

Thomas Kilroy's *Double Cross*: Mediatized Realities and Sites of Multiple, Projected Selves

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I

In Irish theatre various explorations of the concept of the doppelgänger can be found ranging from Brian Friel's *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* (1964) to Frank McGuinness's *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme* (1985); in the former, Gar O'Donnell is irresolvably split between Public and Private, and in the latter, the division is between Elder and Younger Pyper, different versions of the same character, who embrace at the end of the play, as if a considerable cycle of destructive division has been brought partly to an end and falsifications surrendered temporarily. Their embrace has personal, political and tribal implications. In Marina Carr's *Portia Coughlan* (1996), Portia is haunted by her dead twin, Gabriel. The opening stage direction reads: "They mirror one another's postures and movements in an odd way" (193). Such is their connection, however symbolic, real or spurious one believes it to be, she kills herself, unable to evade his death call. In *Double Cross*, a play produced by Field Day, Thomas Kilroy reflects on two men, Brendan Bracken—Minister for Information from 1941–45 in the Churchill government during the Second World War and the Nazi broadcaster William Joyce—better known as Lord Haw Haw. Both disaffected Irishmen were played by Stephen Rea (a co-founder of Field Day) in the play's original production.

Many contemporary theatre practitioners have begun to use different media devices not only to complicate and elaborate upon processes of representation, but also to investigate the whole notion of identity within realities that are highly shaped by the media. Kilroy foregrounds the ideological imperatives underpinning representation. In order to process the notion of partial doubleness (doubleness is just the default setting), mirroring, demonic duplicity, haunting and symbiosis within the context of Ireland's colonial experience at the hands of the British, Kilroy draws, first of all, on complex staging strategies, a video screen and a radio (a recurring prop across a range of Irish plays). A flexible performance space is the foremost requirement; there are shifts from scene to scene with little attempt to establish quasi-realistic or authentic environments, in the conventional sense. The initial stage direction brings together a notional realistic stage space which is "dominated by an Adam fireplace" (17), with an alternative type of staging which utilizes a "hanging washing line" with "larger than life figures, cut-out cardboard representations of Churchill, King George V and Sir Oswald Mosley," effigies

that will be flipped over later when they become “Dr. Goebbels, Hitler and Mosley, again.” A rostrum, downstage right represents a range of different locations and upstage is the video/film screen (17). So the stage space is composite and multi-functionally artificial. Other theatrical touches used to suggest the shifting of location include the use of music, the dropping of Tory party streamers and a Union Jack, and sounds are deployed to suggest bombing raids, etc. Kilroy stretches to utilise the theatrical potential of the sign systems available to a play that was conceived initially as a touring show which visited mainly non-conventional theatre venues in Ireland.

More importantly there are demands placed on actors to shift in and out of roles, to interrogate, exposit, imitate, infer, and to step forward and address the audience. The two supporting (if that can ever be the word) actors, one male and female, play an array of characters with utterly distinguishable traits, postures and accents. However, greatest demand is placed on the central actor who is obliged to play both Bracken and Joyce as protagonists/antagonists in each other’s stories, for when Bracken is present on stage, Joyce is brought into being over the airwaves or on the video screen and vice versa. The character transformation from one to the other takes place on stage visible to an audience in such a way that the mutation exposes the play’s metatheatrical inclinations.

The media devices function as filtering, mediating realities, but they also act as liminal, threshold ones, accommodating a type of hybrid reality, through the fact that the characters operate in a heterotopic space. While the spectator’s exposure to the media elements is intermittent, they remain omnipresent and coercive even when actively non-communicative. It is not a play that is simply using multi-media as an elaborating strategy, but is a play that uses different media in order to comment on the nature of role, identity and performance, where identity is one that is constructed through colonial and ideological interpellations, cultural broadcasts and political imperatives as much as through experience, choices and personal actions.

Although act 1 is called the Bracken Play and act 2 the Joyce Play, they are not discrete independent units, for the drama is not simply about the dialogue between two parallel acts or the dialogical tension between both. By almost superimposing or mapping, palimpsest-like one act on another, there is persistent cross-contamination, engagement or contact between both characters and the worlds they immediately inhabit, Britain and Germany, and by default, Ireland. All these staging facets ensure the creation of a truly complex, complicated and accomplished *mise en scène*.

Bracken was brought up in County Tipperary and his father was a Fenian revolutionary; Joyce was born in America to an Irish father and English mother, but moved back to live in Galway at an early age. Both fled to England in order to find some purpose in their lives at a time when Ireland gained its independence, both embraced politics and both “fabricated ultra-English identities” according to the Actress/Narrator (20). Joyce ended up as a “naturalized German citizen of the Third Reich,” having “wanted to be English but had to settle on being German” (52). Bracken tried to dis-

guise all traces of his past by fabricating one that nobody truly believed in, but a past that he assumed would give satisfactory credence to his manufactured identity. So both went to extraordinary lengths to shed their Irishness. The play interrogates the possibility as to whether or not “Patriotism and treason may be fuelled by the same hunger?” (28) Both men live life-lies. Beaverbrook claims that “anyone can be British [...]. All you need is a modest command of the language and a total commitment to a handful of symbols, some of which are pretty ludicrous” (75). Then, if it were so easy, why did they fail, in different ways? So the quest for authentic purpose and their embrace of Britishness in both of their lives is governed fundamentally, perhaps, by grammars of performance and masquerades of inauthenticity.

Kilroy introduces the Faber edition of the play with the claim that “To base one’s identity, exclusively, upon a mystical sense of place rather than in personal character where it properly resides seems to me a dangerous absurdity” (6-7). But place will define you if one cannot lay claim to the ownership of that space or where the space within which one lives does not guarantee you fundamental freedoms. In a broader context, Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins suggest that:

split or fragmentary subjectivity reflects the many and often competing elements that define post-colonial identity, whereas attempts to achieve a subjective ‘wholeness’ may merely replicate the limited significations of the coloniser/colonised binary through which imperialism maintains control over the apparently unruly and uncivilised ‘masses.’ (231)

They go on to argue that “split subjectivity can be viewed ... as potentially enabling rather than as disempowering” (231). However, the native within the imperialist project must face down his/her internalisation of oppression, otherwise what is oppressed can turn into repression or into all kinds of displacement, avoidance and imitative strategies to accommodate or to make sense of subjugation. Split, fractured, de-centred subjectivities result in identities that over-invest in performance and style and less in substance. Clearly, there is an obligation to de-stabilise the remit of nation to shape oneself, while at the same time to embrace the restraint and inadequacy that nationhood formalises as if to generate a vertigo of self. Perversely, from the innate self-destructiveness of the characters, dramatic creative synergies emerge, so in that sense “split subjectivity” can be empowering. Christopher Murray reads the play with specific reference to Northern Ireland:

Joyce’s self-destruction shows the ‘serpent of history’ can indeed bite off its own head in pursuit of an unattainable ideal. The application to internecine strife in Northern Ireland may be inferred. It is a colonial issue: an investigation of the meaning(s) of loyalty. In Northern Ireland one person’s loyalty is another’s treason. Doubleness is built into the political system. (218)

Terry Eagleton in his discussions on Wilde argues for him “adopting a performative rather than a representational epistemology” (qtd. in Llewellyn 115). That distinction between the two is vital to an understanding of this play and of Irish theatre particularly. The performative is foregrounded in so much of Irish theatre, yet it is often very gender specific. So it is important to keep in mind what Anna McMullan points out that in this play women “by revealing or confronting duplicity, have the moral advantage,” but “the transformative potential of the mask eludes them. They are constant fall guys to the player princes” (132). The fractious coherence of politically sensitive, indigenous selves of many nationalist projects delivers a cohesion that denies differences of gender, class, ethnicity and race. Pretence can be used as a political subversion and it can also satisfy a range of very narrow permitted perspectives.

While both Bracken and Joyce have a vile opinion of each other, both have a gift for language, for invention, misinformation, disinformation, for pretence and disguise. Both display a compulsion to perform and each has a capacity to test the credibility of others to their limits. The multi-media dimension both enhances and makes visible the dysfunctional longings of the characters, their fundamental inability to individuate. The relationship between both of the main characters is one of literal false connection, but the symbolic connection the “principle of circularity” (34) that is mentioned in the play is vital. While Nicholas Grene argues that each character is “constantly confronted by his screen simulacrum, his hated and despised double” (76), for me, the characterisations are more to do with juxtapositions, superimpositions, displacements and fragments, for the characters echo and upstage each other. The notion of double only gets one so far. The spectator gets what effectively is, instead of a play-within-a-play format, a character-within-a-character. The interconnection between Bracken and Joyce benefits from the incongruity of theatrical modes of performance, the Comedy of Manners style of act 1 uneasily resides with act 2, which bears a serious Brechtian influence. So the spectator experiences the layering of acts, performance styles and the layering of characters. Commenting on the first production of the play, Murray notes that Stephen Rea delivered a performance that “ironically intersects as ‘traitor’ and ‘trickster’” (217). To witness a single performer doing both the Bracken and Joyce roles is to regard, perhaps, performance as virtuosity and cultural ventriloquism as pathology. The form of the play, its staging and its multi-media elements all conspire to deliver such potential reflections.

II

The opening stage image has Bracken attempting to tune in a Joyce broadcast. In this way the radio is used to allow in the disembodied voice of Joyce, while at the same time, we get a sense of Bracken’s repulsive, compulsive fascination with him. Bracken then goes on to provide a commentary on the broadcast. But if Bracken can make disparaging comments on the broadcast, Joyce’s right of reply comes from the video screen. Joyce accuses Bracken of being a “specimen of outrageous masquerade” (17)

and of being a “poseur and parasite” (18). Later Joyce deems him a “trickster” (19). On the other hand, Bracken regards Joyce as “traitor” (19). The anti-realist thrust of the convention is obvious. Joyce is responding to the thoughts and opinions expressed by Bracken. Each offers the other’s repressed story. It is as if the video screen affords not only presence to what Bracken rejects or wants kept hidden, it also offers the type of narrating function that the other two actors later take up and also presents the characters with the opportunities to debate with each other, without the actual corporeal presence of the other, which is further complicated when the lead actor swaps roles. Ultimately, while there is no evidence that either of the real people ever met, the use of video circumscribes that fact, not so much as putting them both in the same physical location, but within the same symbolic location, thereby foregrounding their connections. So from this early point in the play we can see how the media inserts and introjections are there to jam the possibility of a single point of view or perspective, establishing a dialogical function for the theatrical experience by potentially moving the spectator into some estranged space, beyond the norm of naturalised empathy.

Once the action of the play is set, once the possibility of different voices coalescing and disagreeing is established and once the conventions of the drama are articulated to an audience, then there is less use of the video screen: when re-utilized, it is always at key moments of transition and tension. In a review Fintan O’Toole argues that “the use of film becomes repetitious and undramatic” (Furay and O’Hanlon 52). (The original production was directed by Jim Sheridan who now is better known as a director and writer of film.) However, even if we accept O’Toole’s criticism, given advances in technology, one could speculate as to how a contemporary production could utilise the video screen in a far more successful way, cutting in different ways, using backdrops from London and Berlin and superimposing archival footage from the war era. The initial presence of the video and radio ensures that the concerns of the play are political debate, language and performance. While the articulation and delivery of language demands a performance of sorts, Bracken delivers something well beyond the normal levels of expectation. When an audience witnesses him on the phone, we get a different Bracken each time he communicates. It is either that he is the most accomplished performer or that his self is so fractured that he cannot be comfortable with any consistency within the sphere of public discourse. While he is in denial about many things, fundamental to him is the absence of security, or maybe even the absence of self. He may either be terrorised by this absence or he may well be perversely enabled by it. To what we might account for this absence is, perhaps, key to a post-colonial reading of this play.

When it comes to sex, Bracken again displays a fluctuating ambivalence. Popsie appears before him “dressed as boy scout” (25) and is ready to perform, as Bracken needs “costuming to become sexually” aroused (25). She enquires, “Do you think you are making love to a boy?” (26) Even on the level of sexual fantasy there is much insecurity and the suggestion of paedophilic fantasies. The costuming does not work in arousing him, so she suggests a range of alternatives: “highland tartan,” a “gym-slip,” or her dressed as “Florence Nightingale” (27). Popsie’s personal explanation is

that the reason behind his sexual dysfunction is because he is a “twisted little Irish puritan” (27). Is it better to perceive the Irish as puritanical and sexually repressed by religious doctrine or its opposite, rampantly sexual? Within imperial thinking there is no middle ground for the native. Popsie’s claim that Bracken can “conceal nothing” from her (27), seems to be an attempt to position herself in a superior and perhaps culturally arrogant position. Later she says to Bracken, “Every time I try to reach you, yet another Brendan Bracken is talked into existence” (28). If one is performing and hiding, what one fears most is the trial of truth or to be betrayed by truth. Beaverbook reveals to Bracken that he has pieced together his true/real Templemore, Co. Tipperary upbringing, but this background is not the one used to introduce him to the Paddington constituency meeting, where the claim is that Bracken is of “British-Irish stock, was born in Bedfordshire, the son of a distinguished officer in the Indian Army,” educated at “Sedbergh and an Oxford “graduate” (33). Bracken’s father likewise was not a “distinguished clergyman” (25), nor was Bracken the illegitimate son of Winston Churchill, a claim that was both fun and useful to his career progression. Bracken remembers as a child being in denial about his identity, refusing to “recognize his name when it was called” (36). Bracken says of the past: “All is dead! I want nothing to do with what was!” (37) In a letter to his mother he admits that his father was a vicious “barbaric man” who beat her (46). Between the denial of origins and the fabrication of origins lies one of the fundamental tensions within Bracken.

Bracken’s brother, Peter, who has the dress sense of a “Soho pimp and the ‘manners to boot’ ” and who has stolen the “Romney portrait of Burke” (39), is another psychic shadow. On the other hand, Peter proves helpful as a way of positioning Bracken socially. Sometimes Peter is “high up in the Admiralty, in charge of vast tea plantations in Ceylon, while, at the same time conducting a lucrative business in the City” according to Popsie (40), or at other times his brother is “terribly well connected with the Frog.[...] Import-export...” (23) To the Warden on the rooftop Peter has “died in action. The RAF. Died splendidly. One of ‘Stuffey’ Dowding’s chaps. Life and soul of the mess” (42). Bracken easily changes the story to say his brother is a “traitor” when the Warden pushes him for details. So, Peter, like Joyce, is also another “traitor” as this word is the ultimate expression of deviance. Yet, Bracken is a “traitor” in a different way, for he betrays his background, not in a political sense but because he denies it and disregards the fundamental inequality of its political make-up—imperial rule.

However, while most of society disbelieves Bracken, but has the good manners not to question his inconsistencies and his fantasies, at least to his face, behind his back they “smile” at “Poor Brendan.”(40) “Smile” is the appropriate word, for it is not the coarse laughter of defiance, not the laughter of participation or shared irreverence, and not the laughter of ironic self-recognition of themselves as fabricators, moreover, it is the laughter of the refined and the distinguished against a “red haired golliwog” who wears “indifferent suits” (31) as Castlerosse perceives Bracken’s dress-sense to be. Bracken’s relative uncouthness and his inability to fit in come to

the fore, and, despite all of his performative intelligence and despite his business acumen—for he was running five newspapers by the age of thirty—he still participates not as an insider, but as an outsider. Popsie claims that she has “never known anyone to use the English language quite in the same way” that Bracken does (29) and she additionally remarks: “Well, it’s rather as if one were speaking to someone who was discovering the words as he went along. It’s aboriginal” (30). Made explicit here is the arrogance of the elite, watching someone attempting to belong, yet unable to dismiss fully either his energy, commitment or his successes for that matter. He is kept external, indifferently other, through the arrogant dismissal of his routines and his fabrications. Bracken is both exposed and captivated by language, but he also is enslaved by that language precisely because he functions abnormally and inappropriately within it. His thoughts are assembled with a structuring that does not benefit from either familiarity or cultural absorption, in other words, he is without the apprenticeship of class. He ruptures the syntax despite attempts to be in control. (Joyce asks: “Are all the careful consonants out of control?” [46] It is Joyce who understands his linguistic vulnerability.) It may be true in a limited sense that the writing/speaking of English through the frame of what is considered Hiberno-English allowed Irish people to make it their own, but the sheer inappropriateness and strangeness of its usage in another cultural context is obvious, as it generates distaste and unease amongst Joyce’s acquaintances.

Bracken’s play at being British ultimately fails on many levels. The concept of play within a post-colonial context is often about the reversals of hierarchies, here is one of limitation, for Beaverbook notes, Bracken overstates and tries “too hard.” There are both excess and unease in his playing that make the experience of his performance obvious. So during the bombing, his Tipperary accent and a more fearful, child-like mindset break through, as natural reflexes betray the imposed mask. Performance is a shell that covers some core of Irishness that does not go away, that cannot be evaded despite all the fabrications. Joyce, in one of his broadcasts, accuses Bracken of being a clown and a performer:

They like to see you perform, don’t you know that? It satisfies their taste in comedy as a scale, a measurement, politics as entertainment, entertainment as politics. In its decadence the imperial always transposes conquest into circus. The more clownish Irish have always been willing to step into that ring. And you’re the perfect clown because you believe that life is a matter of taste. (45)

As for what does it mean to be British, Bracken quotes Edmund Burke (an Irishman): “To be bred in a place of estimation, to see nothing low or sordid from one’s infancy—to be habituated in the pursuit of honour and duty” (37). Such a false consciousness is obvious: it is naïve and almost politically innocent. Likewise, Bracken’s disdain for Gandhi is telling, rejecting his primitiveness, his political protests and his

requests for independence, seeing Gandhi and his people as opposite to Burke's ancient ideal. As Maria Kurdi notes: "Bracken's misinterpretation of the Burkean legacy and its self-destructive consequences warn against acts that privatise meanings and turn identity into hollow fictions, disregarding its complexity" (117). On Gandhi, who did quote Burke, Bracken states, "I don't need to know him. I know his type" (37). For Bracken, people like Gandhi know nothing of "law" or of "grace," of culture or of "cultivated living." Instead it is their smell, their "obscene rituals," ultimately their "animalism" that most offends (37). In these admissions, Kilroy patterns out the notion of the subaltern and the manner in which binary opposites function to establish systems of superiority and subjugation, but as Homi Bhabha points out through his theorised concept of ambivalence, the oppressor is never omnipotent and the victim is not without the opportunity to resist or reply (qtd. in Loomba 105).

Beaverbrook and Bracken share an allegiance. Beaverbrook, the Canadian, invented himself: "I'm British. You're British. We believe in the Empire. We believe in the greatest compromise ever devised by human political ingenuity" (36). While Bracken is ashamed of his past, Beaverbrook acclaims that very past, believing that people actually cherish and reward those who have made the journey, from colonised to coloniser, or at least have a shared belief in the values of the colonised. Thus subjectivity rather than objectification is granted. However, what is lost in the transition and what does the native surrender? He/she may well be merely mimicking an identity that does not belong to him or her, for the terms of participation are weighted too heavily in favour of the colonised, who turn colonisation into circus. The converse is worth considering; the conversion of the circus act into benign colonisation which is often the wrongful accusation against Martin McDonagh's work. You may perform the role, but you are seldom if ever allowed to inhabit the role. The disjunction is too overwhelming and not possible to override. The *Lady Journalist* towards the end of the play remarks: "But it is the hallmark of British civilization that it sheds coarse extravagance. Its power is in its discrimination, its grace is in its refinement of what in other cultures become crude images" (73). (Britain and England are interchangeable within Kilroy's text to such an extent that many would be horrified.) Discrimination might be one thing but the imperial force wields power often with a ruthlessness that is unrefined, crude, coarse, indifferent and indiscriminate. The denial of this fact is something that the play confronts again and again.

When it comes to his own family, again Bracken structures a similar mindset, viewing his father as having "the face of a condemned man" (38), so political revolt becomes condemnation for him. When with the Warden on top of the roof during an air-raid Bracken comments that while the enemy without is obvious, the one within British society is just as dangerous: those in Whitehall that would sell the "King for a pension," "Lefties" and "Wogs and Frogs and Whatnots from every corner of Europe" (41). Bracken addresses a rally, professing that he does not want "our country" to be "over-run by alien races" (34). Bracken claims not to be anti-Semitic, but

does not want Britain invaded by the “riff-raff of Russia, the refuse of the dens of the East” (34). There is little difference between this and the purity of race that Hitler and his cohorts were after. For Joyce, it is the “Bolshevik Jew of Russia and Capitalist Jew of Wall Street” (48) who is “our evil otherness, the fault in our nature which we must root out” (47). Mosley wanted all Jews to be transported to Madagascar. Both imperialism and fascism are in very close alignment in how they demonise otherness.

For Popsie, Joyce’s broadcasts are “boring shit” (25). She orders Bracken to turn the radio off, to keep Joyce at bay, out of his head. But he hears him regardless. Towards the end of act 1 the actor must change from playing Bracken to Joyce; it is the presence of the radio that seems to initiate the transformation. The stage direction interestingly indicates, “the voice of Joyce calling to Bracken across the airwaves,” and although Bracken “switches off the wireless; the voice continues. He rushes off but the voice follows him” (44). That sense of being pursued by a disembodied voice is striking and only the presence of the radio can achieve that. From here we move into Joyce’s broadcast and now it is specifically directed towards Bracken again. Joyce is in stern accusatory flow, and his prominence switches from a radio voice to a presence on the video screen, in order to suggest a type of omnipresence.

A key stage direction reads as follows: “the voice speaks for the image” (44). Bracken makes notes on an unfinished letter to his mother where he urges the past to be forgotten, but the letter home and the addressee of the letter are pertinent here. Home is the place of intimacy and judgment; home is the space of sanctuary offered by the feminine in the main. At this point Bracken still resists Joyce. Theatricality takes over. The other two cast members flip over the initial cardboard figures and Bracken disrobes, flipping over, so to speak, to reveal a fascist blackshirt and tie. He loses his wig and reveals a cropped hair. Bracken is now Joyce. Fintan O’Toole in his *Sunday Tribune* review observed that Rea’s “transformation from the nervous, watchful arrogance of Bracken to the haunting, melancholic mania of Joyce is masterly, and his acting avoids completely any spurious attempt at psychological explanation or ‘characterisation’ of either man” (Furay and O’Halon 52).

The relationship between Joyce and Bracken echoes the fantastic summoning into being by JPW King of *The Irishman*, who adopts the life story of the musician Gigli, in Thomas Murphy’s *The Gigli Concert* (1983). Declan Kiberd, in his analysis of Algernon and his fantasy friend Bunbury in Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest*, points out the type of “off-loading” involved in the notion of the fantasy friend, who also may be an enemy in that he/she is guardian of the repressed. Another male character, Jack, in the Wilde play invents his fictive brother called Ernest. Algernon and Jack must kill off Bunbury and Ernest respectively, for according to Kiberd,

Many characters in literature have sought to murder their double in order to do away with guilt (as England had tried to annihilate Irish culture), but have found that it is not so easily repressed, since it may also contain man’s utopian self (those redemptive qualities found by [Matthew] Arnold in

Ireland). Bunbury is Algy's double, embodying in a single fiction all that is most creative and most corrupt in his creator. (42)

Kiberd goes on to suggest that: "No sooner is the double denied than it becomes man's fate"(42). Joyce now regards Bracken as being at "one" with himself (43). While Joyce does not become Bracken's fate in the literal sense, he does turn into him in a manner of speaking.

III

Act 2 opens with a compendium of radio broadcasts that alerts the audience to the state of the British nation as the war progresses. The spectator experiences the physical presence of Joyce, with Bracken disembodied on the radio, and towards the play's end, on the video screen. Bracken is trying to unravel the propaganda of Joyce's broadcasts that pretend to come from inside Britain, but are really transmitted from Germany. Apart from great boasts and the announcement of impending attacks, Joyce is altogether more subtle when he suggests little things, such as local clocks are not working entirely accurately. By so doing, he hints at a breakdown in order, some inane and innate dysfunctionality at the core of society. Additionally, by pinpointing some of the British public's private transgressions, he treats these as acts of civic disobedience. Joyce forces others through his broadcasts to question the legitimacy of British authority and the willingness of people to do exactly what is required of them. Propaganda, as Joyce recognises, must confirm at some level "people's desires" (54). For if you can get within the minds of the public, and run with their fears, all kinds of unravelling can take place. As such, Joyce through his broadcasts brought "into existence another England" or an alternative England over the airwaves (53).

The play then switches to Berlin; Joyce broadcasts during an air-raid, where he is but one of many transmitting from a "factory of voices" (52). The air strike in act one frightened Bracken, while here Joyce takes pleasure in the danger. During the city bombardment Joyce is in full flow and is violent, aggressive, even apocalyptic, reflecting on his childhood and his father and on how he, himself, betrayed the Irish Nationalist cause. People were murdered, at least this is the implication, for he witnessed blood being washed out the back of a lorry, after he had provided information to the British forces (57).

Act 2 also gives us the world of Joyce and his partner, Margaret, who has an affair with the German native, Erich. Erich also happens to be learning English. Margaret and Erich play "out some impossible but perfectly delightful romance" (63) or at least it is how she herself sees it. However, Margaret and Joyce's affiliation has an even darker underbelly than the Bracken/Popsie one. The affair results in a divorce and the re-marriage of Joyce and Margaret. Margaret's sexual betrayal gives the play another perspective on life choices. In many forms of marriage infidelity is seen as a betrayal, yet monogamy to many is a restraint on freedom. While that may well be a

choice on an interpersonal level in marriage, however, on a political one, in imperial acts of coerced union, for one partner there is little or no real choice. Imperialism is seldom by invitation. So the interpersonal and the political do not easily map onto one another, and they do not map onto one another easily.

The end of the war is announced by Bracken on the video screen and with the collapse of the Third Reich, the Joyces flee with false papers, passports and identities. Again the notion of a fabricated, bogus self is to the fore. Joyce is captured and shot by a British soldier of Jewish extraction, or as Joyce puts it, “shot by a Jew pretending to be a Briton” (72). The irony is obvious. Joyce’s detention comes about only after bouts of what Margaret calls “Irish roulette” (70): Bracken tempted fate, by speaking to British soldiers seeing if they would identify him. The self-destructive impulse did not subside even when faced by the terror of potential captivity.

The physical move to a prison location is achieved by Joyce removing his trenchcoat and replacing it with a 1940s “prison jacket” (72). With Joyce in prison, Bracken is again on the video screen summarising and making the legal case for the prosecution. Joyce was tried for treason under the accusation that he endeavoured “to turn Britain against itself” (72). The play points out that behind the treason reflex, more often than not, lies an “inappropriate reverence” for the country one betrays (73). Treason, according to Beaverbrook, “creates a reflection of what is betrayed.[...] A kind of terrifying mirror or something” (75). Joyce’s British passport was false, but by holding it, it was enough to incriminate him, despite the fact that he was an American citizen. For Hiroko Mikami, “Joyce has chosen.[...] what he sees as the inner essence of Englishness: its racial purity, something akin to the mythical Aryan ideal.[...] The irony is, of course, that Joyce became obsessed with the purity of a race to which he did not actually belong” (104).

In terms of staging, the final moments are astonishing. Initially, Joyce is on stage alone, then, Bracken materializes on the video screen and it appears “as if he were behind bars or a grille of iron” (78). Bracken is incarcerated symbolically, whereas Joyce is about to face execution. The next stage direction is vital. Although we have both characters visible on stage, all the lines “may be spoken by the actor on stage, with closed eyes” (78). Not only is the “may” pointed, but, if one is to assume that this is the better way to do so, then we have a subtle repetition of act 1 where on that occasion the radio voice spoke “for the image” (46). So you have the actor on stage now voicing two different opinions in two different voices, while the face of Bracken appears on the screen without speaking. The exchange becomes an imaginary meeting between the two characters Joyce and Bracken. Bracken’s reason for being there is because he is searching for his “brother,” his double, his symbolic other, who, like his father has the face of a “condemned” person (78).

The silent video presence complicates an audience’s response to this meeting. Previously, the video screen had been used as a way of integrating debate between them and as a way of establishing conflicting perspectives, now it becomes like something from a Beckett play, with the actor on stage playing two roles and the haunting

presence of the face on the screen. Towards the final moments of the play “lights go down on the faces of Bracken and Joyce” and the final speech is left to the Lady Journalist who recollects the trial and the presence of the young fascists in the gallery driven by poverty, desire, a need for change, and exclusion. While the radio is silent and the video screen blank, in those young men both Bracken and Joyce are resurrected. The play ends with the lines “They [young men in the court] wept for Joyce. They wept for England” (79). The incongruity is that people like Joyce, through their idealism and fanaticism, even their naive belief in the possible, will always inspire extremes. The fundamental irony in the play is that the victory in war will deteriorate ultimately the reach and resolve of the British Empire.

At the height of his powers up to half of the population of Britain used to listen to Joyce’s broadcasts, and as for Bracken, his substantial role as Minister for Information was central to the wartime propaganda, as a way of controlling and motivating citizens. Bracken’s over-enthusiasm for language betrays him, as does his fascination with words. He dies from throat cancer. In some perverse way, language is Bracken’s crime, his treason, for language as a mode of self-discovery is suspect in a society supposedly already discovered, solidified and known. Captivated he may be by the symbolic order, he, however, is not co-opted within that order. There is the claim within the play itself that the British achieve “more captives with our dictionaries than with our regiments” (21). Erich learns English and does it badly. Erich is regarded by Joyce as a “ridiculous buffoon in his Harris tweeds” (60). The visibility of Erich’s Anglo-philia is apparent, Joyce’s is less obvious. The fact that Erich believes that the Anglo-Irish writer William Butler Yeats is an exemplary part of the canon of English Literature is a deliberately pointed irony.

Kilroy in 1986 sets serious questions for national and international audiences, unlike at times today what seem like vacuum packed nostalgia and cosy, flat-packed, versions of Irishness that are being performed on international stages. Some of the play’s weaknesses become apparent, as many of them grow out of the need to be strenuously political, almost pamphlet-like, given that the production was mounted by Field Day, which Kilroy suggests was wrongly regarded as the literary wing of Republicanism. When the bombs fall during the air-raid, Bracken’s mask slips. He breaks into a “strong Tipperary accent” (43). The impersonator falters under the strain of violence and is betrayed by the mother tongue he could not erase. While this makes a good theatrical point it doesn’t succeed in making a psychological one nearly as well. At one stage in the play the Actress states: “England had offered him a dream of supremacy. When it failed to deliver, it would have to be punished, with the punishment of an invented rebellion over the air” (52). At such times in the play the actors/narrators say too much. Maybe that is the weakness not only of the play itself, but of the Irish tradition as well, to over-invest in the power of language and in the power of communication to expose ranked relationships.

And while the play is accomplished theatrically, it is over-reliant on the process and distancing of theatre rather than on the encounter and physicality of engagement.

(The distancing and control that Kilroy endeavours to assert in most of his plays corresponds with the type of distance and control he treasures in the writings of the Anglo-Irish writers.) One could also claim that play through destabilising possibilities can formulate and formulise some future through gesture, simulation, impersonation, through the thoroughness and dexterity of performance. Imitation is a form of self-defence, but also as a form of preservation, and it is this factor which is not teased out enough by Kilroy. It could be argued that play may well be too hemmed in by the boundaries of language and that language becomes the prison-house of identity. However, one can through play invent oneself, not only renew a previous reality, but foster a creative future.

Bracken fabricates his past and is not accepted for it. Joyce, thanks to his falsehood, dies because of it. Fundamentally, both are the victims of power's ultimate control, to falsely embrace you when it is convenient, to turn its back on you when necessary, or to allow you to believe you are inside, while all the time you are outside. Colonial strategy is to confuse one's status, to have visible hierarchies and invisible ones, but there is no passport to the comfort of sanctuary of that inner reality that is Britishness. Mimicking the imperialist power will not get you there, even if you gain access to government departments. At the Tory rally "Bracken for Britain" is the rehearsed chorus delivered (33), not that Bracken is British: one can be for "it" but still never of "it."

IV

The use of video and radio ensure that the principle of circularity or the Double Cross effect is made obvious; both Bracken and Joyce shape each other, as do Britain and Ireland. The intricate staging suggests alliance, disjunction and betrayal. Colonialism and post-colonial nationalism are about ideas as much as they are about violence and power: they are about restraining and mobilising people through ideas and images and both have serious propagandist purposes, with the former highlighting the fundamental lack and the inferior differences of the native, the latter promoting itself around idealised indignity and the fundamental need for absolute transformation, while the reality of transformation for most post-independence citizens is simply the exchange of one ruling hierarchy or elite for another. National identity is no simple rallying point for the colonised; instead, it can be something deeply problematic. As Kilroy states in his "Introduction" to the Gallery edition of the play in 1994: "What interested me was not so much nationalism as source of self-improvement... but nationalism as a dark burden, a source of trauma and debilitation. It was inevitable then, I suppose, that I should end up writing about a fascist" (15). Eight years on, Kilroy is aligning nationalism and fascism, but in previous statements he was suggesting that the absence of, or a seriously restricted national identity led to a type of fascism.

The flipping of the iconic leaders suggests not only interchangeability but also how close both sides were to each other. The possible alliance between Mosley's fas-

cists and Churchill's Conservatives to oppose Ramsay McDonald's Labour party is intriguing. The notional common enemy, politically and socially and economically was those deemed "other." On the one hand, the twisted logic of fascist ideology was just an extension of British imperialist practices toward natives and those outside the frame, and fascism's belief in supposed purity was just a more savage form of nationalism. The victim of imperialism internalises negativity. For some, they believe that the oppressor can be overcome by mimicking it, even inhabiting it. But the hierarchy and oppression implicit in such manoeuvrings must be recognised. The play posits the unnaturalness of fascism, yet how an imperial experience might naturalise it, if a nation offers only negative impressions of the self. If postmodernism stretches for the abolition of self, then post-colonialism rejects the notion of a diabolic and atrophied self and pushes for something more solid and the shedding of oppressive internalisations. Although both Joyce and Bracken are performers, both share an unconscious mutiny against a concept of Irishness, yet there is a real lack of ironic self-awareness by either character.

Anthony Roche wonders whether "there is a stable enduring identity behind all the protean impersonations?" (207) They, Bracken and Joyce, operate in the abject shadow of each other. Double crossing suggests the endurance of cheating, dishonesty and also liminality, the sheltering beneath what Kilroy calls "the mantle of character" where the only stable ingredient is performance, which is seldom if ever neutral. In terms of dramatic form, the inter-layering of the two acts, each with its own performance style, the casting of a single actor to play both Bracken and Joyce and the complex staging strategies are all vital to this ambitious play. The use of both the radio and the video screen which not only brings the characters together simultaneously but also shows how propaganda, seemingly innocuous broadcasts and personal and national narratives seduce the receiver. Kilroy optimises the impression of his script by interrelating all of the above. The irony of course is that such media devices are deployed to explore the complex mediated and mediatized realities in which one lives, exposing and exploding the whole notion of national identities that are overwhelmingly ranked, projected and performative, yet lethal in the case of the subalterns/subjugated for whom it is compensation to be accepted as he/she vanishes behind the mask of oppression.

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