

In spite of its obvious attraction for many, Sterne's awesome major work, *Tristram Shandy* did not find a translator to render it into Hungarian in full before the middle of the twentieth century. There was some sweeping around it though, as Döbrentei's *Life of Sterne* (1817) focussed on *Tristram Shandy*, giving a romanticized view of the author as the creative genius whose work enabled its readers to see the beauties of his digressions and capture the deeper meanings as well. Further on, Hartvig discusses an 1824 extract from *Tristram Shandy*, with the title "A Letter of Instruction on Courtship Meant for Bachelors," which rendered into Hungarian Walter Shandy's letter of advice to his brother on how he might conquer the heart of the Widow Wadman. It was published anonymously, and it is a special value of Hartvig's research of the subject that, having found the actual source of the extract, she managed to identify the translation as the work of Edvi Illés, an ambitious contributor to the periodical where the letter appeared. In the middle of the nineteenth century, however, interest in Sterne slackened, due to a strange coincidence of facts: by the time the institution of criticism had reached the state of being able to communicate the aesthetic values of foreign literature to Hungarian readers, eighteenth-century novel writers had fallen out of fashion. The book, thus, tells a narrative of many strands, digressions and varying fortunes, but Sterne-loving readers will hardly be puzzled by the phenomenon.

Finally, two problems need to be mentioned. In spite of its formidable philological apparatus, the book perhaps cites from secondary sources slightly overmuch. On the other hand, given the abundance of names, titles, and contextual references, an index from the end of the volume is gravely missing. All in all, however, Gabriella Hartvig's study of Laurence Sterne in Hungary in context and in perspective—to complete her modest title—qualifies as an intriguing scholarly achievement that well deserves being added to the critical library of those interested in the English and Anglo-Irish novel, English-Hungarian literary relations, and the cultural history of the reception and translation of foreign literatures in Hungary.

*From Brooke to Black Pastoral: Six Studies in Irish Literature and Culture. Litteraria Pragensia* 10.20 (2000). 101 pp.

Zsuzsa Csikai

The editors of this special issue of *Litteraria Pragensia*, the publication of the Faculty of Arts of Charles University, Prague, hope to illuminate certain issues of the current debate in Irish literary and cultural studies. They perceive that contemporary writing in and on Ireland demonstrates a strong intention of writers to advocate a "plurality of perspectives on the general cultural issues" (1), and to reflect this phenomenon in their publication the editors selected essays that are not unified in terms of either a specified theme or a critical approach.

In his essay "Charlotte Brooke and James Macpherson," Micheal MacCraith shows how Charlotte Brooke's *Reliques of Irish Poetry* contrasts with and subtly discredits Macpherson's plagiarisms. By including genuine Gaelic Irish versions of the plagiarist's alleged Scottish originals when compiling her own translations for the anthology, Brooks seems to implicitly argue her scepticism concerning the authenticity and provenance of Macpherson's Ossianic poems. McCraith also claims that the

Ossianic debate influenced Brooks to concern herself with the careful dating, as a means of authentication, of her own selection of poems.

In his contribution bearing the title "Black Pastoral: 1990s Images of Ireland," Nicholas Grene explores how the traditional literary image of Ireland as a site for pastoral and glorified source of origin is resisted and subverted by writers of the 1990s. He looks at the images of the mother, the emigrant and the child in Martin McDonagh's play *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, Frank McCourt's memoir *Angela's Ashes* and *The Butcher Boy*, Neil Jordan's film based on Patrick McCabe's novel, and argues that a strongly discernible feature of them is their turning "the green idyll of Ireland into a black dystopia" (68), which is a reflection on the Irish having achieved a point of modern maturity, where they "can play sardonically with the idea of Ireland as the pastoral other" (75).

Maria Kurdi's article on "Strategies of Adaptation on the Contemporary Irish Stage" deals with the great interest contemporary Irish playwrights show in producing dramatic adaptations of earlier texts, whereby the boundaries between translation and rewriting become blurred. Arguing that "translation in the form of carrying over by recreation" (53) was central to the hybridized and bilingual Ireland of the nineteenth century, Kurdi shows how this tradition is still present in post-colonial Irish writing. She analyzes the strategies employed in a number of Irish adaptations that typically draw on originals from four main theatrical traditions: the modern Russian and Western European theatres, the Greek classics, and the Anglo-Irish playwrights of the colonial period. Her article discusses how these adaptations address important contemporary Irish issues like those of language, identity, resistance to patriarchal rule, or violence to achieve liberation.

Clare Wallace's "'A Crossroads between Worlds': Marina Carr and the Use of Tragedy" deals with the plays of the young playwright of increasing importance by discussing "Carr's conceptualization of the tragic and her inflection of particular generic aspects of tragedy" (77) in three works that are considered as a trilogy: *The Mai*, *Portia Coughlan*, and *By the Bog of Cats*. The author attributes Carr's great popularity partly to her combination of "powerfully traumatic stories with a fluidity of language and bleak humour" (76), providing the audience with the high entertainment of tragedy. Wallace also ponders the question "as to what Carr's adoption of tragedy as a form and tragic vision might signify" (88), but provides only tentative answers, suggesting that what lies behind is "an atavistic drive (of the audience) to interpret human struggle with the framework of a 'high culture' tragic tradition" (89), and sees Carr's tragic vision and her voice of curiously intense despair as "the reflection of the violence commonplace in the popular media and film" (89).

Ondrej Pilný focuses on the work of Brian Friel and the Field Day project, assuming that Jean-Francois Lyotard's views spelt out in *The Postmodern Condition* were influencing its theoretical position. He argues that alongside the post-colonial interpretation there is a need to consider the crucial role of the concept of narrative systems, and claims that Friel's plays of the Field Day period show an awareness of "the flaws of Lyotard's utopian vision" (2), that is, the failure of tackling the "mechanisms of communication among individual narratives" (2), and he sets out to demonstrate/explore how the Friel plays dismantle meta-narratives with a view to a plurality of narratives.

Louis Armand re-examines the famous "disquisition on the tundish" in Joyce's *A*

*Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and contends that it has more to it than its traditional reading as an example of colonial domination. Armand gives a deconstructive reading of the relevant episode in which he finds an ironic subtext and also the suggestion how decentering the origin of the English language “raises doubts about asserting any straightforward relationship of a ‘subject’ to language, in which his subject is considered a ‘colonial subject’” (28). According to him, as soon as the subject becomes part of the discourse, the “assumption of cultural or linguistic sovereignty” (30) exhausts itself.

By carefully selecting individual articles that analyze such diverse concerns of Irish culture and literature, Ondrej Pilný, the executive editor of *Litteraria Pragensia*, whose words introduce the publication, and his co-editors have presented the readers with a plurality of new and illuminating perspectives on Irish cultural studies. Their special issue is indeed a valuable source for anyone with an interest in things Irish.

**Challenging Stereotypes, Lacking Alternatives?: Mapping the Irish Theatre of the Last Twenty Years.** Bolger, Dermot, ed. *Druids, Dudes and Beauty Queens: The Changing Face of Irish Theatre*. Dublin: New Island, 2001. 302 pp.

### Ondrej Pilný

After *Theatre Stuff* (edited by Eamonn Jordan, 2000), this is another important collection of essays focused on the variegated nature of contemporary theatre in Ireland in a relatively short time. One of the reasons why *Druids, Dudes and Beauty Queens* surpasses (never mind its tacky title) its predecessor is that it brings together not only academics and theatre critics but also a large number of theatre practitioners and observers, in order to facilitate different perspectives on the theatre and to cater for all its aspects—literary, practical and social, domestic and international.

One of the highlights of the volume is the analysis of the recent elevation of playwrights Martin McDonagh and Marina Carr to the status of major stars of the Irish stage. In a brilliant article on McDonagh’s Leenane trilogy, *The Irish Times*’ John Waters offers a poignant examination of what he calls an “Irish neurosis”: Irish audiences may be roaring with laughter at the sight of McDonagh’s absurd caricatures; however, their guffaws are always accompanied by a profound sense of unease, as the plays really deal—according to Waters—with the traumatic, grim past of material and spiritual poverty of rural Ireland. Waters claims that McDonagh’s mastery rests in being able to “deal in the things which a society seeks to conceal or avoid, while not alienating that society entirely” (53). In other words, McDonagh manages to coat a bitter pill with enough humour or entertainment to avoid a violent reception of his work. Moreover, as a contributing factor to the playwright’s popularity Waters enlists also the fact that many Irish people admire McDonagh because they wish to “maintain their sense of oppression by the disturbing forces of an Ireland which no longer exists,” such as the secular influence of the Church, the mechanisms of a patriarchal society or the vision of Ireland as a pastoral rural country (37).

Vic Merriman takes an opposite view in his article on the “excess and success” of McDonagh and Carr. According to Merriman, these playwrights “stage Ireland as a benighted dystopia,” while the performances of violence are “calibrated to the tastes of