese ha dedicato tutte le sue attenzioni e le sue energie, sia come docente, sia come direttrice dell'Istituto Italiano di Cultura di Dublino: Rosangela Barone è stata una vera e preziosa ambasciatrice della cultura irlandese in Italia.

*Paolo Bertinetti*





## Libri ricevuti / Books received

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Suad Aldarra, *I Don't Want to Talk About Home*, Dublin, Penguin-Random House Ireland, 2022, pp. 309. € 20. ISBN: 978-1-7816-2062-5.

Chris Arthur, *Hidden Cargoes*, no place, Eastover Press, 2022, pp. 230. \$ 14. ISBN: 978-1-958094-03-7.

Amy Abdullah Barry, *Flirting with Tigers*, Dublin, Dedalus Press, 2023, pp. 71. € 20. ISBN: 978-1-915629-08-1.

Sebastian Barry, *Old God's Time*, London, Faber and Faber, 2023, pp. 261. £ 18.99. ISBN: 978-0-571-38206-4.

Brendan Behan, *A Bit of a Writer. Brendan Behan's Collected Prose*, ed. by John Brannigan, Dublin, Lilliput Press, pp. 419. € 25. ISBN: 978-1-84351-859-4.

Dermot Bolger, *Other People's Lives*, Dublin, New Island, 2022, pp. 125. € 12.95. ISBN 978-1-84840-843-2.

Pat Boran (ed.), *The Word Ark. A Pocket Book of Animal Poems*, Dublin, Dedalus Press, 2020, pp. 145. € 18. ISBN 978-1-910-251768.

Pat Boran, *The Statues of Emo Court. Poem and Images*, Dublin, Orange Crate Books, 2021, pp. 52. € 10. ISBN: 978-0-993-1726-4-9.

Pat Boran, *Building the Ark. Poem and Images*, Dublin, Orange Crate Books, 2022, pp. 46. € 10. ISBN: 978-0-993-1726-5-6.

Rebecca Brownlie, *Abandoned Ireland*, Newbridge, Merrion Press, 2022, pp. 250. € 27.95. ISBN: 978-1-78537-432-6.

Jan Carson, Jane Lugea (eds), *A Little Unsteadily into Light. New Dementia-Inspired Fiction*, Dublin, New Island, 2022, pp. 236. € 16.95. ISBN: 978-1-8-48-40-861-6.

Tim Pat Coogan, *Storia delle origini dell'I.R.A. (1919-1970)*, trad. di Renato Polimeni, introduzione di Fiorenzo Fantaccini, Sesto San Giovanni, Oaks Editrice, 2023, pp. 317. € 16.95. ISBN: 979-12-8019-032-1.

Cónal Creedon, *Art Imitating Life Imitating Death*, Cork, Irishtown Press, 2022, pp. 176. € 16. ISBN: 978-1-7399180-7-1.

Emma Donoghue, *Haven*, London-New York, Picador, 2022, pp. 257. £ 14.99. ISBN: 978-1-529091-14-4.

Terence Dooley, *Burning the Big House. The Story of the Irish Country House in a Time of War and Revolution*, New Haven-London, Yale UP, 2023. £ 11.99. ISBN: 978-0-300-27043-3.

Peter Fallon (ed.), *Second Voyages. Writers on Poems by Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin*, Oldcastle, Gallery Press, 2022, pp. 180. € 14.50. ISBN: 978-1-91133-829-1.

Eóin Flannery, *Form, Affect and Debt in Post-Celtic Tiger Irish Fiction*, London-New York-Oxford-New Delhi-Sydney, Bloomsbury Academic, 2022, pp. 239. £ 76.50. ISBN: 978-1-350-16674-5.

Anne Fogarty, Marisol Morales-Ladrón (eds), *Deirdre Madden. New Critical Perspectives*, Manchester, Manchester UP, 2022, pp. 280. £ 80. ISBN: 978-1-5261-1892-9.

Brian Friel, *Teatro. Volume 1*, trad. di Riccardo Duranti, Roma, Arcadia & Ricono, 2022, pp. 344. € 22. ISBN: 978-88-98745-15-9.

Brian Friel, *Rehearsal Diary (Faith Healer, 1979)*, Oldcastle, Gallery Press, 2022, pp. 59. € 17.50. ISBN: 978-1-91133-841-3.

Seamus Heaney, *The Translations of Seamus Heaney*, ed. by Marco Sonzogni, London, Faber and Faber, 2022, pp. 685. £ 35. ISBN: 978-0-571-34252-5.

Seamus Heaney, *On Home Ground/Come a casa. Le versioni pascoliane*, Fanna, Samuele Editore, 2023, pp. 135. € 15. ISBN: 978-88-94944-75-4.

Seán Hewitt, *All Down Darkness Wide*, London, Jonathan Cape, 2022, pp. 234. £ 14.99. ISBN: 978-1-787-33338-3.

James Joyce, *Rime parodiche e giocose*, introduzione, trad. e note di Francesco Muzzioli, Roma, Lithos, 2022, pp. 162. € 13. ISBN: 979-12-80197-54-2.

Louise Kennedy, *Trespasses*, London, Bloomsbury, 2022, pp. 311. £ 15. ISBN: 978-1-5266-2332-4.

Freda Lughton, *A Transitory House/Una casa transitoria*, trad. di Viviana Fiorentino, note introduttive di Renata Morresi e Lucy Collins, postfazione di Emma Penney, Osimo, Arcipelago Itaca Edizioni, 2022, pp. 141. € 18. ISBN: 978-12-80139-52-8.

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## Autori / Contributors

Donatella Abbate Badin (<donatella.badin@unito.it>), formerly Professor of English Literature at the University of Turin, Italy, has worked in the fields of English, Irish and American literatures of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, specializing on poetry (G.M. Hopkins, Kinsella, Wilde) as well as on representations of Italy in Irish literature. She has published several books and essays on Thomas Kinsella and translated his poetry into Italian. Her research on travel to Italy has led to publications regarding Lady Morgan, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Thomas Moore, Sean O’Faolain, Elizabeth Bowen and others. She is the editor of a critical edition of Lady Morgan’s *Italy*, vols. 1 and 2 for Pickering and Chatto (2010).

Arianna Antonielli (<arianna.antonielli@unifi.it>) holds a PhD in English and American Literature and specializes in Humanities Computing and Digital Publishing. Among her publications: “ ‘Canons die hard’. L’ipercanone letterario in rete” (2011) and (with Mark Nixon), *Edwin John Ellis’s and William Butler Yeats’s The Works of William Blake: Poetic, Symbolic and Critical. A Manuscript Edition, with Critical Analysis* (2016). She is Journal Manager of the *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, *Lea – Lingue e Letterature d’Oriente e d’Occidente*, *Studi irlandesi. A Journal of Irish Studies* and *Quilso – Quaderni di Linguistica e Studi Orientali*.

Vito Carrassi (<vito1976@interfree.it>), PhD in Literary Sciences, is an independent scholar, formerly adjunct professor of Folkloristics and Cultural Anthropology. His research is focused on the theory and practice of folklore, in particular on folk narrative genres and on the interplay between (Irish) folklore and literature. On these subjects he has published monographs, edited books and several peer reviewed articles and book chapters.

Andrea Ciliotta-Rubery (<arubery@brockport.edu>), PhD, is a Professor of political theory at SUNY, The College at Brockport. She is the author of several articles and book chapters, on such topics as Machiavelli, Shakespeare, 16th century politics and literature, the political novel, Turgenev, Aristotle, and political extremism. She is the recipient of the Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching.

María del Mar González Chacón (<gonzalezmar@uniovi.es>) lectures at the University of Oviedo. Her main research is focused



on contemporary Irish theatre, with a special interest in the theatre of Marina Carr and her rewritings of female classical myths. She also studies unpublished Irish versions and adaptations of Federico García Lorca.

María Eugenia Cruset (<mariaeugenia.cruset@ucalpvirtual.edu.ar>) (CONICET/Universidad Nacional de Quilmes/Universidad Católica de La Plata). She holds a PhD in History (University of the Basque Country) and a Master's Degree in International Relations (IRI, National University of La Plata). She is a Postdoctoral fellow of CONICET and a founding member of the Association of Southern Irish Studies (AEIS). She directs and teaches in the Diploma in Irish Studies at the Universidad del Salvador. She is Director of the Free Chair of Irish Thought and Culture at the National University of La Plata. She is also a lecturer and researcher at the Catholic University of La Plata and the University of Salvador, Argentina.

Hajer Gandouz (<hajer.gandouz@gmail.com>) is a PhD candidate and an Academic Researcher in Culture Studies, specialized in Irish and European studies at the Univeristy of Sousse (Tunisia).

Dalia Mohammed Hamed (<dalia.ali@eda.tanta.edu.eg>) is an Associate Professor of Linguistics in the Department of Foreign Languages (English), Faculty of Education, Tanta University, Egypt. Her Ph.D. dissertation was a comparative analysis of legal discourses in American and Egyptian legal institutions. She has completed thirteen training programs at The International Center for Faculty and Leadership Development in Tanta University. Her interests revolve around transdisciplinarity so that Linguistics may be integrated with other disciplines to render a more comprehensive analysis. Her fields of reasearch are Critical Discourse Analysis, Stylistics, Pragmatics, Cognitive Linguistics and Corpus Linguistics.

Richard Haslam (<rhaslam@sju.edu>) is an Associate Professor of English at Saint Joseph's University, Philadelphia, U.S.A. His essays on Oscar Wilde have appeared in the Norton Third Critical Edition of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (2020), *English Literature in Transition* (April 2020; January 2014), *Victorian Literature and Culture* (June 2014), the Norton Critical Edition of *The Importance of Being Earnest* (2005), *The Explicator* (Winter 2003), and *Irish Studies Review* (Summer 1995).

Deirdre Kelly (<Deirdre.Kelly@tudublin.ie>) is a Lecturer in Spanish at Technological University Dublin. She has published peer-reviewed articles and interviews in *Journal of Romance Studies*, *International Journal of Iberian Studies*, *The Year's Work in Modern Language Studies*, *RTE Brainstorm* and several book chapters in edited volumes.

Rania M Rafik Khalil (<rania.khalil@bue.edu.eg >) is an Associate Professor of English literature. She currently teaches in the Department of English Language and Literature and holds the administrative/academic positions of Director of Postgraduate Studies Programmes, as well as the Director of the Research Centre for Irish Studies (RCIS) at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, The British University in Egypt. She established the Research Centre for Irish Studies at the British University in Egypt in 2020 with the support of the Embassy of Ireland in Cairo. It is the only Research Centre for Irish Studies in North Africa, Egypt, and the MENA region. She is a member of the International Association for the Study of Irish Literatures (IASIL) and the European Federation for Associations and Centres of Irish Studies (EFACIS). She has contributed to research in Irish studies through her own research publications and participating in blind peer review for international journals, and is an Editorial Board Member for a number of international

and regional journals.

Isabella Martini (<Isabella.martini@unifi.it>) is a full-time English Language instructor at the Department of Education, Languages, Intercultures, Literature and Psychology of the University of Florence. She holds a PhD in Foreign Literature (English specialisation, University of Pisa). She has published on the Anglo-Canadian short story and on translation. Recently she has focused on research in linguistics, specifically on corpus linguistics, media discourse, and historical English. She is also a member of The Corpora and Historical English Research Group (CHER) – Florence Unit.

Nahed Mohammed Ahmed Meklash (<nahedmeklash24@mau.edu.eg>) is working as a lecturer of English Literature, Faculty of Education at Matrouh University. She is a member of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment, and a peer review for *Language, Literature, and Interdisciplinary Studies*. Her main interests are intersectional feminism, African studies, ecocriticism, and digital humanities.

Ilaria Natali (<ilaria.natali@unifi.it>) teaches English Literature at the University of Florence. Her research interests include manuscript studies, intertextuality, translation, the history of ideas, and cultural memory. She has widely published on the works of James Joyce and other twentieth-century authors as well as on various eighteenth-century subjects.

Orla O'Connor (<orlaoc@nwci.ie>) is Director of the National Women's Council of Ireland. She has held senior management roles in several non-governmental organisations for over 25 years. Orla was Co-director of Together for Yes, the national civil society campaign that influenced Ireland legalising abortion in 2018.

Ciarán O'Rourke (<orourkeci@tdc.ie>) was born in 1991 and lives in Dublin. His first collection, *The Buried Breath*, was published by The Irish Pages Press in 2018 and highly commended by the Forward Foundation for Poetry the following year. His second collection, *Phantom Gang*, has been longlisted for the international Dylan Thomas Prize 2023.

Ahlam Ahmed Mohamed Othman (<ahlam.othman@bue.edu.eg>) is an Associate Professor of English Literature and Acting Head of English Language and Literature Department at the Faculty of Arts & Humanities, British University in Egypt. She is also a member at the Faculty of Humanities, Al-Azhar University where she gained her doctorate in English Literature. She has a Master of Arts in TEFL from the American University in Cairo, and has registered at Al-Azhar University for another doctorate in Comparative Poetics. She is a member of the Egyptian Writers' Union, board member of the Egyptian Society of Comparative Literature, and reviewer for the National Center for Translation.

Luca Sarti (<luca.sarti@unicampania.it>) holds a Ph.D. in Literary, Linguistic and Comparative Studies at the University of Naples "L'Orientale". His dissertation was on Irish fairy tales collected and retold in the new millennium. He is the managing director of *ContactZone*, an e-journal which publishes scholarly work on Science Fiction and the Fantastic, and teaches English language and culture as well as world literature at Università degli Studi della Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli".

Samanta Trivellini (<strivellini83@gmail.com>), PhD in Classical Reception Studies from Parma University, teaches Italian as a Second Language and English in Milan. Her publications include the monograph *Filomela, Filomele. Variazioni del mito ovidiano nella letteratura in lingua inglese* (Aracne, 2017), and essays on the presence of classical intertexts in English literature. Her research interests also include the poetry of W.B. Yeats and the writings of Maud Gonne. In 2020 she was awarded a bursary from the European Society for the Study of English (ESSE) for a project on Gonne's occult interests and the reception of her autobiography.

Somaya Abdul Wahhab Al-Samahy (<Somaya.wahhab@alexu.edu.eg>) is a PhD candidate in English literature at the Faculty of Arts, Alexandria University. She obtained her M.A. in English Literature, with a thesis entitled *The Quest for Identity in the Poetry of Eavan Boland and Derek Walcott* (2015). She graduated from the Faculty of Arts, Alexandria University in 2005. She is currently an instructor at the Programme of Applied Linguistics, Faculty of Arts- Alexandria University and is a freelance translator. Her research interests include comparative literature, gender studies, postcolonial studies and Irish studies.

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