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Papers in English Literary and Cultural Studies XIII

Issue on
Interwar Modernisms in Context;
Their Predecessors and Legacy

Edited by

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Institute of English Studies
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University of Pécs

Pécs
2022

Published by
Institute of English Studies
Department of English Literatures and Cultures
University of Pécs
Pécs 2022

HU ISSN 1585-5228

FOCUS: Papers in English Literary and Cultural Studies XIII

Printed at Kontraszt plusz kft., Pécs

The publication of this volume has been made possible by the generous financial help of the University of Pécs, Hungary.

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Introduction

Considering its international cultural and literary output, 1922, a year within the period called "high modernism," is widely called an *Annus Mirabilis.* 2022 marks the centenary of the publication of ground-breaking Anglophone modernist works, primarily T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land,* F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tales of the Jazz Age*, James Joyce's *Ulysses*, G. B. Shaw's *Back to Methuselah*, Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room*, and *Later Poems* by William Butler Yeats. 1922 was also the year when Ireland regained its freedom after centuries of British colonial rule. Inspired by these centenaries the editors, Gabriella Vöő, Mária Kurdi, and Bence Gábor Kvéder decided to define the theme of this 2022 issue of *FOCUS: Papers in English Literary and Cultural Studies* in the broadest possible terms as "Interwar Modernisms in Context; Their Predecessors and Legacy." Under this heading, the issue contains five essays on literature and theatre, two articles written in memory of colleagues whose oeuvre included significant analyses of interwar historical, cultural and literary phenomena, as well as six book reviews. The authors are from Hungary and other countries, including the United Kingdom, the United States, Taiwan and Turkey.

Among the essays, the first three are each concerned with modernist literary works, a novel, a drama and an autobiography, respectively. Angelika Reichmann's contribution, "Ford Madox Ford's 'Cold Pastoral': *The Last Post*" revisits the concluding novel of the writer's tetralogy, *Parade's End* (1924-28). *The Last Post* (1928) has long been regarded as the least accomplished piece of the "Tietjens Saga" because the ending apparently smooths over the devastating effects of the Great War on its cast of characters and veers towards a conventional closure. The central characters fall back to stereotypical patterns, and the tragic mode of the preliminary volumes modulates into an awkward pastoral. Reichmann, however, agrees with those interpretations of *The Last Post* that, like Paul Saint-Amour's, consider such "failures" to be essential components of Ford's experimentalism and critique. Her perceptive reading reveals that the harmony at the end of the novel is subverted by discernible elements of the Gothic mode which undermine the pastoral idyll. Thus, what might be seen as a facile closure may in fact be Ford Madox Ford's powerful statement that condemns the devastation of war and the morally and intellectually diminished world of post-war Britain. Reichmann's analysis of *The Last Post* leads to the persuasive conclusion that the salient themes of Ford's novel are not regeneration and the prospect of utopian renewal but the sense of loss and disorientation.

Bence Gábor Kvéder's essay, "Back and Forth to Methuselah: Utopia, Dystopia, and Problematizing Age and Longevity in G. B. Shaw's Interwar Play Cycle" inquires into *Back to Methuselah*, a monumental work of five interconnected plays from five different and, to an extent, imaginary eras of human history and civilization. After the straightforward response to the horrors of the First World War in *Heartbreak*

House (1919), in Kvéder's view the later work offers an allegorical reflection on the aftermath of the military events that reshaped, among several fields of culture, both political and philosophical attitudes in Europe. The author claims that by reaching back to biblical sources and origin myths, as well as forward to futuristic settings and certain predictions, *Back to Methuselah* is a representative of *interwar utopianism*. The essay presents a reading of the drama as both a modernist piece of utopian literature and an authorial answer to wartime inhumanity, anticipating, at the same time, the later discourse of posthumanism. Relying on theoretical approaches and standpoints of recent scholarship, Kvéder examines the forward-looking plot(s), interwar significance, and present-day relevance of what he calls G. B. Shaw's utopian sci-fi drama cycle.

In "'I let down my nets and pulled': Langston Hughes's *The Big Sea* (1940) as a Slave-Narrative Inspired Autobiography" András Tarnóc explores the indebtedness of modernist autobiography produced during the Harlem Renaissance to an older form of the genre, the American slave narrative. Through the lens of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century slave narrative, his targeted analysis of *The Big Sea* expands on criticism, highlighting the enormous relevance and long-lasting influence of the slave narrative in African American culture. Hughes, like Olaudah Equiano, Frederick Douglass, or Henry Bibb before him, performs against the odds of racial and social oppression, the self-authenticating act of "writing himself into being." Tarnóc points out that the conditions of Hughes' upbringing, extensive travels to Mexico, Africa and the American South, as well as his struggle for personal integrity, fall into the pattern of symbolic death, decision to escape, confrontation with repressive forces, and self-liberation through education and, finally, the assumption of agency that characterize the slave narrative. His perceptive analysis of *The Big Sea* illuminates the larger historical and intellectual context of Langston Hughes's ordeals and revelations on his way to self-discovery both as an intellectual and as a writer.

The last two papers discuss influences on and legacies of modernist interwar drama. José Lanters' contribution focuses on a post-war play by Donagh MacDonagh, first performed in 1951, under the title "'Tinkers' in Verse: The Dublin Gate Theatre's Production of Donagh MacDonagh's *God's Gentry* (1951)." The essay describes the play as both an innovative, late modernist take on the verse drama and the ballad opera as well as a politically and economically aware, satirical depiction of the Irish social class referred to as Travellers, also known as "tinkers" at that time. Assessing the most probable direct influences and the mid-twentieth-century reception of the play, the author looks at its literary and cultural predecessors, especially the verse drama of T. S. Eliot in the interwar period, as well as its admittedly rather problematic place in Irish theater. Lanters enumerates and examines the various folk elements (e.g. clothes, music, and dancing) incorporated into the staged drama and also draws attention to the religious aspects of the power structure depicted in it, considering the dramaturgy of the first performances an example of total theater. In Lanters' reading, comprehensive textual analysis is accompanied by comments on the theatrical gimmicks of the set designers and by remarks about certain behind-the-scenes details derived from the archived sources related to this unpublished piece of Irish dramatic literature.

Wei H. Kao's essay, "Heroes on Stage: Robert Emmet, Charles Parnell, and Michael Collins in Three Irish Plays from Interwar Avant-garde to the 1990s" provides an analysis of the various ways in which Irish theaters supported or opposed the practice of depicting some popular and oftentimes heavily mythicized national heroes in staged productions. The author analyzes three plays based on the lives of three revered Irishmen whose contemporary evaluation has proven ambiguous enough to match the ambivalent feelings associated with being Irish in the twentieth century. The plays under discussion are Dennis Johnston's *The Old Lady Says 'No!'* (1929), Larry Kirwan's *Mister Parnell* (1992), and Tom MacIntyre's *Good Evening, Mr Collins* (1995), which portray recognized but controversial national heroes from three different periods of modern Irish history. Written during the interwar modernist period and reaching back to a time over a century before, Johnston's drama is known in the theatre world for the iconoclastic approach it takes and its radical avant-garde innovations. As the article highlights, the other two plays follow the Johnstonian legacy in their choice of dramaturgies which show the historical figures and events on the stage from several angles while they also expose and critique the shortcomings of propagandistic myth-creation.

In the "In Memoriam" section, there are two pieces. "In Memory of Tibor Frank" by Enikő Bollobás commemorates her former colleague and friend, the Humboldt Prize-winning historian Tibor Frank, professor emeritus of Eötvös Loránd University, full member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and corresponding fellow of the Royal Historical Society in London, who passed away in September 2022, at the age of 74. Bollobás makes an account of Frank's life and achievements as a person actively cherishing the memory of his ancestors, a professor teaching at ELTE and at two American universities in his younger years, a distinguished professor of history and a scholar with a many-sided output. Sampling the richness of his scholarship, Bollobás claims that, perhaps, Migration Studies were foremost among his research areas, extending to the topic of Hungarian-American and European-American relations in the interwar period. Mária Kurdi's writing in the same section, "A Most Distinguished Hungarian Scholar of Eugene O'Neill: In Memoriam Péter Egri (1932-2002)," commemorates a professor and scholar whose work embraced a broad range of subjects, from Shakespeare to Beckett. Nevertheless, the main field of his research included the greatest representatives of English language modernism, O'Neill and Joyce in particular, about whom he published books and numerous articles. Kurdi emphasizes that Péter Egri contributed a great deal to international O'Neill scholarship, probably leading the line in this respect among the countries of this region.

The six book reviews in the present journal issue inform the reader about books and edited collections published in the years 1919-2022. Regarding the subject of the books they are reviewing, they are arranged in chronological order. Andrew C. Rouse writes on Ian Keable's *The Century of Deception: The Birth of the Hoax in Eighteenth-Century England*, introducing it as a book we are justified to call interdisciplinary today as it explores the joint issues of gullibility and subterfuge from many angles, including references to the authors of early English prose fiction as well. Linda Charlton's study, *Jane Austen and Reflective Selfhood: Rereading the Self,* is reviewed by Rebeka Petra Simon, who highlights that the author examines Austen's works and

characters through the lens of eighteenth-century philosophies of selfhood and their bearing on individual identity and moral judgment. Viktória Osoliová's review of *The Haunted House in Women's Ghost Stories: Gender, Space and Modernity, 1850–1945* by Emma Liggins underscores that the book spans over several decades of women's fiction to offer its readers a "feminist history of the ghost story." Jessica Cox's *Neo-Victorianism and Sensation Fiction,* as reviewed by Özlem Demirel, introduces the reader to the corpus and methodology applied by Cox and the various textual analyses conducted in the book. Mária Kurdi has contributed two book reviews to this journal issue. In the first, *Plays by Women in Ireland (1926-33): Feminist Theatres of Freedom and Resistance,* edited by Lisa Fitzpatrick and Shonagh Hill, she provides an overview of a collection of plays written during the early years of post-independence Ireland which coincided with those of interwar modernism. Acknowledging the selection and goals of the editors, the reviewer expresses her hope that these works by women authors will have a wider audience in the future. Kurdi's other review celebrates the publication of a collection of essays which is the result of co-operation of scholars from Hungary and other countries on Samuel Beckett, intriguingly titled *Influencing Beckett / Beckett Influencing.* In addition to assessing the respective subjects of the contributors' analyses the reviewer calls attention to the interconnected ways in which the essays approach the central theme of the book, that of influence.

Finally, we the editors express our thanks and gratitude to all the contributors for their essays, book reviews, and commemorative articles. Our special thanks go to the invited members of the advisory board for this particular issue, whose generous help has proved indispensable in the process of bringing the submitted texts into their final form. The publication of this issue was made possible by the financial support of the University of Pécs. We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Dávid Lovász and Ivett Krizsán in publishing *FOCUS* as an online Open Access journal. We also greatly appreciate the technical expertise of those who added the final touches to the issue: Lázár Vértes for the work of typesetting and Kontraszt Plusz Kft. for printing. Hopefully, the material of *FOCUS* 2022 will reach many readers in academia, whose comments and criticism we are eager to hear or read about.

The Editors
Gabriella Vőő, Mária Kurdi, and Bence Gábor Kvéder
December 2022

Essays

Ford Madox Ford's "Cold Pastoral": *The Last Post*

Angelika Reichmann

Abstract

The essay discusses the last volume of Ford Madox Ford's tetralogy *Parade's End* (1924-28). As Andrew Hampson and Robert Purssell highlight, whether *The Last Post* is an integral part of the tetralogy has been heavily debated since Graham Greene decided to publish the 1963 edition of the 'Tietjens Saga' as a trilogy. As they go on to explain, a major charge against the volume is "tying up too neatly various loose ends" (2013). Indeed, *The Last Post* seems to call for an interpretation in the pastoral tradition, which suggests that Ford's novel—especially in comparison with Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* (1918)—ends in an idyll even if it is not free from certain ironies inherent in pastoral literature, as Seamus O'Malley (2007) maintains. In my view, on closer scrutiny, these ironies fundamentally undermine the "too neat" ending of the tetralogy. Haunted by the aftereffects of war and the ghosts of Mark's, Christopher's and Valentine's former selves, dissolving identities not only by decentering but also by doubling, this apparent idyll far too often offers glimpses of its own Gothic alter ego, a narrative of madness, imprisonment and disintegration. Yet, as consistent readings of the novel in the pastoral mode imply, the Gothic double never fully takes over but, in my interpretation, subverts the superficial idyll of *The Last Post,* and with that, fully optimistic interpretations of the entire tetralogy.

Keywords: pastoral, *Bildungsroman,* Gothic, irony, subversion

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Although Ford Madox Ford is having a Renaissance and *Parade's End* (1924-28), his tetralogy about the Great War, has more or less achieved canonical status, its critical reception—and especially the assessment of the fourth volume, *The Last Post* (1928)—is still fraught with controversies. As recently as 2015, Paul K. Saint-Amour could still write about the "broad dismissal" of *Parade's End* and his own reading of it in terms of highly experimental encyclopaedic fiction, to be discussed on a par with *Ulysses* (1922) or *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), as going against the "critical consensus." In his view, central to the accepted understanding of the tetralogy is the impression that it fails to fulfil its own promises by never following through the experimental solutions it sporadically features (268). Saint-Amour, in turn, sees especially in these features, 'failures' to be consistent, moreover, the key to what Vincent Sherry terms Ford's "counter-conventional" approach (qtd. in Saint-Amour 280) to the traumatic experience of the first total war. In Saint-Amour's view, by offering a

fragmented and impressionistic encyclopaedia of genres and narrative techniques,[1] including traditional nineteenth-century modes of writing, Ford rejects and resists the "coherentist" urge of literature (Saint-Amour 277-281) in representing what T. S. Eliot in his famous *Ulysses* review calls "the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history" (483). It is in this context that Saint-Amour takes a firm stance in the heated debate still surrounding *The Last Post* and argues that, let alone being "a disaster which has delayed a full critical appreciation of *Parade's End*" (Graham Greene qtd. in Saint-Amour 294),[2] the last volume might actually be the most experimental among the four:

> *Last Post* is the tetralogy's most counter-conventional volume in retreating from the world stage and in trading the central observer for a decentered ensemble. [...] Its opening is focalized through Mark Tietjens, silent and confined to his bed on a terrace overlooking four counties. Dodging in and out of narrative registers from omniscient third-person to free indirect discourse to interior monologue, subsequent chapters shift to [various minor characters]. [...] Where the flickering experimentalism of the earlier volumes glimpsed a series of stylistically and generically alternative tetralogies, *Last Post*'s rapid handoffs in point of view make protagonism itself subjunctive. (296–297)

Nonetheless, *The Last Post* might create the impression of a "paradise regained [that] betray[s] [...] the rest of the tetralogy" (Saint-Amour 294), which suggests that its duly noted affinities with the pastoral tradition are a prime cause for its apparent conventionality: an overly happy ending that glosses over the disaster of the Great War far too easily. Ford's novel—especially in comparison with Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* (1918), as Seamus O'Malley's comparative study demonstrates—seemingly ends in an idyll, even if it is not free from ironies inherent to pastoral

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1 For detailed analyses of Ford's narrative technique in *Parade's End* and especially its connection with shell shock see (Bonikowski 57–94; Haslam, *Fragmenting* 84-117).

2 It is a commonplace in Ford criticism that the status of *The Last Post*—whether it is an integral part of the tetralogy or not—has been heavily debated since Graham Greene decided to publish the 1963 Bodley Head edition of the 'Tietjens Saga' as a trilogy. As the editors of the recent Wordsworth omnibus edition explain, a major issue with the volume is "tying up too neatly various loose ends"—a charge of artistic inferiority which seems to be confirmed by Ford's own (hesitant) withdrawal of *The Last Post* from the tetralogy (Hampson and Purssell; cf. Saint-Amour 294–295; Christensen 22). As Saint-Amour also notes, popular culture, namely the recent 2012 BBC miniseries adaptation of the 'Tietjens Saga,' corroborates this critical assessment (295). Dropping the fourth volume, Tom Stoppard's critically acclaimed screenplay does not simply replace a "too neat" ending with an open one—the celebration on Armistice Day at the end of Ford's third volume, *A Man Could Stand Up*—but also exchanges an idyll too clearly haunted by the Great War for the hope of full regeneration. The detailed interpretation of Stoppard's solution falls beyond the scope of the present study. One of Ford's most fervent admirers, though, who would clearly go against the "critical consensus" evoked by Saint-Amour above—and would "never forgive [Greene] for omitting the fourth and final volume of the *Parade's End* series" (Mill 219)—was Anthony Burgess. In a 1980 essay he insisted that *Parade's End* was not only "the finest novel about the First World War," but also "about the nature of British society" (Burgess qtd. in Mill 219).

literature.[3] Thus, *The Last Post* as an ending suggests an optimistic reading of the tetralogy (O'Malley 156) in which Tietjens is "liberated by the war" (O'Malley 159) to be symbolically reborn from the mud of the trenches and to undergo a positive transformation (O'Malley 162), much in accordance with the patterns of the *Bildungsroman* (see Christensen 19).

In my view, upon closer scrutiny the ironies of *The Last Post* prove to be too grave to be compatible with pastoral literature and are instrumental to the effect that the fourth volume is indeed "irreducible to the element of nostalgic pastoral" (Saint-Amour 298). These ironies include Valentine Wannop's subjugation in an apparently fully patriarchal relationship with Christopher Tietjens and her abandonment of feminist ideals, the lingering effects of Christopher Tietjens' shell shock, the paralysed and muted Mark Tietjens' assumption of the central role in the novel, and the deferral of Christopher's own utopian dream to an indefinite future in Valentine's wishful thinking about her unborn son. Haunted by the aftereffects of war and ghosts of Mark's, Christopher's and Valentine's former selves, dissolving identities not only by decentering but also by doubling, this apparent idyll far too often offers glimpses of its own Gothic alter ego, a narrative of madness, imprisonment and disintegration. Yet—(to return to Saint-Amour)—Ford's resistance to "coherentist" urges is also clearly traceable in his balancing between these two modes: as consistent readings of the novel in the pastoral mode imply, the Gothic double never fully takes over, but—in my view—subverts the superficial idyll of *The Last Post* and with that, fully optimistic interpretations of the entire tetralogy.[4]

Valentine Wannop: From Blue Stockings to Pink Silk

The core of Ford's presumably simplistic solution is the apparently idyllic fulfilment of Christopher Tietjens' affair with Valentine Wannop in a bucolic environment: after many years of longing and frustrated desire, *The Last Post* features the pair set up in rural England years after the Great War, and Valentine expecting their first-born. Valentine's radical transformation in the fourth volume, however, undermines this idyll in a disturbing manner: the ironic contrast of her present and former selves might make one wonder whether the term fulfilment is relevant at all to her career, her relationship with Tietjens, and the large-scale symbolic promises both held out during the war.

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3 Relying on Annabel Patterson, O'Malley speaks of "pastoral's inherent irony," which resides in the fact that "suggestions of war and battle have always been implicit in the pastoral mode" (159).

4 The effect is thus similar to what Nick Hubble calls "Ford's parallax view." Hubble associates the parallax shift—the revelation of "the object's non-coincidence with itself" through a shift of perspective—with "ironical humility," the simultaneous exaggeration and rejection of social rank and distances (170-171), in Ford's novels, including *Parade's End* (185–186). The present analysis rather identifies ironic twists or ironies of fate, yet their effect—the maintenance of a double vision—seems to be strikingly similar to what Hubble, and indeed, Saint-Amour, hold to be central to Ford's experimental writing. In ascribing a definitive role to the last volume of *Parade's End* in the interpretation of the entire tetralogy, I rely on Peter Brooks' critical insights advanced in *Reading for the Plot* (especially 3-36), which assert that narratives are interpreted retrospectively, in the light of their ending.

In fact, Valentine's transformation is so conspicuous that it could not go unnoticed among Ford scholars. Isabel Brasme's interpretation of the tetralogy's female characters is a case in point: she follows the trajectory of Valentine's transformation from a "torchbearer for social and political autonomy" (173) in the first three volumes into an "epigone" of the Angel in the House (179) in *The Last Post.* Indeed, as Christopher Tietjens' interior monologue suggests right upon their first acquaintance, it is Valentine's being a "militant" feminist (Ford) that largely makes her Christopher's intellectual partner and love interest, his "feminine counterpart" (Brasme 178). This proposition—together with the lingering but finally dissolved suspicion that they might be half-siblings—even connotes narcissistic overtones to his infatuation:

> Then thank God for the upright young man and the virtuous maiden in the summer fields: he Tory of the Tories as he should be: she suffragette of the militants: militant here on earth . . . as she should be! [...] Thank God then for the Tory, upright young married man and the suffragette kid . . . Backbone of England! (Ford, ellipsis in the original)

As Tietjens' last exclamation implies, the fact that Valentine is a positive embodiment of New Womanhood (see Flanagan 37)[5] throughout their unfulfilled romance is also key to the pair's role as trustees of England's future in Ford's condition of England novel.[6] In stark contrast to Sylvia's stereotypically oversexualized, predatory, *femme fatale*-like femininity,[7] Valentine's agency is both shown to be continuous with proto-feminist ideals of womanhood voiced by Mary Wollstonecraft (Brasme 177), and in its modernity essential for a break with the codes of Victorian patriarchal society, which she—along with Ford (Saint-Amour 286-287)—holds responsible for the apocalypse of the First World War (Brasme 176). Therefore, in my view, both her transformation and its implications deserve closer scrutiny: the disappearance of the first three volume's Valentine from *The Last Post* both disrupts the illusion of idyll and undermines the utopian resolution to the condition of England question that such an idyll entails.

Though Sally Ledger's claim that the New Woman was largely a "discursive phenomenon" (3) has acquired much currency, as for instance, Tracy Collins notes, it does not—and should not—stop critics from recognising New Woman characters in *fin de siècle* fiction (309). Collins provides a list of the well-known features by which this "abstraction" can be identified (310), but I would rather refrain from quoting it: Valentine fits the bill so perfectly that her description can effectively replace Collins' list. Being a professor's daughter, Valentine is well-educated and ready to use her

5 Here I beg to differ from Brasme, who interprets Sylvia Tietjens' violent quest for agency, though with major reservations, in the context of New Womanhood (180-184).

6 For an analysis and critique of Ford's tetralogy as a condition of England novel see (Christensen passim).

7 Though Ford's support of the suffragette movement is well-known and even allows Brasme to call him a feminist (175), his often pointed out conflation of the war conflict with the domestic one (for instance Saint-Amour 287-289) and casting Sylvia as the villain pulling the strings in both—almost a power of pure, arbitrary evil—appears to be most incongruous with a feminist stance.

intelligence to secure her financial independence—though she does not shy away from manual labour to provide for those dependent on her, either. Thus, she works as a writer's assistant, as a teacher, even as a maid, becoming the breadwinner of her family in the war years. She pointedly seems to have no concern with appearances, as Brasme also highlights (174), and is consistently represented as being highly intelligent. Nevertheless, her athletic body—the body the New Woman gained from *Punch* in the last two decades of the nineteenth century (Collins 310)—and bobbed hair also make her decidedly attractive. Her New Woman-like search for "freedom and equality with men" (Collins 310) is conspicuously reflected in her disregard for gendered separate spheres: she is consistently associated with open and public (male) spaces (Brasme 175) and behaviours. This is best exemplified by her spectacular entry into the novel's world in the shape of a militant suffragette crashing a golf course and negotiating a ditch by a superb long jump when chased by a comically unfit police officer. Her involvement in politics—and the women's rights movement, at that—is in itself a rebellion against patriarchal norms of passive femininity (see Brasme 176) and a transgression of the separate spheres divide. Her oppositional attitude is further aggravated by the pacifist political stance Valentine takes during the war years permeated by patriotic propaganda (see Brasme 177). In short, as Tietjens' "feminine counterpart," the first three volumes' Valentine Wannop holds out a promise of a post-war future that breaks with the patriarchal system at the root cause of war—and thereby establishes a utopia in which no further wars are possible.[8]

In my view, it is in this context that the implications of Valentine's transformation—and its Gothic overtones—gain their full significance. To start with, it is hard to disagree with Brasme's above-quoted insight according to which in the one-chapter Valentine's stream of consciousness takes up in *The Last Post*; she makes the impression of wholeheartedly returning to Victorian models of femininity, though she remains painfully conscious of her inadequacy in doing so. This divorce from her earlier self surfaces in a number of ways. First of all, in contrast to her earlier freedom and transgression into open spaces, she now appears to be mentally entrapped in the feminine sphere, which is yet emphatically controlled by masculine power. Her thoughts now seem to revolve exclusively, obsessively and at the same time claustrophobically around household matters: the house itself, housekeeping, farming, the costs of living and their financial constraints are all she can think of. This pattern is broken only when she refocuses on the men who, even in their absence, dominate her life: Christopher and their unborn son, Chrissie. Her relapse to Victorian patterns of thought is best demonstrated by her desire solidified into the conviction that she should have a son and thereby continue the male lineage of the Tietjens family. The self-denial implicit here explicitly appears in a buffalo metaphor for the Tietjenses, which connotes her complete and voluntary subjugation to energetic, but

8 Saint-Amour—quoting Ford himself—identifies this as the "tetralogy's central aim": "I have always had the greatest contempt for novels written with a purpose. Fiction should render and not draw morals. But, when I sat down to write that series of volumes, I sinned against my gods to the extent of saying that I was going—to the level of the light vouchsafed me—to write a work that should have for its purpose the obviating of all future wars" (270).

also aggressive, potentially even toxic masculinity. Indeed, her major concern is that such masculinity should be sustained: "living with Tietjenses. It was like being tied to buffaloes! And yet . . . How you wanted them to charge!" (Ford, ellipsis in the original). Secondly, regardless of her complete conformation to traditional feminine models—or rather because of it—insecurity becomes a new constant of Valentine's character. Thus, for instance, self-reproach on her inferiority to her sister-in-law, Marie Léonie, a self-satisfied impossible mixture of French lover turned into lady-*cum*-nurse-*cum*-perfect housewife, obsessively surfaces in Valentine's thoughts. For one thing, as she recalls, "as Marie Léonie had perforce taken over the housekeeping [when Valentine's pregnancy became apparent], they had found things easing off a little. Marie Léonie had run the house for thirty shillings a week less than she, Valentine, had ever been able to do—and run it streets better. Streets and streets!" (Ford). Also, the once careless blue stocking now feels pressured to conform to the stereotypical feminine model of commodity culture, the object of male desire who sustains her desirability through expensive purchases: "Marie Léonie was of opinion that she would lose Christopher if she did not deluge herself with a perfume called Houbigant and wear pink silk next the skin" (Ford). Though this advice is voiced by her sister-in-law—a French woman stereotypically better versed in issues of gender and femininity—the epitome of this feminine ideal is Sylvia herself (cf. Brasme 181). Is Valentine becoming a faint shadow of her archenemy, the feminine model she used to detest and still fears? She is constantly worried by not being legally wedded to Christopher and thus usurping the name Mrs. Tietjens for the sake of decency, to the point of apologising to Sylvia for being called Mrs. Tietjens to her face, which again suggests a sense of inferiority and insecurity. These feelings are intertwined with a third major change in Valentine: she is forced into a passivity diametrically opposed to her earlier activity, for which her condition is both a cause and an excuse. Thus, she feels remorse for not standing up for Christopher in the case of Groby Great Tree: "Well, she had been run down . . . At that stage of parturition, call it, a woman is run down and hysterical" (Ford, ellipsis in the original). Indeed, Valentine enters the scene in *The Last Post*—in stark contrast to the athletic figure in *Some Do Not...*—on the note of mental and physical frailty, which is only apparently explained away by her pregnancy. At the beginning of her stream-of-consciousness chapter she is, quite symbolically, woken to the reality of a potentially disastrous day—the uninvited visit of Sylvia and her company—from a passive daytime slumber, feeling "dizzy and sickish with the change of position and the haste—and violently impatient of her condition" (Ford). Yet, her weakness seems to be rooted rather in her general insecurity caused by living in an extramarital relationship and the social stigma it entails. As she mentally puts it, she is living "in open sin" (Ford). All in all, if Valentine used to be a "feminine counterpart" to Tietjens, almost his incestuous double, her transformation into a faint shadow of her former self suggests not idyllic fulfilment, but disintegration, not *Bildung,* but "an anti-*Bildungsroman*, a novel which involves the forfeiture rather than consolidation of the protagonist's self" (Marais 79).

Actually, the frail and troubled, passively confined Valentine of *The Last Post* is just as much reminiscent of the Angel in the House as her Gothic double, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's well-known concept of the madwoman in the attic. Valentine

seems to be almost paranoidly shy of her condition: not only does she regard all customers coming to their house as "intruders," but her fears are also tainted by the supernatural: "You never knew who was coming. It was eerie; at times she shivered over it. You seemed to be beset—with stealthy people, creeping up all the paths" (Ford). Feeling relatively safe only in the house, she becomes an "embodiment of the doctrine of 'separate spheres'" (Brasme 179) by keeping to her first-floor bedroom—if not an attic, certainly a room at the top that has "a barrel-shaped ceiling, following the lines of the roof almost up to the roof-tree" (Ford). Her self-afflicted confinement—she accidentally locks herself in the room and is unable to get out for a while to call for help for the dying Mark—is on the one hand strongly reminiscent of pregnant women's traditional seclusion in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England. On the other hand, her constant anxieties and voluntary imprisonment recall the marriage environment of eighteenth-century women, the one that—according to Tania Modleski's insight—provided a fertile soil for "delusions of persecution" and emergent Gothic fantasies and literature (55). This sense of Valentine's mental instability is further strengthened when, as a faint reminder of her former activity and self-reliance, she finally, after much struggle with lock and key, manages to get out of her room and call the doctor: she is just as much concerned about Mark's well-being as getting a mild sedative (bromide) for herself. Is she an addict, a caged wild animal who is able to cope with her situation only in chemically induced stupor? Indeed, Valentine's mental state, taken together with her past and present transgressions on patriarchal norms, contextualise her present predicament as patriarchal society's punishment for her rebellion, only at one remove from the forced imprisonment of the monstrous madwoman (Gilbert and Gubar 79), a *topos* of the Gothic tradition (Gilbert and Gubar 83-84). Her acceptance of her situation—or rather, her complicity in it, as the above-quoted buffalo metaphor suggests—gestures towards the acceptance of female identity centred around (self-)victimisation in male Gothic (see Kilgour 37-38). Even her confrontation with Sylvia ends in a Gothic cliché: like the classic persecuted heroine who would faint at the smallest shock (Botting 42), she helplessly "fell straight down on to the ground, lumpishly!" (Ford).

Thus, the Valentine of *The Last Post* suggests anything but the utopian idyll of going beyond the patriarchal system and the large-scale destruction coded in its mechanisms. Conversely, the volume leaves her in a state of full regression to patriarchal patterns of thought and traditional models of femininity, suffocating to the point of evoking, in tandem with the motifs of incest and usurpation (see Botting 3–4), the male Gothic as a hitherto ignored facet of generic versatility in *Parade's End*. Indeed, it is a fitting dark counterpart to both the superficial pastoral idyll of *The Last Post* and the often-mentioned eighteenth-century ideals of reason Tietjens to a great extent embodies (see Haslam, "Conversation" passim).

The Tietjenses: Shell Shock and Paralysis

If Valentine's transformation is a bitterly ironic turn in *Parade's End* which subverts the apparent idyll of *The Last Post* and concomitant readings of the entire tetralogy in

terms of Christopher Tietjens' completed *Bildung*, the same holds true for the (non-) representation of the two brothers Tietjens in the same volume.

As far as Christopher is concerned, the long shadow of the Great War is present in the form of the lingering effects of his shell shock.[9] This, in turn, puts into question the narrative of his straightforward *Bildung,* especially the notion that it features his unambiguous rebirth. As Valentine's worried thoughts about Christopher reveal, they live under the constant threat of his relapse into illness, a protracted mental breakdown: "You couldn't cut down Groby Great Tree. But the thought that the tree was under the guardianship of unsympathetic people would be enough to drive Christopher almost dotty[10]—for years and years" (Ford). In fact, the conflict over Groby Great Tree—and all it symbolises—has already shaken Christopher's mental balance, to the extent of triggering nightmares, a typical though not differential symptom of shell shock (see Leese 95) and a reminder of his painful past condition: "It is true that he was almost out of his mind about Groby and Groby Great Tree. He had begun to talk about that in his sleep, as for years, at times, he had talked, dreadfully, about the war" (Ford). Valentine's concern about Christopher's threatened masculinity, implied only in the buffalo metaphor, elsewhere appears in explicit form, much in accordance with the often-noted feminising effect of shell shock (Juliet Mitchell and Pat Barker qtd. in Haslam, *Fragmenting* 99-100): "And you have to think whether it is worse for the unborn child to have a mother with unsatisfied longings, or a father [...] lacking masculinity" (Ford). The latter excerpt does not simply indicate an unfulfilled desire at the core of *The Last Post*, an ailment that is inconsistent with full recovery from the war's effects. What is more, it posits that lack as potentially detrimental to the future generations, suggesting that the war left indelible scars on its victims, which they might transmit, like some infection, to their descendants. Just as Valentine's femininity and mental stability are threatened in *The Last Post,* so are the same aspects of Christopher's identity, which precludes the acceptance of his successful *Bildung* or bucolic idyll at face value.

The above-mentioned lack undermining the straightforward, optimistic narrative of Tietjens' *Bildung* and rebirth also surfaces as Christopher's almost complete absence from *The Last Post.* Conceding Saint-Amour's point that the disappearance of the (former) main character questions the very notion of protagonism, I suggest

9 As is well-known, *Parade's End* can be considered therapeutic writing in the sense that it helped Ford work through his own shell shock, on which Tietjens's experience is modelled (Bonikowski 57; Hampson and Purssell; Haslam, *Fragmenting* 103–104). It is present in the novel as a conspicuous gap, in accordance with the amnesia it brought about for both author and character. According to Wyatt Bonikowski's Freudian analysis of the tetralogy, what Randall Stevenson elsewhere calls Ford's "anachronous narrative tactics" seem to be rooted in trauma: "Ford [...] offers us an idea of wartime as a traumatic temporality that affects past, present, and future. [...] Ford's narrative technique of leaping ahead in time in order to fill in what has been leaped over through the fractured perspectives of characters reinforces the effect of [his] patterning of figures and associations" (80).

10 Dotty is a word consistently used in the previous volumes as a synonym of mad and, especially to allude to mentally disturbed shell-shocked soldiers, as in "He had been trying the old trick of the military, clipped voice on the half-dotty subject. It had before then reduced McKechnie to some sort of military behaviour" or "If a fellow, half dotty, whose record showed that he was a very good man, was brought to his notice Campion would do what he could for him" (Ford).

an alternative Gothic reading of his replacement. That is, the place of the patriarch Christopher leaves empty in this strange ghost of a Victorian household is apparently taken by his mysteriously ailing, vegetating brother, Mark, which in itself establishes Mark as Christopher's double (see Dolar 11-14). Though Saint-Amour speaks of a character ensemble in the focus of *The Last Post*, Mark seems to be more equal among equals in the sense that his extended thought processes open *The Last Post* and take up a large section of it, while his death—complete with the conventional 'famous last words' in the form of his warning and legacy to future generations—closes the novel. The impression of his replacing Christopher is underpinned by numerous similarities between the two male characters, which point towards doubling—a symptom of insecure identity in the Gothic tradition. Some of these common features are rooted in their being brothers: as John Attridge demonstrates, they have the same codes propagated through public school mentality and the stereotypical English stiff upper lip (passim, especially 27-28),[11] as well as a similarly stubborn mentality indicated by the above-quoted buffalo metaphor, which pertains to both of them. These apparently insignificant similarities gain special importance in the light of the two men's shared fate: though both conduct and extramarital affair, it is Mark, who, as doubles would (see Dolar 11), fulfils Christopher's central desire by legalising his affair with his own mistress. Just as importantly, the two brothers mirror each other in suffering from the long-term effects of the war: while Christopher is tortured by the lingering symptoms of shell shock, Mark was mysteriously paralysed on Armistice Day, so his present immobility and muteness appear to be caused by the war. The symptoms themselves, being also typical of shell shock (Bonikowski 2-7; Leese 39), might be interpreted as an exaggeration of Christopher's own condition, which turns Mark into an embodiment of an alternative fate for Christopher—something that could have happened to him—or into a projection of Christopher's shell-shocked present mental and spiritual state. Even the misunderstandings surrounding Mark's disease—as he mentally puts it, he is taken for "a syphilitic member of an effete aristocracy" (Ford)—connect him with ex-servicemen, whose ailments were often mistakenly and maliciously put down to syphilis (Leese 34). At the same time, Mark's mental comment epitomises him as the remnant of a bygone era and class, a ghost of the past and himself. The concomitant spectrality is yet another essential feature that Mark and Christopher share, since actually both of them are absent from the narrative in one sense or another: though physically there, Mark is unable to communicate with his environment, while Christopher physically withdraws himself from the household, only to haunt Valentine's thoughts unstoppably. Ultimately, Mark, just like Christopher's narrative and thereby Christopher himself, seems to be dependent for his life on Sylvia's violence: his will to live leaves him when deprived of that impetus. As he mentally puts it, "Well, if Sylvia had come to that [initiating divorce], his, Mark's

11 John Attridge describes only Christopher Tietjens in these terms. Nonetheless, he acknowledges a "silent accord" between the brothers and quotes the following passage from *The Last Post*—an excerpt that highlights the uncanny similarity rather than simple understanding between the siblings: "Over Boswell the two brothers had got as thick as thieves with an astonishing intimacy—and with an astonishing similarity. If one of them made a comment on Bennet Langton it would be precisely the comment that the other had on his lips. It was what asses call telepathy, nowadays" (Ford qtd. in Attridge 34).

occupation was gone. He would no longer have to go on willing against her" (Ford). Such a contextualisation of his death also indicates that he takes a central role in the narrative instead of Christopher and thus replaces him in the manner of a double: in contrast to the previous volumes, the antagonists in the conflict over Christopher's divorce and all it stands for are him and Sylvia in *The Last Post.* Envisioning Mark and Christopher as ghostly doubles, however, entails that Mark's self-willed death at the close of *The Last Post* provides Christopher's narrative with an alternative ending, fully incompatible with the superficial idyll of regeneration and successful *Bildung*: the shell-shocked soldier never recovers and the apparent plenty of utopia fails to gloss over for long the jarring abysses of loss and desire, which mar even the prospects of a brighter future.

Instead of a Conclusion: Deferred Pastoral

I hope to have demonstrated that the apparent conventionality of *The Last Post*, which is rooted in its conspicuous reliance on the pastoral tradition, is undermined and complicated by bitterly ironic turns in the two major characters' fate and representation. Far from being a simplistic and *per se* inferior culmination of *Parade's End*, the volume in fact contributes to the tetralogy's generic versatility: its Gothic overtones are instrumental to subverting the apparent pastoral idyll and providing the tetralogy with an ambiguous ending. Though Ford carefully maintains a fragile equilibrium between the two diametrically opposed visions—that of a superficial pastoral idyll and an underlying Gothic vision of extinction (see Saint-Amour 271)—the deferral of Christopher's dream of a resurrected bucolic past to an indefinite future sums up the impossibility of the task the condition of England novel poses in the aftermath of the Great War:

> Oh God, she ought to lie between lavendered linen sheets with little Chrissie on soft, pink silk, air-cushionish bosoms! . . . Little Chrissie, descended from surgeon-butler—surgeon-barber, to be correct! —and burgomaster. Not to mention the world-famous Professor Wannop . . . Who was to become . . . who was to become, if it was as she wished it . . . But she did not know what she wished, because she did not know what was to become of England or the world . . . But if he became what Christopher wished he would be a contemplative parson farming his own tithe-fields and with a Greek Testament in folio under his arm . . . A sort of White of Selborne . . . Selborne was only thirty miles away, but they had had never the time to go there . . . [...] And Christopher looking on . . . He would never find time to go to Selborne, or Arundel, or Carcassonne, or after the Strange Woman . . . Never. Never! (Ford, ellipsis in the original)

Thus, in Valentine's thoughts, it is now Chrissie's future and not their own existence that is to realise Christopher's ideal of perfection, modelled on eighteenth-century modes of life: the emphatically repeated "never" signals absolute closure, Valentine's final giving up on Christopher's ever (re)establishing the identity that kept him

going during his horrible front experience. Yet, as Valentine is careful to make that distinction, her unborn child's hypothetical bucolic life as a parson and, by inference, its being a boy, in the first place, is Christopher's and not her own wish-fulfilment: in the light of the unpredictable future of England and the world, in general, Valentine finds herself unable to chart out a future for her progeny, even at the level of desires. In other words, just as Christopher and Valentine appeared to be the trustees of England's future in the pre-war years, now her unborn child's fate is fully intertwined with—as it were, it is the embodiment of—what is to become of England. Valentine's renunciation, on her own part, of Christopher's bucolic dream is an acknowledgement of the dream's potential irrelevance in a world totally remapped by the Great War. Indeed, she seems to be mourning both Christopher's inability to fulfil his own dream and the loss of a world in which such straightforward, well-defined dreams could be had at all. Catching at last straws in her state of absolute insecurity and disorientation, she apparently finds refuge in Christopher's wishes and their underlying patriarchal discourse because they, as opposed to her own inability to map out a future, at least offer a clearly outlined view. Thus, her thought processes at this point repeat and perform Ford's strategy throughout *The Last Post*: while at first glance they provide a confirmation for a bucolic and patriarchal idyll, life regenerated and celebrated after war's destruction, a more careful reading reveals that apparent confirmation to be haunted by a fearful sense of lack, insecurity and disorientation. In that light, Valentine's—and the novel's—regression to patriarchal discourse, whether in the form of the pastoral or the male Gothic, proves to be a retreat to a well-known and thus relatively safe place from the horror of an unknowable future after the apocalypse of the Great War. Providing a fearfully inadequate, nostalgic answer to the condition of England question, both Valentine and Ford offer an only thinly veiled vision of an even greater horror: having no answer at all.

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Back and Forth to Methuselah: Utopia, Dystopia, and Problematizing Age and Longevity in G. B. Shaw's Interwar Play Cycle

Bence Gábor Kvéder

Abstract

After the straightforward response to the horrors of the First World War in *Heartbreak House* (1919), Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) created a more nuanced and rather allegorical reflection on the aftermath of the military events that reshaped, among several fields of culture, both political and philosophical attitudes in Europe. In *Back to Methuselah* (1921), the author provides five interconnected plays from five different and, to a certain extent, imaginary eras of human history and civilization. Reaching back to biblical sources and origin myths, as well as forward to futuristic settings and certain predictions, this Shavian Pentateuch, accompanied by an equally complex Preface, is a representative of *interwar utopianism*. Aimed at general, age-old, and overarching, essentially eternal themes and issues, such as the meaning of life and death, possible ways to achieve maximum longevity, as well as the potential betterment and advancement of humankind, this five-part dramatic work appears to be Shaw's first, but not only, truly "speculative" writing in the literary sense of the term. This essay presents a reading of *Back to Methuselah* as both a modernist piece of utopian literature and an authorial answer to wartime inhumanity, keeping the scope of analysis primarily on the features and elements that create and maintain the modern-day scientific and speculative nature of the play(s). Furthermore, I look at the way(s) in which the concept of age and the social phenomenon of *ageism* are addressed and utilized in the play cycle, also analyzing certain Shavian predictions regarding the future of humankind in general, as well as the dramatist's views anticipating the emergence of a discourse later identified as *posthumanism*. Relying on the theoretical approaches and standpoints of recent scholarship, my ultimate goal is to examine the forward-looking plot(s), interwar significance, and present-day relevance of G. B. Shaw's utopian sci-fi drama cycle.

Keywords: *Back to Methuselah*, interwar utopianism, longevity, ageism, sci-fi

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Introduction: Utopia, Dystopia, and Sci-Fi Drama in the Interwar Period

It is hardly surprising that an undeniably turbulent period of human history, namely the twentieth century, witnessed a considerable resurgence of utopian modes of

writing. For instance, in the "Introduction" to their book *Utopianism, Modernism, and Literature in the Twentieth Century*, editors Alice Reeve-Tucker and Nathan Waddell refer to that era as "a century of utopianism" (5). Besides the more advanced, yet not perfect worlds appearing in utopian literature, however, less optimistic prospects regarding humankind's potential future also emerged in noticeably great numbers during that conflict-ridden period of history.[1] The co-existence of and occasional rivalry between utopian and dystopian traditions have received widespread critical attention since the early 1900s. Providing a well-defined historical context for utopias and dystopias, Fátima Vieira notes that "the twentieth century was predominantly characterized by man's disappointment—and even incredulity—at the perception of his own nature, mostly when his terrifying deeds throughout the two World Wars were considered. In these contexts, utopian ideals seemed absurd; and the floor was inevitably left to dystopian discourse" (18). Not only does the critic elaborate on the process of dystopian views becoming more influential than utopian ones, but she also highlights the reason behind this shift by identifying the two major global military conflicts of the first half of the last century as the cornerstones of the perspectives and standpoints people developed regarding their social, economic, and political contexts (18).

Readers naturally tend to connect both utopian and dystopian modes of writing to fiction. The name "fiction" often refers to works belonging exclusively to one of the three main traditional genre categories, thus, upon encountering the terms "utopia" and "dystopia," one can easily think of prose works. Accordingly, novels (such as George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*) and short stories (such as E. M. Forster's "The Machine Stops") usually claim privilege in the corpus of utopian and/or dystopian texts. In scholarly literature, these two concepts indeed are widely associated, or even intertwined, with fiction, specifically with the sub-genre of sci-fi, which Patrícia Vieira regards as "their [i.e. utopia's and dystopia's] literary cousin" (25). A further classic example could be Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), a work of interwar speculative utopianism—as well as an example of dystopian literature at the same time. However, a thought-provoking tale or parable can be told in a form different from that of prose works. Despite the assumed implication of the term, "science *fiction*" might mean any fictitious plot using elements of and addressing certain themes prevalent in sci-fi novels and short stories, regardless of its structure. Consequently, the general characteristics of this literary form can be extended to the realm of drama, too. Theater has always been alert to social changes and even crises, thus dramatic pieces can offer insight into what their authors may consider the most significant, urgent, sensitive, or controversial issues within their own cultures. Therefore, the potential of drama to be influenced by and to take advantage of utopian and dystopian ideas and features can be acknowledged.

Plays drawing inspiration from and incorporating motifs of science fiction started emerging during the 1920s: a period of time when revolutionary advancement in

1 For a list of numerical data regarding utopian and dystopian texts published in English in the first half of the twentieth century—based on Lyman Tower Sargent's research—, see Marks, Vieira, and Wagner-Lawlor 11.

modern technology, major and potentially effective social phenomena, as well as strongly experimental modernist ambitions in literature fertilized theater, too.[2] Whereas technological developments and societal novelties provided rich subject matter for utopias, major military conflicts invited response in the form of dystopias. Furthermore, the early interwar period, when the world was still recuperating from the initial shock caused by the First World War, saw the crystallization of a more complicated, ambivalent approach to modern inventions, identifiable in literature as well. Summarizing the aftermath of the global conflict, Sara Danius captures this widespread social phenomenon and literary tendency: "Like never before, large parts of Europe had been subjected to methodical destruction. [. . .] The war seemed like a giant death machine, especially since recent technological advances in armor, warfare, and intelligence collection had been put to systematic use. Indeed, the Great War introduced whole new levels of abstraction, rationalization, and automatization" (69). The uncertainty regarding safety, political, social, and economic stability, technological advancement, as well as the future of humanity in general turned concepts like "abstraction," "rationalization," and "automatization" into a matter of lasting literary debate—whose battles started to be fought on the stage of sci-fi drama, too. The English-speaking playwright whose work includes dramatic texts that can be considered as case studies of such theatrical trends both during the interwar period (1919-1938) and in the post-World War II era (1946-1950) was George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950).[3]

Relying on the theoretical approaches and standpoints of recent scholarship, in my essay I present a reading of Shaw's dramatic cycle, *Back to Methuselah* (1921), as both a manifestation of utopian literature in the form of sci-fi drama and an authorial response to wartime inhumanity. My analysis is going to focus on the up-to-date scientific elements and speculative features traceable in the plays within the cycle. I hypothesize that the text is a representative of interwar modernist literature: a series of five intertwined, dramatized narratives anticipating post-humanist theories[4]

2 One prominent non-English literary manifestation of the trend of sci-fi theater is Karel Čapek's *R.U.R.* (1920), whose robots exemplify the utter instability and fragile nature of utopian beliefs and prove to be capable of turning a utopian dream into a dystopian reality with relative ease, within a short amount of time. In *Utopian Literature and Science*, Patrick Parrinder dedicates a whole chapter to this Czech play ("Towards the Singularity? Čapek's *R.U.R.* and Its Times"), emphasizing its influence in Britain from its 1923 premiere onwards (see Parrinder 147–59). For a brief analysis of the play, see also Stock 139.

3 As a Hungarian researcher of G. B. Shaw's drama, I follow the conventional practice of using the author's full name at first and then consistently adhering to the use of his surname, preceded, at some points, by the initials of his first names in the text.

4 According to Rosi Braidotti's essay about post-human critical theory, the concept of posthumanism started emerging in the 1970s and 1980s, and it has since gained newfound momentum through the first post-Cold War and late capitalist globalizing tendencies of the 1990s and early 2000s. Braidotti refers to the process of gradually reconsidering humankind's general status in the world as "a response to growing public awareness of fast-moving technological advances and also of contemporary political developments linked to the limitations of economic globalization, the risks associated with the 'war on terror' and global security issues" (13). Certain elements of this summary—such as the threats brought about by modern technological innovations, political turmoil on an international and intercontinental level, as well as the dreaded image of yet another imminent military conflict (or even series of conflicts)—proved to be the major sources of fear and anxiety during the interwar period,

and issues of our time mainly addressed in modern science fiction. The present essay is primarily concerned with the Shavian idea of age, ageism, longevity, and Creative Evolution through the development of the human mind, thinking, as well as consciousness, will, morality, and identity. The concept of *ageism* is a particularly pivotal aspect of the analysis. Its centrality emerges due to the layered nature of Shaw's treatment of the idea throughout the cycle: not only do his characters respond to the general phenomenon and various fictitious manifestations of extreme longevity, but, especially in the second half of the overarching plot, widespread prejudice against the elderly and certain striking differences between generations are also depicted in a realistic manner.

A Monumental Treatise of Shavian Utopianism: *Back to Methuselah*

The views dramatized by G. B. Shaw in the five-part play cycle *Back to Methuselah*, as well as in its "Preface," can be located and analyzed on a considerably wide spectrum. Similarly to T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, it was written as a literary response to the First World War, and, through its premiere in New York, it also became a representative work of the *annus mirabilis* of English-language modernism, 1922. Peter Childs reflects on the connection between the horrors of the first truly global military conflict and the metaphysical aspects of subsequent modernist experimentations when he notes that "[t]he war produced a deep distrust of optimistic secular or teleological understandings of history and seemed a climactic, severing event that showed conclusively the failures of nineteenth-century rationalism" (20). *Back to Methuselah* fits into the context of uncertainty, the desperate desire to make sense of the events, and the almost instinctive reaction of looking forward to a more promising future of humankind. However, the range of authorial reflections conveyed by Shaw's monumental work might be found more nuanced, comprehensive, and even more optimistic than the literary output articulating the general atmosphere of early interwar (at that time post-war) Britain.

The tendency to provide a detailed, comprehensive yet not altogether somber image of an exceptionally turbulent era seems to have been accompanied and complemented by what Susan Stone-Blackburn observes about *Back to Methuselah*: namely that it "was written at a time when Shaw, who had for decades been belittling scientism, was moving toward a more positive view of at least the physical sciences and mathematics, although he maintained his opposition to the orthodox life sciences" (185). In other words, the play cycle is also an expressive representation of the extent of Shaw's

too. Shaw was particularly concerned about these prospects in the early 1920s. In addition, Braidotti also reminds her readers of humanity's de-centralized position in the universe, where the notion of *(hu)man* is no longer a privileged or unifying idea within the hierarchical system of living and non-living entities, but rather an ordinary and conspicuously heterogeneous concept, even in the biological classification of various species (14-16). The parts of Shaw's *Back to Methuselah* that venture into sci-fi territories and address potential future scenarios can shed light on the playwright's own views regarding the loss of humanity's dominant role in the world and the consequences of our kind's (next) fall from grace.

interest in the scientific discoveries and debates of his age and the intensity of his urge to, not unlike his most innovative contemporaries, reflect on these events and their social impact in his works. Thus, critical remarks such as those of Stone-Blackburn shed light on the role played by both intertextuality and the use of natural sciences in *Back to Methuselah*, which are inherently modernist features in an inherently modernist interwar drama.

As a potential case study of how sci-fi drama works, *Back to Methuselah* constantly alludes to the way in which the author seems to have been thinking about both the humankind of his time and its fate in the near and the very far future. Not only does the work initiate and maintain a strongly intertextual type of communication with some of the playwright's previous and even later texts,[5] but it also establishes its own evolutionary theoretical basis, upon which the body of the cycle is built. Since its structure follows, on the one hand, that of a logical-methodological treatise and, on the other hand, the chronological order of its plot(s), a complete overview and analysis ought to apply a meticulous, in-depth, step-by-step, and also play-by-play approach akin to and in synch with the nature of the work itself. As a Shavian drama to the core, *Back to Methuselah* is preceded by, or rather organically connected to, a lengthy Preface, functioning as the summary of the dramatist's personal creed concerning the speculative science of the direction humanity seemed to be heading towards at that time, which was an evidently crucial question after the Great War.

Theory before a Case Study: The "Preface" to *Back to Methuselah*

Besides its sheer length, the great variety of themes portrayed, discussed, and, in good Shavian fashion, mercilessly criticized in *Back to Methuselah* also makes this play cycle stand out in Shaw's vast dramatic oeuvre. Summarizing the topics its five parts encompass and deal with, Sally Peters mentions "[s]ocialism and philosophy,

5 Although the present article focuses solely on and goes into greater detail about the strongly intertextual relationship between *Man and Superman* and *Back to Methuselah*, it is important to note that there are numerous overt references and some more subtle allusions to Shaw's other plays in the latter text, too. For example, in "Tragedy of an Elderly Gentleman," a character named Napoleon, upon entering the stage, declares himself to be "the Man of Destiny" (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 175), thus providing a direct connection to the 1897 one-act play of the same name. Furthermore, in "As Far as Thought Can Reach," the two automatons bear names taken from ancient Egyptian and Middle Eastern history, namely Ozymandias and Cleopatra-Semiramis (see *Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 237), which can easily remind the reader/spectator of Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1898), while the name of their creator, Pygmalion, might refer to one of the dramatist's arguably best-known works, *Pygmalion* (1913), a play about a different kind of (re-)creation than the one depicted in the final part of the cycle. It is certainly more difficult to find and, what is more, discuss intertextual implications bringing works not written by Shaw into the immense inventory of references *Back to Methuselah* has to offer. Thus, while their influence on and presence in the play cycle are undeniable, writers like H. G. Wells and Shaw's nemesis-idol, William Shakespeare, as well as pieces of literature such as the *King James Bible* (1611) and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) are not examined as sources in a scrupulous way here. For a detailed comparative analysis of how Swift's travelling Englishman seems to be juxtaposed with Shaw's short-livers in "Tragedy of an Elderly Gentleman," see Crawford 102-16.

biology and metaphysics, merged into the religious-philosophical theory of Creative Evolution" as the fields Shaw "was to dramatize in *Back to Methuselah*" (16).[6] The complexity of the work, however, is held together and rendered consistent by the underlying themes that manifest themselves in the entirety of the immense overarching plot. The concept of longevity and a provocative yet not necessarily scornful attitude towards old age both have their respective theoretical frameworks outlined, again, in good Shavian fashion, in the "Preface" to the main text(s).

Criticizing the Darwinian approach to development and the by that time conventional theory of evolution, the "Preface" to *Back to Methuselah* introduces the reader to the theoretical basis of the scientific-philosophical "biological treatise" (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, xix) that is offered here in a dramatic format. The lengthy text, itself divided into subchapters, mentions the naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, the satirist Samuel Butler, and the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche in a tone suggesting irony and admiration at the same time. However, the one historical figure receiving the most ambivalent authorial treatment is undoubtedly Charles Darwin himself. Reflecting on the general state and evaluation of the English biologist's scientific legacy during the period of modernism, Angelique Richardson notes that, "[w]ith the emerging materialist conception of mind, and the Darwinian dissolution of boundaries between human and animal, human distinctiveness was under threat" (51).[7] As a response to this apparent de-humanization of our species, Shaw utilized the motif of conscious human will in its purest and most uncorrupted form in the "Don Juan in Hell" scene of *Man and Superman* (1903) to depict a brighter and more promising future for thinking creatures, found in the concept of enhanced longevity.

As the playwright emphasizes, "[i]f on opportunist grounds Man now fixes the term of his life at three score and ten years, he can equally fix it at three hundred, or three thousand, or even at the genuine Circumstantial Selection limit, which would be until a sooner-or-later-inevitable fatal accident makes an end of the individual" (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, xix). Thus, the core idea of the Shavian utopia in *Back to Methuselah* can be described as an amalgam of natural selection and the Life Force. This attitude is interpreted by Matthew Yde as a kind of consensus found by Shaw between Lamarckian and Darwinian tenets of evolution (115-16), which can be considered the theoretical basis upon which the plots and ideological content of

6 Shaw seems to have taken the core idea of his version of Creative Evolution from Henri Bergson. The playwright's idea of the dormant yet constant workings of the Life Force and the way in which it is destined to lead humankind from an existence controlled and restrained by the physical boundaries of the body to a purely mental and spiritual state, i.e. a higher level, of being appears to be closely connected to what Bergson had to say about the importance of the *élan vital*. Accordingly, Shaw may have possessed an understanding of the concept of Creative Evolution akin to the definition provided by the French philosopher, namely "that acquired habits are not transmitted hereditarily, that the variations are not due to individual efforts, that, on the contrary, these variations emerge all of a sudden, in all the representatives of a species, or at least in many of them" (qtd. in Pharand 244). Personifications of this phenomenon, as we will see, are presented in parts three, four, and five of *Back to Methuselah* as well. For an analysis of the relationship between Shaw and Bergson, mainly built upon their views regarding the Life Force and Creative Evolution, see Pharand 243-52.

7 For a detailed analysis of the lasting influence of Darwinian, as well as Freudian, tenets on English-language literary modernism and concepts like the Life Force, see Richardson 51-62.

the plays are built. Furthermore, general themes like religion and socialism are also discussed by the playwright in an interwar British context. Combining the critique of Darwinism with that of the conventions of Christian faith, Shaw identifies the personal mission he has undertaken by declaring that he "must give here a little history of the conflict between the view of Evolution taken by the Darwinians (though not altogether by Darwin himself) and called Natural Selection, and that which is emerging, under the title of Creative Evolution, as the genuinely scientific religion for which all wise men are now anxiously looking" (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, xix). As a synthesis of seemingly incompatible fields like science and faith, *Back to Methuselah* offers a "genuinely scientific religion," advocated and, to a certain degree, known in the playwright's own life, too.

Besides elaborating on his personal creed, Shaw also presents a rather urgent call for the kind of mental work that might prove to be life-saving, or, at least, life-lengthening, in the long run. Deeply affected by the world war, the playwright summarizes the global conflict and its aftermath as the shocking yet inspiring source of motivation fueling the project of interwar Creative Evolution: "All that is necessary to make him [i.e. Man, representing humankind] extend his present span is that tremendous catastrophes such as the late war shall convince him of the necessity of at least outliving his taste for golf and cigars if the race is to be saved" (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, xix). Convinced that at this point the future of our kind is at stake, Shaw provides a new attitude towards longevity and the combination of science and religion as a matter of survival.

Functioning as a detailed and subjective overview of the history, (ir)relevance, and the then present state of evolutionary thinking, the "Preface" is concluded by a (relatively) brief summary of the relationship between the concept of evolution and the practice of theater. Furthermore, Shaw's own contribution to the legend of Don Juan as a manifestation of the Life Force, the driving power behind general human advancement, and the notion that establishes a direct correlation between *Man and Superman* and *Back to Methuselah* is also highlighted in this section. Hence the intertextual nature of the latter work: although far from being an actual sci-fi drama, the existential basis of John Tanner's adventures and dialogues, both as the early twentieth-century English gentleman and as the Spanish libertine in Hell, reappears in *Back to Methuselah* as a result of organic literary embeddedness. This time, however, the Life Force is given a textual environment that is closely linked to the emerging discourse based on science fiction. In accordance with the conspicuous signs of an innovative literary trend, merely a few years after the premiere of Shaw's play cycle, in the second half of the 1920s, a newly coined term started becoming more and more widespread, mainly due to the growing popularity of Hugo Gernsback's magazine, *Amazing Stories*, first published in 1926. As Grant Wythoff points out, Gernsback and his periodical "gave a name to fiction treating the *speculative* and the otherworldly through the lens of systematic *realism*: scientifiction" (2; emphases mine). Considering the way in which Shaw manages to incorporate (the critique of) Darwinian ideas in an imaginary story of humankind's future, otherwise made up of realistic social and political debates, one might look at *Back to Methuselah* as a dramatic work of "scientifiction." An amalgam of

fictitious events and notable cultural awareness, Shaw's play cycle serves as a direct continuation of, as well as a set of case studies supporting the introductory theses regarding longevity and evolution.

The Seeds of a Shavian Utopia: "In the Beginning"

Applying time as the variable yet ubiquitous factor of humankind's story, the body of *Back to Methuselah* widens the temporal framework established in the "Preface" in both directions, i.e. back and forward in time. On the one hand, the first piece of the play cycle, "In the Beginning," presents a past based on the biblical origin story, with Adam, Eve, the Serpent, and Cain in the focus. On the other hand, parts three, four, and five are each set in different periods of an imaginary future, while the second play, "The Gospel of the Brothers Barnabas," takes place in the early 1920s.

A cycle of plays about life and the ephemeral nature of human existence aptly begins with a scene portraying death. After finding the dead fawn, Adam and Eve start discussing their own potential mortality:

> Eve: Adam.
> Adam: Yes?
> Eve: Suppose you were to trip and fall, would you go like that?
> [. . .]
> Adam: What is the good of being careful? We have to live here for ever. Think of what for ever means! Sooner or later I shall trip and fall. It may be tomorrow; it may be after as many days as there are leaves in the garden and grains of sand by the river. No matter: some day I shall forget and stumble.
> Eve: I too. (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 3-4)

Such a sudden but profound revelation can easily lead to an existential crisis, yet by being placed right at the onset of "In the Beginning" it underlines the presence of utopian thinking, with humankind's ultimate triumph against death in the center. The importance of mortality as an introductory motif is also highlighted by Peter Gahan when he notes that "[e]mbedded in it [i.e. *Back to Methuselah*] is a poetically structured theory of imagination, one intimately bound up with an awareness of death" (215). However, this combination of the human capacity to create and stick to previously inconceivable visions and goals and the very fact of life that prevents our species from exploiting this capacity to its possible maximum is hinted at in greater detail only near the end of the first play.

Although the Fall from Grace takes place in a way compatible with the biblical story, the age-centered utopian aspect of the first play is presented by Eve as a hopeful monologue near the end of Act 2. After some fierce verbal battles, in which she has to defend herself against her own firstborn son, Cain,[8] Eve describes the kind of

8 For a detailed analysis of the relevance and significance of the ideas represented by Cain within the broader context of "Creative Evolution," see Yde 120-22.

utopian image regarding the future of humankind that serves as the basis of the ideas prevailing across the other parts of the cycle:

> Adam (*to Eve, grumpily*): Why do you live on, if you can find nothing better to do than complain?
> Eve: Because there is still hope.
> Cain: Of what?
> Eve: Of the coming true of your dreams and mine. Of newly created things. Of better things. My sons and my son's sons are not all diggers and fighters. [. . .] They can remember their dreams. They can dream without sleeping. They have not will enough to create instead of dreaming; but the serpent said that every dream could be willed into creation by those strong enough to believe in it. [. . .] When they come, there is always some new wonder, or some new hope: something to live for. They never want to die, because they are always learning and always creating either things or wisdom, or at least dreaming of them. (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 31-32)

The joyful act of creation, a rudimentary yet meaningful imitation of the First Creation, provides not only hope but also a sufficient amount of motivation to seek out the farthest dimensions and parameters of this kind of human potential. However, as Glenn Clifton emphasizes, "Shaw casts embodiment—the very fact that life is incarnated in a material form—as the chief antagonist to the evolutionary Life Force" (109). In other words, the success of such a quest would require considerably longer lives sorted out to the representatives of our species, temporarily yet firmly trapped in their respective husks until their *physical* demise. The key to this phenomenon is directly presented by Eve here: by never wanting to die, some of her offspring may have already found the way out of the conundrum of the Life Force yearning for absolute fulfilment but, as seen later on, being eternally bound and restricted to the limits of the human body.

The mental engine ceaselessly powering the advancement of humanity is equal to the actual process celebrated by the Mother: imagination, (waking) dreams, and creation. When Gahan looks at the entirety of the play cycle as "an allegory in which the old promise of longer life and man's victory over death is to be taken as a hope that his imaginative capacity can be expanded" (215), the seeds of such a mental and physical state are traceable in Eve's monologue. As Shaw himself also points out, "the impulse that produces evolution is creative" (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, xviii), and the subsequent plays in the cycle are intended to show the details of how that is to be realized in practice.

The Rules of a Future Society: "The Gospel of the Brothers Barnabas"

Reminiscent of any early Shavian problem play, "The Gospel of the Brothers Barnabas" focuses on politics, the public role of the Labor movement, and the frequently questioned importance of the Church. These themes are accompanied and

completed by the burgeoning romantic relationship of the two younger characters, Savvy and Haslam. In addition, this part sets the rules of the predominantly Lamarckian (or, more accurately, "Neo-Lamarckian"; see Clifton 109-16) idea of longevity, which later on becomes ubiquitous in the rest of the dramatic plots—and, along with them, the Shavian idea of the future of humankind.

Echoing the concept applied to Eve's monologue in "In the Beginning," the title of Gahan's article, "An Exercise of Imagination," already suggests that *Back to Methuselah* is a dramatic propagation of "a science of the imagination" (215). Gahan even highlights poetic sensitivity as an artistic manifestation of human imagination, in this case represented and propagated by Franklyn Barnabas (215-16). Indeed, the poet priest Franklyn and his sibling, the biologist Conrad, regularly interrupted by the more mundane, politically driven arguments of Burge and Lubin, provide the arguably pseudo-scientific explanation, initially presented as a mock-political program, behind the possibility of lengthening one's life through sheer human will and determination:

> Franklyn: Do not mistake mere idle fancies for the tremendous miracle-working force of Will nerved to creation by a conviction of Necessity. I tell you men capable of such willing, and realizing its necessity, will do it reluctantly, under inner compulsion, as all great efforts are made. They will hide what they are doing from themselves: they will take care not to know what they are doing. They will live three hundred years, not because they would like to, but because the soul deep down in them will know that they must, if the world is to be saved.
>
> (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 84)

Besides turning back to themes and concepts such as the Life Force and Creative Evolution—dramatized by Shaw in greater detail, albeit in a less overtly utopian context, in *Man and Superman*,[9]—this monologue sheds light on the hypothetical yet elaborate outline of the intentional and, as Franklyn Barnabas emphasizes, necessary increase of one's lifespan. The apparent indispensability of this shift in human life expectancy is also highlighted by Clifton when she, with some overt skepticism regarding the validity of the (r)evolutionary idea of the Brothers Barnabas, remarks that it is "an improbable biological theory that lends excessive credence to the 'Life Force' by arguing that humans *must* and can will themselves to live for three hundred years" (108; italics mine). The core of this attitude is summed up by one of the more traditional and practical minded characters, Lubin, when he concludes that "[t]he old must make room for the new" (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 75). This shift from average lifespan to unprecedented longevity, albeit on a larger scale than the elderly politician would probably expect, starts taking place in the third play. Thus, the prophecy of an otherwise general expression of wisdom about the constant and seemingly inexhaustible supply of newer and newer generations is soon shown fulfilled. However, what later on emerges is not simply the next generation but a new species that represents embodied longevity.

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9 For an analysis of the potential utopian and totalitarian elements of *Man and Superman*—mainly with a focus on the "Don Juan in Hell" scene—, see Yde 74-86.

Adam and Eve as the Superhuman Couple: "The Thing Happens"

The first play in the cycle that takes place in the future, "The Thing Happens" presents elements of an ageist dystopia, where, as Barnabas, "a descendant of the great Conrad Barnabas" (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 129), emphasizes, people go against state legislations and are practically committing a crime by living longer than ordinary members of society:

> Barnabas: [. . .] I'm a plain man; and though I dont [sic] understand metaphysics, and dont [sic] believe in them, I understand figures; and if the Archbishop is only *entitled to* seventy-eight years, and he takes 283, I say he takes more than he is *entitled to*. Get over that if you can.
> [. . .]
> Barnabas: You ought to have killed yourself. As an honest man you were *entitled to* no more than an honest man's expectation of life.
> (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 107 and 110; emphases mine)

By repeatedly using the term "entitled," Barnabas reveals that, according to state regulations, the upper limit of a human's lifespan is to be taken especially seriously. Regardless of the futuristic scenario, as one with the typical, overly zealous and relentless clerk figures of Shavian drama,[10] Barnabas is willing to go to extreme lengths, including the suggestion of murder (see *Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 128), and put extra effort into his mission to prevent the newly emerged long-livers from populating the surface of the Earth.

Even though the longevity predicted by the Brothers Barnabas seems somewhat accidental and random in practice, functioning as a rather inexplicable counterargument against the thesis of death, it still manages to produce the first two representatives, i.e. the father and mother, of a new superhuman species, later known as long-livers. As the o(l)dd ones out in this situation, Haslam (now referred to as The Archbishop) and the long widowed parlormaid-turned-Domestic Minister, Mrs. Lutestring, bring about the emergence of their kind. Thus, they also function as the harbingers of a utopia that has the potential to counter the restrictive government policies based on a—from their perspective—rather narrow-minded attitude towards age.[11] Their self-conscious and ambitious behavior is emphasized by Yde when he points out the moment at which "it is intimated that the long-livers, small in number

10 Further examples of this Shavian character type, with some minor alterations and unique features here and there, include Lickcheese when we first meet him in *Widowers' Houses* (1892), Redpenny in *The Doctor's Dilemma* (1906), Soames in *Getting Married* (1908), and Mercer in *The Fascinating Foundling* (1909).

11 Adding a further instance of intertextuality to the reading of the play cycle, the future government is represented, besides the already mentioned Barnabas, by Burge-Lubin, the President of the British Islands, and his Chief Secretary and main consultant, Confucius. The exchanges of words these two politicians are having in the third part are reminiscent of the dialogues carried out by Prime Minister Balsquith and General Mitchener in Shaw's *Press Cuttings* (1909).

and isolated from one another, will now come together and begin to reproduce" (125). Thus, the dawn of a new era seems, and later on proves, to be inevitable. Despite the fierce and foreboding protestation of "the greatest living authority on the duration of human life" (93), the first two long-livers' marriage is destined to turn the world into a utopia for their offspring—and, at the same time, a dystopia for the ordinary homo sapiens (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 127).

The implied image of a later realized utopia for long-living human(oid)s functions as a milestone in the quest of our species for the meaning of existence. It is a *milestone* and not the final stage of this search. The ultimate goal, i.e. the escape of the human mind from the boundaries set by our physical bodies, is mentioned and described by the main character, or rather mouthpiece, in the "Don Juan in Hell" segment of *Man and Superman*, which has been found comparable with *Back to Methuselah* on this basis. For instance, Yde emphasizes the conspicuous parallels and thematic overlaps between the two plays by citing Shaw's own standpoint, namely that they "were the clearest expressions of his philosophical and religious views" (67).[12] Furthermore, John Barnes also does so when, reflecting on the title of the earlier play, he essentially looks at the dialogues in the third, fourth, and fifth parts of *Back to Methuselah* as conversations and arguments between men and "supermen" (159–60). In other words, the glorious advancement of the new species has already started with the encounter of Mrs. Lutestring and Haslam.

Focusing mainly on the final segment of the cycle, Clifton notes that "*Back to Methuselah* presents an important window on the ultimate destination Shaw envisioned for both the body and the mind, which undergo massive evolutionary shifts in the course of the five plays" (108-09).[13] However, while the far future is indeed the "ultimate destination" for our kind in more than one sense of the term, it is at this moment that the ultimate starting point of the actual physical process is properly explained, elaborated on, and even exemplified through two of the earliest specimens of the emerging species. The dialogues between human politicians and superhuman trailblazers mark the first, but arguably not the last, point in the play cycle when an overt reference to the promise of a utopian future is presented. Thus, "The Thing Happens" provides an established framework for the two subsequent segments, illustrating "the simple fact that the will to do anything can and does, at a certain pitch of intensity set up by conviction of its necessity, create and organize new tissue to do it with" (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, xviii). The "necessity" of a remarkable leap and some "massive evolutionary shifts" is handled as an inevitable phenomenon here, while the new "tissue" is going to be recognizable both on the superhuman entities inhabiting future societies and on "the mind," i.e. the ethos and worldview, dominating their cultural discourses.

12 For a brief overview of the influence and continuation of the Shavian Devil's and Don Juan's ideas in *Back to Methuselah*, see Yde 116-18.

13 For a detailed analysis of the theoretical role and performativity of the body in *Back to Methuselah*, see Clifton 116-23. In addition, concentrating on the concept of body as depicted in the fifth segment, Yde remarks that "Shaw's horror of the body culminates in the final play of the cycle" (132).

The Old as New—and Immature: "Tragedy of an Elderly Gentleman"

Regarding ageism in a less pejorative but still discriminative sense, the last two plays in *Back to Methuselah* can be considered as the consecutive pinnacles of the Shavian attitude towards this theme. By setting them so far away from each other in time, 3000 and 31,920 A.D., respectively, the playwright provides the reader/spectator with two different yet intertwined utopias. These two fictitious future societies are separated—and near the end of the fifth play, connected—by the presence of our kind, i.e. ordinary human beings, referred to in the part "Tragedy of an Elderly Gentleman" as "short-livers." In the fourth part of *Back to Methuselah*, short-livers and the descendants of the long-livers introduced in the previous play(s) have been separated, living in their own respective cultures, only occasionally interacting with one another. As Yde observes, this "play offers an interesting perspective as we see both groups together in about equal number, unlike in the previous play where long-livers are a minority and the final play where the short-livers are extinct" (127). Whereas long-livers in the previous part of the drama are still an oddity, in the fourth play they have managed to build a society for themselves in future Ireland. Although they are still not dominant in numbers and are often looked at as a kind of sensation, their superiority is evident whenever an encounter between them and a short-living outsider occurs.

Ironically, the titular *Elderly* Gentleman is, in fact, as Lubin paraphrases his existence in the second part, "a mere child" (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 73) in future Ireland. Coming from Baghdad, the capital of the fictitious future British Commonwealth, to the Emerald Isle, this character is not a jovial and energetic colonizer like Tom Broadbent in *John Bull's Other Island* (1904). Although his conversation with Zoo, his long-living guardian, sheds light on his status as an intruder, this time the guest and his family are the inferior party of the encounter. Issues and obstacles of communication arise between the two sets of characters, preventing them from having meaningful conversations, from the very beginning of the play. For instance, the indirect connotations of idioms like "blood is thicker than water" appear to have been lost. Furthermore, the lack of correlating semantic content with words like "trespassing," "landlord," "decent," and, perhaps most tellingly, "moral" or expressions such as "pious pilgrimage," "sentimental journey," and "lady doctor" only add to the deepening culture shock, depression, and "discouragement" of the Elderly Gentleman (see *Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 140-47, Crawford 110, and Yde 128).

Besides the general misunderstandings due to their different vocabularies and worldviews, as well as the "unnatural arrangements" (146) that permeate the fourth play, certain discrepancies truly emphasize and solidify the portrayed society as a nightmarish scenario, with the conditions being unbearable for short-living creatures—a dystopia for some and a utopia for others. On the one hand, related to the general problem regarding words and phrases, the concept and tradition of family life have evidently also been dropped, and all that remains of this human institution is a rather artificial way of preserving the superior species, a process in which human feelings are practically non-existent:

> Zoo: Do you mean to say that your mother bothered about you after you were ten?
> The Elderly Gentleman: Naturally, madam. She was my mother. What would you have had her do?
> Zoo: Go on to the next, of course. After eight or nine children become quite uninteresting, except to themselves. I shouldnt [sic] know my two eldest if I met them.
>
> (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 152)

Zoo's indifference and apparent skepticism about the idea of keeping in touch with her offspring functions as clear proof of the obliteration of family bonds in this *brave new world*. The negative—puzzled, frustrated, and, as the discussions proceed, more and more desperate—reactions of the Elderly Gentleman, referred to only as unmistakable signs of "discouragement," to such remarks clearly underline his status as a looked-down-upon outsider. His behavior, unanimously considered rather immature by the long-livers, offers a thought-provoking manifestation of the links between utopianism and age studies.

Although concentrating mainly on utopias in American literature, the theoretical basis of Mark R. Brand's research provides a relevant perspective for "Tragedy of an Elderly Gentleman." Brand observes that in utopian texts written at the end of the nineteenth and in the first decades of the twentieth century (roughly between 1890 and 1914), the concern with age was becoming a significant discourse. This development complemented the literary techniques of utopianism and, made the concept of "otherness" a relevant addition to the various depictions of fictitious future societies (163-64). Being a literary product of the 1920s and focusing primarily on issues surrounding age and aging, *Back to Methuselah* is a representative of this trend.

Providing a new layer to the politics and social criticism of speculative writing, Brand also mentions the play cycle, along with Huxley's *Brave New World*, as a relevant example of the impact the above described process of age emerging as a debated topic had on interwar and later literary utopias. Thus, he locates Shaw's work in a context where "age seems to function similarly to 'othering' categorical differences when deployed: it is socially constructed and reinforced, readily recognizable, patently harmful, and contains dynamic differences in scope even within individual biosocial phenomena" (167). Referred to as one of the "prominent early-adopters of this new approach to age" (Brand 172), Shaw pushes the idea of old age as "otherness" to the extreme by enabling his truly elderly, i.e. relatively close to the 300-year mark, long-living characters to kill short-livers with their mere gaze, making the otherness of the former as a new species both "readily recognizable" and "patently harmful." The most expressive instance of this radically unbalanced power structure is presented at the end of the play, when the Elderly Gentleman is practically euthanized by a renowned member of the local community, who also functions as the showrunner of a performance whose sole purpose is to intimidate and provide confusing political advice to official visitors of future Ireland (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 202). What makes that moment particularly grotesque is that not only is the outsider, the guest, destroyed

by the look of his host but it is also the younger one who has no place in this utopia of *old* age and, thus, is destined to perish there.[14]

As a kind of desperate, misunderstood youngster surrounded by true modern-day Methuselahs, the Elderly Gentleman's fate is decided from the very beginning of his journey to Ireland, but such a grim future can also be extended to the entirety of ordinary, short-living humankind. Going back to the age-old dichotomy of utopia and dystopia, Edward James notes that,

> [i]n the twentieth century, [. . .] utopian visions were attacked from two directions: by those who argue that in reality many such utopias would turn out to be "dystopias," that is, oppressive societies, because of the tyranny of the "perfect" system over the will of the individual, or because of the difficulty of stopping individuals or elites from imposing authority over the majority, or over minorities. (220)

Technically, the latter situation, in a more or less subtle way, appears to prevail in "Tragedy of an Elderly Gentleman." By the time the plot starts, long-livers are accepted as the superior species, both by visitors to the Emerald Isle and by themselves. For instance, presenting a radical attitude towards the status quo of long-livers being the select few, the advanced minority in future Ireland, Zoo even admits that a party of long-livers has urged the total annihilation of short-living humans for some time (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 169-70). As a practical manifestation and continuation of the train of thought provided in the previous play, the species Barnabas collectively refers to as "[c]ursed thieves" and "[v]ampires" (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 128) starts realizing that, as more powerful, superhuman beings, they are supposed to be the conquering aggressors.[15] Such a mission might even be justified by their status as a marginalized, objectified sensation, whose usefulness seems to extend merely to ridiculously ceremonious performances, such as the Envoy's pretentious but cowardly behavior and meaningless political questions about the upcoming elections in the Oracle's temple (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 194-99).

Convinced about the oftentimes confirmed mental and physical inferiority of short-livers, Zoo and her kind, echoing the words of another belligerent colonizer of modernist literature, ultimately decide to "[e]xterminate all the brutes" (Conrad 72). Thus, they declare their claim for a stable, truly realized global utopia. The presumable success, as well as the outcomes and certain repercussions of their actions, are chronicled in the final segment of the play cycle. Yet, even at the very end of the Shavian history of (super)human evolution, the question remains: What happens if these "brutes" are obliterated but are later on artificially brought back to life, intruding into an even better established utopian society?

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14 For another analysis of the ending of "Tragedy of an Elderly Gentleman," see Yde 131.

15 At this point the play seems to offer a reference to the topic of eugenics, an issue Shaw was particularly interested in during the 1930s: he elaborated on his thoughts about it in greater detail in *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles* (1934). For an analysis of the morality and economy of killing as discussed by Zoo and the Elderly Gentleman, see Yde 129-31.

A Limited Eternity: "As Far as Thought Can Reach"

Although Clifton refers to the entirety of *Back to Methuselah* as "an extended treatment of Shaw's interest in longevity and maturity" (108), it is the fifth drama, "As Far as Thought Can Reach," which offers the truly utopian combination of the two abstract terms in the quotation. Ordinary human beings had apparently gone extinct—or rather had been, as Zoo foreshadows in the previous play, eliminated by long-livers—at an undisclosed point of (post-)human history. Thus, no obstacles could hinder the advancement of the new species and prevent true "longevity and maturity" from prevailing and evolving, surpassing the (much) earlier defined 300-year mark. Therefore, in the final play, as Clifton points out, "Shaw's future humans evince a radically unfamiliar picture of health and maturity" (109) compared to the two future scenarios of parts three and four of *Back to Methuselah*, respectively.

The fifth play appears to portray an ageist utopia where the script described by Brand is followed more closely, namely that within the framework of the truly far future, unlike in Ireland in 3000 A.D., the elderly are the "others." Therefore, they seem to fit even the present-day "assumption that society tends to view the old age group as a distinct and separate group with unique features" (Lev, Wurm, and Ayalon 52). Accordingly, they live mainly solitary lives, voluntarily segregated from the youth society,[16] and only interact with youngsters either by accident or on special occasions, such as the birth—or rather *hatching*[17]—of a new superhuman entity. A case of the former kind of encounter takes place right at the beginning of the play, when one of the Ancients unintentionally disturbs a festivity-like open-air dance:

> The Youth: Now, then, ancient sleepwalker, why dont [sic] you keep your eyes open and mind where you are going?
> The Ancient (*mild, bland, and indulgent*): I did not know there was a nursery here, or I should not have turned my face in this direction. Such *accidents* cannot always be avoided. Go on with your play: I will turn back.
> (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 205-06; emphasis mine)

The dialogue and the stage instructions describing the Youth's rather indignant reactions to the appearance of the Ancient immediately reveal the underlying ageist prejudice against the elderly and aging itself, thus shedding light on the internal mechanisms of the utopian society depicted here.

A rather skeptical attitude towards older generations can usually be explained through the considerable age gap between certain groups. In this particular case, notable periods seem to have been skipped both on the general time scale of the play cycle—i.e. between 3000 and 31,920 A.D.—and within the community introduced in the fifth segment. As for the latter aspect, not only do long-livers reach maturity at a

16 For a brief analysis of the lonesome way of life represented by the Ancients, see Yde 140.

17 The term—and the process described in the text (see *Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 214-15)—can easily evoke Huxley's *Brave New World* in a contemporary reader's mind.

fascinatingly young age (they are considered "old" by the fourth year of their lives), but they have also succeeded in extending their life expectancy beyond the original 300-year limit: one of the Ancients even confesses that she is more than 800 years old (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 246). The ensuing, almost inconceivable difference between the Youth and the Ancients in this world also contributes to the intense stigmatization of old age. For instance, ageist prejudice is echoed by Strephon shortly after Chloe's departure, when he, in his heart-broken, furious rage, refers to the Ancients as "unnatural, heartless, loveless, joyless monsters" (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 213). Such a situation, however, does not necessarily erase all hope for mutual understanding and a lively, meaningful communication between the two groups.

Despite the permanent disillusionment of youngsters like Strephon, usually caused by one of their mates reaching the ripe age of four years, growing uninterested in their previous frivolous activities,[18] and being inspired by the lifestyle of the Ancients, "the ecstasy of life as [they] live it" (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 208), this Shavian utopia seems to function well. Furthermore, and perhaps, it constantly offers the chance of dynamic discussions through the relatively rare yet meaningful arguments taking place between the Ancients and the Youth. Such exchanges of words take place about *art*, the act of an irrepressible need for *creation*, as well as, based on these concepts, the meaning of *existence*—keeping the community in incessant motion and promising further development. For instance, the He-Ancient's brief summary of the bodily restrictions limiting the fulfilment of spiritual needs (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 250; also cited and commented upon in Yde 133) proves to be a relevant topic for both age groups, leading to serious and thought-provoking inter-generational discussions.

Even though members of the two communities do have their respective criticisms and reservations about each other and, as a result, often find their interactions tedious, some mutual respect can be traced in their words even near the end of the play:

> The She-Ancient: It is tiresome for us, too. Children, we have to put things very crudely to you to make ourselves intelligible.
> The He-Ancient: And I am afraid we do not quite succeed.
> Strephon: Very kind of you to come at all and talk to us, I'm sure.
> Ecrasia: Why do the other ancients never come and give us a turn?
> (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 256)

The recurring topic of such exchanges is "the eternal life, the perpetual resurrection" (250) that has previously been present in the conversation of Chloe and Strephon—i.e. a newly made "old" long-liver, still referred to as a "Maiden" but just on the threshold of becoming an Ancient, and a youngster, probably in the prime of his life (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 208-13). Thus, regardless of the number of people involved, a peculiar balance appears to be maintained in these arguments and conversations: a truly utopian state of affairs, which is inevitably disturbed by an intrusive element, either from the inside or from the outside, or, ironically, from both sides.

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18 For a concise overview of Strephon's complaints after Chloe's apparent betrayal, see Yde 133.

The imminent doom of the Shavian utopia is brought about by the eerily human-like vanity and shallowness of the artificial couple created by a scientist, Pygmalion, as an experiment. However, another reason of the momentary downfall of the way of life depicted in this play turns out to be its own apparent perfection: the theoretically immortal future superhumans, quite ironically, prove to be extremely easy to kill. The unsettling fragility of long-livers is demonstrated through the circumstances of Pygmalion's death. The ambitious scientist, the de facto father of the artificial humans, dies from merely being bitten by the female automaton created by him (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 238-39). As opposed to the unpredictable and unavoidable *accident* elaborated on and explained by the She-Ancient to the Newly Born (218) and also encountered by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 3), the concept and practice of violent death because of intentional murder causes a breach in the so far stable texture of a well-constructed utopia. In a sardonic twist of events, this future society is disturbed by a factor that is both alien to and inherent in it. Despite being made up of flesh and blood, the two figures were created in a laboratory, i.e. even less natural than an egg, and ultimately prove to resemble their predecessors, who have already been put to the test of human evolution in Shaw's previous plays, too much to be accepted by the natives as their own. However, although their status as outsiders and momentary sensations, not unlike that of long-livers in "Tragedy of an Elderly Gentleman," seems to be solidified: Ozymandias and Cleopatra-Semiramis are the re-animated representatives of an ancestry without which superhuman beings could not exist. Consequently, their destructive and demoralizing words and deeds break the flow, albeit temporarily, of the utopian conditions both from the outside and from the inside of the established system. Thus, the sudden yet relieving death of the two figures re-establishes the superiority of the superhuman species, and the utopia founded upon it.

Intruders like the Elderly Gentleman in the previous play and the automaton couple here, i.e. people who have no business to exist in and, what is more, absolutely no chance to adapt to a society like the one presented in the fifth segment, perish rather unexpectedly: they simply break under the burden of life. By exclaiming that he is "discouraged" (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 243) by his surroundings and the He-Ancient's way of looking at him, while asking him existential questions, the Male Figure creates a link to the utopia portrayed in the previous play, as well as to the Elderly Gentleman in it. This reference can be a reassuring sign that the two utopias, once again, are separated but also connected by the human factor. However, if the representatives of our kind have to be exterminated in order for the superhuman species to prevail and prosper, this particular Shavian utopian vision seems to celebrate the Life Force in post-human evolution, rather than in a gradual advancement of the ordinary, short-living sort. To illustrate and express his standpoint as a lifelong advocate of the superman, at the end of the fifth play, closing the drama cycle itself, Shaw presents an age-old, almost pre-human character, whose mere timelessness provides a comprehensive point of view for humankind's ultimate mission.

Lilith, as the first human being, keeper of the ancient wisdom of life derived directly from God, the witness of humankind's entire history, and the "actual" mother to all, functions as the definitive realization and mouthpiece of Shaw's optimism regarding

the future of humanity as the predecessor of a more successful and fit species. Just as Ann Whitefield and her alter ego, Doña Ana, in *Man and Superman* declare their wish to find "a father for the Superman" (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 3, 649), Lilith appears to pass the torch on to all of humankind, but this time the mission is not to create new generations but to lay the foundations of an emerging superhuman species. Allowing them to prove themselves worthy of such a responsibility, the First Mother even stops herself from destroying our kind through "[t]he pangs of another birth" upon seeing how at one point in the history/future of humanity "one man repented and lived three hundred years" (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 261). By identifying the pivotal revelation in the third play, i.e. the structural axis of the five-part cycle, as the exact moment she withdrew from the idea of wiping out humans and annulled her intention to give life to a new experiment of Creation, Lilith expresses her preference for the long-livers as Evolution's superior attempt to fulfil the ultimate duty of the Life Force. She sees considerable yet—even after the events of the fifth play—still dormant potential in "these infants that call themselves ancients," and, accordingly, vows to "have patience with them" (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 262). Having put her trust into the superhuman life form, she reassures herself that her "seed" will eventually succeed (262) in making the ultimate Shavian utopia of "redemption from the flesh" (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 261) as a reality.

Lilith's embodiment and monologue, making the immense, overarching plot and the logical route of the five plays come full circle, bring the classic dichotomy of *ou*topia ("no place") and *eu*topia ("good place")[19] into the discussion at the end:

> Lilith: [. . .] Of Life only is there no end; and though of its million *starry mansions* many are empty and many still unbuilt, and though its *vast domain* is as yet unbearably desert, my seed shall *one day* fill it and master its matter to its uttermost confines. (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 262; emphases mine)

Through Lilith's words, the central thought delivered here seems to be that there is indeed a good *place*, a (e)utopia taking the form of a mansion or a "vast domain" and, along with that, an *era* to be achieved "one day." Since the hopeful idea that "there is a beyond" (*Complete Plays*, Vol. 2, 262) can function in both spatial and temporal terms, it implies the potential establishment of a yet unknown, hypothetical, non-existent (o)utopia, towards which humankind is steadily heading, making even the (futuristic) present-day conditions bearable and tolerable for the greater good of human imagination, evolution, and the Life Force as sources of motivation.[20] This kind of optimism was later on disrupted by the ambiguities and contradictions of the 1930s and the sheer horrors of the 1940s—and each of these two decades received its

19 Ruth Levitas reflects on the two components of this "rather troublesome ghost" by tracing the problem back to the "benevolent founding father of the utopian genre" and suggesting that the pun implied by the very title of Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) resulted in the common usage of the term "utopia" as a kind of amalgam of the two connotations, noting that "colloquially understood [it] contains two meanings: a good, but non-existent and therefore impossible, society" (2-3). For another brief summary of the same issue, see Waddell 8-9.

20 For a brief analysis of the final monologue in "As Far as Thought Can Reach," as compared to the idea of the superman, see Barnes 163.

own Shavian evaluation through utopian and dystopian drama, namely *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles* (1934) and *Farfetched Fables* (1948), respectively. *Back to Methuselah* was, and still is, an early interwar representation of some insolently hopeful prospects. The two later works, as well as the utter disillusionment expressed by them, eventually managed to criticize and overwrite these authorial predictions—but not before Shaw succeeded in declaring and elaborating on a vision that was looking forward to the promising and spiritually fulfilling age of Methuselah.

Conclusion: Forward to Methuselah

Summing up the intellectual scope of the play cycle, Yde emphasizes that "*Back to Methuselah* straddles a fine line between the most outrageous hope for the potential of humankind to escape the material conditions of reality (Shaw rejected any hope of the transcendent kind) and absolute despair at the reality of the human condition" (139). Yde does not neglect the fact that Shaw was never a playwright of clear-cut moral standpoints or existential declarations. The "fine line" of ambiguity, this time presented as an amalgam of "hope" and "despair," permeates this Shavian work, too. Thus, the drama suggests certain authorial doubts, primarily based on the often less than favorable social and economic circumstances, regarding the eventual outcome of humankind's evolution. However, the "outrageous hope" implied by the text may not refer to humankind being rewarded by Life in the end and the universal enjoyment of the final achievement. Rather, it is the kind of Shavian optimism derived from the prospect that humanity will do its bit and contribute to the glorious victory of the Life Force, even if that means the extinction of our species to give way to our (r) evolutionary descendants, the superhuman long-livers.

Shaw "himself considered [*Back to Methuselah*] his most important work" (Yde 112), so its importance as a point of reference within the Shavian canon is confirmed by the author as well, and understandably so. Despite having been criticized and overwritten by the playwright himself later on, *Back to Methuselah* can undoubtedly be considered a set of the Irish dramatist's most innovative, comprehensive, detailed, and provocative ideas regarding the future of humanity. Furthermore, highlighting the modernist aspect of the text, Yde notes that "*Back to Methuselah* remains a satire to the very end" (132). Indeed, besides being a long, five-part play cycle, it deals with serious and rather complex existential questions in an ironic, Shavian fashion throughout the plot and even in its "Preface." Overall, the entirety of the text presents a perhaps deliberately fragmented yet deeply contemplative take on the origins, length(s), and meaning(s) of life, not only on a human level but anticipating the twenty-first-century concept of posthumanism, as well as, exemplified by the creation, behavior, and demise of the automatons in the final part, the rise of—and controversial attitudes towards— artificial intelligence.

In conclusion, the very essence and pillars of the Shavian attitude in the early 1920s, characterized by positive views delivered in a witty, contemplative fashion, were later on shattered by the experiences of the Second World War. For a dramatist as sensitive to social phenomena and change as Shaw, the new global conflict meant a particularly

severe case of disillusionment. However, especially when compared to the sardonically realistic portrayal of human life in his earlier works, as well as the bitter tone and apocalyptic visions of his later plays, *Back to Methuselah* proved to be the epitome of a hopeful Shavian interwar utopianism. Its irony, similarly to the vast majority of the Irish playwright's works, stems from complicated conundrums and polemical paradoxes. Additionally, concerned with (as well as, to a certain degree, *about*) the potential future(s) of our species' existence, *Back to Methuselah* can be regarded as a lasting, meditative, thought-provoking, and original instance of modernist sci-fi drama, conveying relevant ideas to its audiences even a century after its premiere.

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"I let down my nets and pulled." Langston Hughes' *The Big Sea* (1940) as a Slave-Narrative Inspired Autobiography

András Tarnóc

The aim of the essay is to investigate the connection between the slave narrative and the Harlem Renaissance through Langston Hughes' *The Big Sea* (1940). The work recalls Hughes' personal growth and professional development from a struggle-filled young adulthood to becoming an accomplished literary figure. I consider Hughes's text a slave narrative-inspired autobiography. In order to substantiate my hypothesis I primarily rely on Frances Smith Foster and Kim Green's cyclical interpretation of the slave narrative, John Olney's theory concerning the respective form and content related conventions, and Mikhail Bakhtin's chronotope model. I identify three formative experiences in Hughes's life: his extended stay with his father in Mexico at age 19, his voyage to Africa in 1923 and his "sociological study trip" to the South in 1924. My treatise retraces how the options provided by the genre of autobiography helped Langston Hughes to convert an unwritten self into literary representation.

Keywords: life writing, agency, ports of call, pulpits of consultation, pastoral chronotope

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Introduction

One of the main aspects of African American literature is the construction of racial identity, which is usually realized via a set of dyads or "a linked series of opposites" entailing Black/white, enslaved/free individual, European/African, etc. (Smethurst 563). The Harlem Renaissance, a period of flourishing black literary production and growing mainstream appreciation, reflects both the construction of race and a break from this tradition as well. The era encompassing the third decade of the twentieth century saw the emergence of such acclaimed authors as Langston Hughes, Alain Locke, Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, Nella Larsen, and Zora Neale Hurston. Although this movement is generally considered an essentialist variant of modernism, the very term, Renaissance, implies a "return to and reengagement with the texts of the past"(Stokes 29). Such literary retrospection (Stokes 29) is signaled by the rediscovery of the slave narrative as indicated by James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912/1927) and Langston Hughes' *The Big Sea* (1940).

The connection between the slave narrative and the Harlem Renaissance autobiography has been explored by several scholars. Dennis Chester asserts that *The Big*

Sea is a "derivative of early slave narratives" (44), while Claudia Stokes identifies both formal and content-based similarities with Hughes' text as she "equates [the search for] manhood and self-determination" in the slave narrative with the author's striving to achieve "literary control" in *The Big Sea* (34). Another example is Johnson's novel mentioned above. *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* displays such time-honored conventions of the genre as the self-affirmatory introduction, the detailed description of the racially mixed family background, along with the Preface of the Publishers (31) offering a "bird's-eye view of the conflict" [...] brought on by the respective "race drama" (Johnson).

The significance of the slave narrative is based on its capability to provide an authentic description of enslavement and its social, cultural, and psychological consequences. Along with the Indian captivity narrative, it conveys the myth of American origination, while it refutes such stereotypical images of blacks as the savage brute, the tragic mulatto, the wretched freedman, or the natural slave. Zsolt Virágos highlights the slave narrative as a survival and success story (197). In Houston Baker's view, the authentic description of the slavery experience functioned as a means of the slave to write himself or herself into being (*Journey* 30), while Arna Bontemps considers the slave narrative the Rosetta Stone of early America (Sekora 483).[1] In the same vein, Baker holds that the narratives themselves are derivatives of the blues matrix, which is the foundation of black culture in general (Baker *Blues* 14). This interlocking system offering a code to interpret African American cultural production entails progress from the "obdurate economics of slavery to a resonant, improvisational, expressive dignity" (13). As Baker asserts, one of the leading blues moments is provided by the best-known examples of the genre, Frederick Douglass' *Narrative* (13-14).

The slave narrative, which John Barbour considers to be, along with the Indian captivity narrative, one of the principal forms of American autobiography (Juster 9), questions the very idea of race construction. The slave narrative can be divided into three categories: the late eighteenth century—mostly Afro-Briton—texts, the classic antebellum accounts of the first half of the nineteenth century, and the neo-slave narrative, a principally twentieth-century version of the latter. In light of Vincent Caretta's four-part interpretation of the slave trade[2] and Richard Van Der Beets' modeling of the plot of the Indian captivity narrative[3], the first-generation narrative—among others, Ottobah Cuguano's "Thoughts and Sentiments" (1787) and Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative* (1789)—includes the following stages: separation from the homeland, relegation into the position of an object, integration into the system of slavery, and the eventual acquisition of subject status. The acquisition stage includes the determination to escape, escape itself, (self) emancipation, and

1 Just like in case of the actual Rosetta Stone, whose ""decipherment led to the understanding of hieroglyphic writing" (Augustyn), the slave narrative had become an authentic source of information concerning the social, economic, and political relations of the respective period.

2 The process includes capture, the Middle Passage, seasoning, or introduction into the system of slavery, and full enslavement (Caretta 296).

3 According to Van Der Beets, the given experience can be divided into three main stages, Separation, Transformation and Return (562).

reintegration into mainstream society. In the case of second, or even third-generation slave narratives, the model is simpler since the given individual is born into slavery. In the latter instance, exemplified by the accounts of Frederick Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. Written by Himself* (1845) or Henry Bibb's *A Narrative of the Life and Adventures* (1849), such stages can be discerned as the slave's recognition of object status, determination to flee, escape, and reintegration into free society.

Inspired by the above mentioned research findings, my study delves further into the connection between the slave narrative and Hughes' autobiographical writing, which I view as a slave narrative-inspired autobiography. In order to substantiate this claim, I explore the particular plot, identify correlations and overlaps between the respective forms and conventions, and point out the relevance of selected autobiographical theory models. For the sake of realizing the given research objective, I will mainly rely on interpretations developed by Frances Smith Foster and Kim Green, in addition to that of John Sekura, Sidonie Smith,Julia Watson, and John Barbour. I will substantiate my findings with the help of Pierre Nora and Mikhail Bakhtin's critical views as well.

Journey and Personal Transformation in *The Big Sea*

Langston Hughes' (1902-1967) *The Big Sea* (1940) commemorates the author's personal and artistic development while it provides a behind-the-scenes look at the internal dynamics of the Harlem Renaissance. The text retraces Hughes' life through early adulthood. The account contains three formative experiences: Hughes' time spent in Mexico with his father at age 19, the voyage to Africa in 1923, and his visit to the South after his return in 1924. Hughes mostly grew up with his mother and stepfather, as his father deserted the family when he moved to Mexico and became a successful businessman. Years later, aiming to promote the personal well-being and career of his son, he invited him to his ranch. Hughes' move to Mexico alienated him from his mother, who maintained a hostile and tension-filled relationship with her former spouse. Despite the extended time spent in Mexico and the attendant personal development that entailed learning Spanish and becoming familiar with accounting, Hughes could not get closer to his father. While James N. Hughes wanted his son to escape restrictions posed by the color bar in the United States by studying mining engineering in Europe and eventually resettling in Mexico, Langston refused to follow his father's footsteps and chose to study at Columbia University instead (62).

The other major episode is the journey to Africa in 1923. At the age of twenty-one, Hughes signed up to serve on a West Africa-bound merchant marine vessel, the SS Malone, as a mess boy. In addition to retracing the Middle Passage, the voyage entails a confrontation between the myth of Africa and the sobering reality. Having returned from his trip, Hughes attempted to reintegrate into American society. After taking various odd jobs in 1924, he eventually enrolled in Columbia University, only to drop out later in the same year. Although he deserted the Ivy League, he continued his education at Lincoln University of Philadelphia. Fulfilling a self-imposed sociological

research project in 1924, he took a longer visit to the South, including the states of Louisiana and Georgia where, despite his status as a budding writer and poet from the North, he ran into the frustrating restrictions of the color line. Hughes indeed provides a "behind-the-scenes look" at the Harlem Renaissance as he brings to life the excitement of the period along with providing a panorama of the contemporary cultural and literary elite. Hughes' account ends with him becoming an established author in 1930 when his first novel *Not without Laughter* is published.

2.1 The Text as Autobiography

The autobiographical aspects of the account reveal the applicability of Smith and Watson's concept of life writing, while Elizabeth Bruss' theory of the autobiographical act and John Barbour's view of the slave narrative as the cornerstone or primary example of the specific genre offer the backbone of the forthcoming analysis. Although Smith and Watson distinguish between life writing and life narrative, as the former refers to all writing in which life is a subject and the latter being self-referential, Hughes' work qualifies on both counts. At the same time, it can be considered as an autobiographical narrative, combining imaginative acts of remembering—in other words, subjective memory—with rhetorical acts such as assertion, judgment, conviction, or interrogation (16).

The text, due to its original self-affirmatory intent, includes several aspects of assertion. When Hughes declares: "And right then, even before I was six, books began to happen to me, so that after a while, there came a time when I believed in books more than in people—which, of course, was wrong. That was why, when I went to Africa, I threw all the books into the sea" (29), he reverses his former conviction. Seeing "the raised club, the commanding white man, and the frightened native" (112) on the ship brings the antebellum plantation to mind, while noticing Africans working like slaves in loading mahogany boards brings him to the remark: "perhaps someday [these logs would be] somebody's grand piano or chest of drawers made of wood and life, energy and death out of Africa (111).

Smith and Watson also identify the components of the autobiographical effort as memory, experience, identity, embodiment, and agency (16). Hughes' experiences in Africa, Mexico, and the American South forged his truly multicultural identity. In him, one can see the embodiment of the new self-liberated black artist gaining agency via the examination of the self. Such a heightened self-awareness and subsequent essentialist pride led to his article, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (1926), which became the manifesto of the Harlem Renaissance. Hughes proudly declared:

> We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. The tom-tom cries and the tom-tom laughs. If colored people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either (Hughes, "Mountain").

While the article became the declaration of independence for the black author ushering in an era of racial pride by a break with the accommodation-oriented past, the concept of the racial mountain symbolized the cultural and literary expectations of "the smug Negro middle class" (Hughes, "Mountain") and the white literary taste black authors or artists traditionally had to contend with.

According to Elizabeth Bruss, in the case of an autobiographical act the author takes responsibility for the writing of the text, similarly to Philip Lejeune's autobiographical contract. Hence, the text's producer, the author, and the protagonist are considered identical, and the author reaffirms his credibility testifying to the truth of the narrated events. Hughes' self-emancipation expresses his own responsibility for himself:

> I took them all out on deck and threw them overboard. It was like throwing a million bricks out of my heart—for it wasn't only the books that I wanted to throw away, but everything unpleasant and miserable out of my past [...]. All those things I wanted to throw away. To be free of. To escape from. I wanted to be a man on my own, control my own life, and go my own way. I was twenty-one. So I threw the books in the sea. (96)

The detailed descriptions of family history guarantee the authenticity of the narrator. Hughes' great grandfather was a proud man helping black slaves gain their freedom. In fact, his grandmother's first husband participated in John Brown's raid. Unlike the nineteenth-century slave narrative, the text does not have any introduction or preface written by a white author vouching for the validity of the account. Hughes proudly declares ownership for the events of his life. It is noteworthy that the text itself combines several genres, including the autobiography, the essay, and poetry, bearing similarity to the bricolated form of the Caribbean slave narrative. One such example was the narrative of Francisco Manzano[4] which, in addition to retracing his slavery experience in Cuba, contained poems by the author and the amanuensis as well.

John Barbour asserts that the slave narrative, along with the Indian captivity narrative, are the first forms of American autobiography. He states that the main foundation of these texts is religion and, on this base, three impulses—race, individualism, and healing—are positioned (Juster 9).Hughes, just like the authors of the slave narrative, maintains a skeptical view towards religion. This is manifested in the salvation episode as he feels pangs of guilt for imitating or faking an emotional connection to God. "But I was really crying because I couldn't bear to tell her that I had lied, that I had deceived everybody in the church, that I hadn't seen Jesus, and that now I didn't believe there was a Jesus any more, since he didn't come to help me" (24). He also presents the animistic aspect of African religion, when he reveals how he was barred from entering a ritual to celebrate the Omali god Ju-Ju. "White man never go see Ju-ju. Him hurt you! Him too awful! White man never go!' 'But I'm not a white man,' I objected. 'I'll—' 'You no black man, neither,' said Pey impatiently" (116).

4 Manzano, Juan Francisco. "Life of the Negro Poet, Written by Himself" (1840).

Race, evidently, is the other backbone of the text, manifested among others by the denial of Hughes' racial identity by Africans and his critique of the snobbery and condescending attitude of the black cultural establishment. While he recognizes the help of the sympathetic white author and a promoter of black literature, Carl Van Vechten, and he is grateful to an unknown benefactor, Hughes castigates the Washington black intelligentsia for its snobbery and haughty accommodationist attitude. The individualist aspect is aptly demonstrated by his wish to be a "man on [his] own, control [his] own life, and go [his] own way" (96). The voyage to Africa serves the purpose of psychological healing as well: "It was like throwing a million bricks out of my heart–for it wasn't only the books that I wanted to throw away, but everything unpleasant and miserable out of my past" (96).

2. 2. Manifestations of the Slave Narrative in the Text

In this section, I illustrate the connection between the genre of the slave narrative and Hughes' text. I suggest plot-based, formal-conventional, and potential criticism-based similarities. In addition to the general linear interpretations of the confinement narrative espoused among others by Richard Van Der Beets, I deploy the cyclical approach of Foster and Green, while the circular theory of John Sekura will become applicable as well.

2.2.1. Connections Based on the Interpretation of the Plot

Eschewing the original linear perspective ranging from captivity to freedom, Frances Foster and Kim Green elaborated a cyclical view of the slave narrative. Their resulting model, "ports of call and pulpits of consultation," enumerates physical and metaphysical points of entry the slave passes through on the one hand, while presenting a moral commentary on the institution on the other. Uniting the physical and metaphysical aspects of the slavery experience entailing travel, exploration, and transition, ports of call refer to literal and figurative gateways, while pulpits signify the didactic and heuristic capacities of such texts. Moreover, the first component of Foster and Green's theory invokes the *picaro* motive, whereas pulpits of consultation entail commentary on the religious or political foundations of slavery. Consequently, in said light, the slave narrative can function either as a travelogue or a pamphlet with abolitionist potential (45).

This approach is suitable to the eighteenth-century slave narratives which primarily commemorate the Middle Passage. Such works include the accounts of James Albert Gronniosaw and Olaudah Equiano. Passing through the given port has both physical and metaphysical consequences. The account of events in the first port, usually the originally Portuguese slave-trading fortress of Elmina, is followed by objectification, as after embarkation the slaves were treated as cargo. The arrival to the New World, as recalled by Equiano, among others, amounted to a culture shock. "This heightened my wonder; and I was now more persuaded than

ever that I was in another world, and that every thing (sic) about me was magic" (206). Similarly to said works, Hughes' text contains several interrelated journeys: physical and spiritual, literal and symbolic, reminiscent of the ports of call and pulpits of consultation model. The trip on the SS Malone includes the New York (Sandy Hook) - African Coast- New York route. Leaving New York harbor behind is coterminous with self-emancipation.

In the following passage Hughes provides a virtual register of all ports he passed through in Africa: "Along the West Coast we visited some thirty-two ports, from Dakar in Senegal to Loanda in the South. The Ivory Coast, the Gold Coast, Lagos, the Niger, the Bight of Benin, and the Slave Coast, Calabar, the Kamerun, Boma up the Congo, where we were moored to a gigantic tree, and our last port, San Paolo de Loanda in Portuguese Angola" (105). While ports of call implied additional bondage or being sold at the market for the slave, Hughes negotiates the harbors of Africa in an adventurous spirit:"Africa! When the Captain let us draw money, we enjoyed ourselves in what is, I suppose, the fashion of sailors everywhere. We drank licker and went looking for girls" (106).

Regarding the pulpit function, while authors of slave narratives commented on the immorality of the slave trade or that of the whole "peculiar institution,"[5] Hughes expounds upon the absurdity of race construction by contrasting the myth of Africa with the actual reality. Faced with the invalidity of the myth of the motherland in Africa when he is considered a white man, in fact his very identity is denied, he experiences disillusionment. "Our problems in America are very much like yours' I told the Africans, 'especially in the South. I am a Negro, too.' But they only laughed at me and shook their heads and said: 'You, white man! You, white man!' It was the only place in the world where I've ever been called a white man" (102). The passage shows how his efforts to promote intercontinental and intra-racial solidarity are foiled by the respective differing interpretations of race.

The Kru from Liberia, viewing him as white for being one of "those foreign colored" (102) men, perform cultural exclusion and racial discrimination in reverse. In other words, in the eyes of the Africans Hughes is an object, and any meaningful communication or cultural exchange is precluded due to his lighter skin color or place of birth. Thus Hughes, othered by the Other, dejectedly remarks: "The great Africa of my dreams! But there was one thing that hurt me a lot when I talked with the people. The Africans looked at me and would not believe I was a Negro" (15).

Another example of the arbitrariness of racial division is offered as Hughes recalls the way white Americans categorized him after returning from Mexico: "On the way back to Cleveland an amusing thing happened. During the trip to the border, several American whites on the train mistook me for a Mexican, and some of them even spoke to me in Spanish, since I am of a copper-brown complexion" (50). Being asked

5 The arbitrariness of the institution of slavery is well illustrated by Douglass when recounting his roots from the enslaver he puts the Hamian curse argument to rest:"[...] it will do away the force of the argument, that God cursed Ham, and therefore American slavery is right. If the lineal descendants of Ham are alone to be scripturally enslaved, it is certain that slavery at the south must soon become unscriptural; for thousands are ushered into the world, annually, who, like myself, owe their existence to white fathers, and those fathers most frequently their own masters (1649)."

at a St. Louis ice cream fountain whether he was a Mexican or a Negro resulted in an equally bizarre and detrimental description of the color bar: "Because if you're a Mexican, I'll serve you,' he said. 'If you're colored, I won't" (51).

Speaking from Foster and Green's pulpit, Hughes shares his views on the ubiquitous and devastating racial epithet responsible for physical, economic, social, and psychological harm as well: "The word *nigger*, you see, sums up for us who are colored all the bitter years of insult and struggle in America: the slave-beatings of yesterday, the lynchings of today, the Jim Crow cars, the only movie show in town with its sign up FOR WHITES ONLY, the restaurants where you may not eat, the jobs you may not have" (251). Hughes, however, singles out another equally demoralizing and damaging result of segregation, namely racial self-hatred demonstrated by his father: "That's what I want you to do, Langston. Learn something you can make a living from anywhere in the world, in Europe or South America, and don't stay in the States, where you have to live like a nigger with niggers" (61).[6]

While segregation is different from slavery in form, it is a related pattern of the systematized race-based oppression leading to the rise of slave narratives. In Chester's view, Hughes' account qualifies as a Jim Crow narrative, similarly to that of Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery* (1901) which, due to the author's birth in the antebellum period, is also considered a slave narrative (44). In this vein Hughes' work yields to the partial application of John Sekura's core and periphery model as well. The core is the institution of slavery or, in his case, segregation, the periphery implies the individual experience. The journey to the mythical homeland, followed by the failure of communication coupled with cultural exclusion and the eventual return, brings his experience full circle. Thus, Hughes signs up to serve as a mess boy in order to escape the de facto segregation experienced in the North. Subsequently, upon arrival at the West African coast, he is in fact faced with intra-racial discrimination and eventually he returns to the original point of departure. Although for obvious reasons the return phase can hardly, if ever, be discerned in slave narratives, Briton Hammon's *Narrative*[7] describes how after suffering as a captive at first of the Indians and later of the Spanish in the Caribbean and followed by a tumultuous "career" as a sailor in British warships he is reunited with his "good Master, General Winslow."

2.2.2 Connections Based on Form and Content

Hughes' text reveals several formal aspects and conventions of the slave narrative including the self-affirmatory introduction, the description of the racially impacted

6 Such racial self-hatred is applicable in the case of Harriet Jacobs' *Narrative* as she "admits that the black man is inferior. But what is it that makes him so? It is the ignorance in which white men compel him to live; it is the torturing whip that lashes manhood out of him; it is the fierce bloodhounds of the South, and the scarcely less cruel human bloodhounds of the north, who enforce the Fugitive Slave Law. They do the work" (69).

7 Hammon, Briton. *A Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings, and Surprizing Deliverance of Briton Hammon, a Negro Man*.(1760)

family background and the struggle to achieve personal integrity, along with a potential parallel with standard character types.

The author follows the respective self-affirming tradition and positions himself both chronologically and geographically: "I was born in Joplin, Missouri, in 1902, but I grew up mostly in Lawrence, Kansas" (18). John Olney distinguishes the main form and content-related features of the slave narratives. The term "I was born" reaffirms the personhood of the slave in light of the legally warranted chattel status, and the actual recalling of the ordeal in first person singular implies the slave's ability to cope with the tribulations mentioned (152-53).

In the second chapter titled "Negro," Hughes provides several parallels with the slave narrative, including the description of his family lineage, the direct connection to a white slave trader, and even to Henry Clay:

> I am brown. My father was a darker brown. My mother an olive-yellow. On my father's side, the white blood in his family came from a Jewish slave trader in Kentucky, Silas Cushenberry, of Clark County, who was his mother's father; and Sam Clay, a distiller of Scotch descent, living in Henry County, who was his father's father. So on my father's side both male great-grandparents were white, and Sam Clay was said to be a relative of the great statesman, Henry Clay, his contemporary (16).

This passage implies a link with the indirect slave narrative, the account of slavery included in the correspondence or texts of mainstream authors or those written by the representatives of the slaveholding society (Tarnóc 65). One such example is John Gabriel Stedman's report on his participation in putting down the slave rebellion in Surinam.[8] Furthermore, William Lloyd Garrison, in his book-length letter attacking Lajos Kossuth during his visit to America for his professed neutrality on the topic of slavery, singled out the Hungarian statesman as the lackey of the slaveholding and slave breeding government. The work also contains Garrison's recollection of the cruel treatment of Lewis Richardson, one of Clay's slaves, and retraces how Richardson determines to escape and becomes a spokesman for the abolition movement.

Taking the second-generation narrative into consideration, Hughes directly experienced de facto segregation, which resulted in a determination to escape. The first escape or separation attempt was the move to his father's ranch in Mexico. While he definitely was not relegated to the status of a slave, he was subordinated to the will of his father, regardless of the fact that the latter wanted to make life better for him through education. Hughes even reached the nadir of the slavery experience, the stage of symbolic death when the ordeals of captivity lead to suicidal thoughts or actual attempts to kill oneself. "I began to be very sorry for myself, in a strange land in a mountain town, where there wasn't a person who spoke English. It was very cold at night and quiet, and I had no money to get away, and I was lonesome. I began to wish I had never been born—not under such circumstances" (47). Several slave narratives include this stage, suffice it to refer to Douglass as he laments: "I often found myself

8 *Narrative of a Five Year's Expedition amongst the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (1796).

regretting my own existence, and wished myself dead; and but for the hope of being free, I have no doubt but that I should have killed myself, or done something for which I should have been killed," (1665). Likewise, in Briton Hammon's text combining both the Indian captivity narrative and the slave narrative, the protagonist expresses his state of mind after suffering an Indian ambush:"I immediately jump'd overboard, chusing rather to be drowned, than to be kill'd by those barbarous and inhuman Savages" (Hammon).

Hughes's inability to maintain close relations with his father and, in fact, losing his power of expression, leads to a decision to escape: "As the weeks went by, I could think of less and less to say to my father. His whole way of living was so different from mine, his attitude toward life and people so amazing, that I fell silent and couldn't open my mouth when he was in the house" (47). The fact that he plans his departure in secret is reminiscent of the slave narrative's description of the slave's escape: "Not caring what that meant, I made up my mind to see about getting away myself" (66). The transatlantic voyage symbolizes the desire to reach subject status, which culminates in throwing his books into the ocean soon after his departure. Getting rid of his previous readings represents self-emancipation and a personal and artistic declaration of independence while it echoes the motto of the modernist movement: "Make It New!"

One standard aspect of slave narratives is the physical confrontation with the representative of the slaveholding society, as shown in accounts written by Frederick Douglass, Henry Bibb, Francisco Manzano, or Harriet Jacobs. Hughes' clash with the Third Engineer, who wanted to remove African families while he was having dinner is reminiscent of Douglass' altercation with Edward Covey: "The Third Engineer was a big fellow, and I couldn't fight him barehanded, so I raised the tureen, ready to bring it down on his head. 'I'll report you to the Captain, you black—!' 'Go ahead, you —— and double—!' I said, raising the soup tureen. He went. The Africans finished their meal in peace" (113). Just like when Douglass' fight with the overseer helped him to rekindle the "few expiring embers of freedom and revived a [...] sense of [his] own manhood" (1679), Hughes achieves self-liberation and invokes racial pride and solidarity.

Baker's view of the blues functioning as a foundation of African American cultural and literary production along with his recognition of blues moments in Douglass' work, not to mention Hughes' regular deployment of the respective motif in his art, suggests the relevance of the given idea to the present inquiry. Baker posits that the blues offers a "vernacular trope for cultural explanation"(14). He identifies the slave narrative perpetuating personal suffering and victory over the given ordeal as a blues text or a blues moment. Hughes, however, undergoes mostly psychological tribulation due to a distant father, or being continuously hampered by the restrictions of the color bar. The potential causes of his suffering include "the memory of [his] father, the poverty and uncertainties of [his] mother's life, the stupidities of color-prejudice, [being] black in a white world, the fear of not finding a job, the bewilderment of no one to talk to about things that trouble you" (96).

While Baker locates the blues performer at the juncture of the train tracks, Hughes appears to negotiate the physical and metaphysical crossroads composed of American and African culture along with the snobbery of the Washington black elite and the

down-to-earth community of average blacks. “To me it did not seem good, for the ‘better class’ Washington colored people, as they called themselves, drew rigid class and color lines within the race against Negroes who worked with their hands, or who were dark in complexion and had no degrees from colleges” (196).The autobiography itself also contains several references to the blues as a leading motif of Hughes’ poetry, exemplified by “The Weary Blues” (92).

Hughes finds the blues moment with “people [...] on Lenox Avenue in New York, or Seventh Street in Washington or South State in Chicago—people up today and down tomorrow, working this week and fired the next, beaten and baffled, but determined not to be wholly beaten” (246). In another episode, Hughes invokes the blues and the Negro spirituals as the tangible evidence of the black past. He visited a plantation in Georgia where he came across one of the descendants of Jean Toomer, the author of another outstanding work of the Harlem Renaissance, *Cane* (1923). The old black man was wearing a worn patchwork hat, which reminded Hughes of “the quaint soul of labor in the Old South, caroling softly souls of slavery” (278).

2.2.3 Connection through Critical Interpretation

The centrality of the voyage to Africa in Hughes’ narrative and the actual transatlantic passage gives rise to the application of two critical approaches otherwise relevant to the slave narrative. The idea of travel, regardless whether forced or voluntary, entails the application of the chronotope viewed by Mikhail Bakhtin as a binary conceptual structure implying the “intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships” within a given text (84). Chronotopes have two main types, the pastoral pattern and the one reflecting displacement (Ganser et al. 2). In the case of the first, space dominates over time. The pastoral pattern can be found in traditional travelogues commemorating a journey undertaken at the traveler’s will and usually refers to an idyllic immersion in the beauty of the landscape. In the chronotope expressing displacement, the temporal or time-oriented perspective prevails over spatiality (Ganser et al. 2).The first-generation slave narrative, describing among others the ordeal of the Middle Passage, is characterized by the displacement chronotope, while Hughes offers an example of the pastoral one.

The SS Malone, the ship on which he traveled to and along the coast of Africa, functions as a chronotope, a concept fusing space and time and the respective journey facilitates an answer to Countee Cullen’s rhetorical question “What is Africa to me?” posed in his poem “Heritage” (1922). Hughes writes:“The crossing was bright and sunny. We reached the Azores, the Canaries, and finally Africa. A long, sandy coastline, gleaming in the sun. Palm trees sky-tall. Rivers darkening the sea’s edge with the loam of their deltas. People, black and beautiful as the night” (101). Due to his nervous anticipation of seeing Africa, the attractiveness of the given space takes precedence over the duration of the journey. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that Hughes rarely indicates the length of the given voyage.

Naturally, the ship Hughes serves on plies the same waters as the slave transporting vessels did. Just like in the case of the slave narrative, the bodies of water have special

significance. Having left America, the SS Malone is suspended between two cultures. Accordingly, both the physical connection to and the commemoration of slavery are represented by the actual vessel crossing the Atlantic.

Toni Morrison, building on Pierre Nora's *lieux de memoire* concept, argues that in African American culture, bodies of water serve as lieux de memoire, or sites of memory. "All water has a perfect memory and is forever trying to get back to where it was" (99). Nora identifies places of memory as physical and metaphysical repositories of remembrance with material, functional, and symbolic dimensions (19). Therefore, the Atlantic Ocean, the site of the black community's originary trauma, serves as a *lieu de memoire*. The actual bones of the victims as gruesome reminders of the slave trade represent the material aspect, the water and its capability to remember to symbolize the organic perspective of black history, while the very crossing stands for the archetypal black cultural experience (Wardi 6).

Although occurring in an opposite direction, Hughes's water crossing serves as a *lieu de memoire* as well. A *lieu de memoire* can be conveyed verbally, kinetically, and visually (O'Meally and Fabre 8). The verbal aspect is the actual description of the given action or concept. The kinetic dimension represents motion at sea, while the visual side commemorates the landscape. Thus, the actual concept in fact underlines the idea of the chronotope as well. The kinetic and visual aspects are represented by this passage: "The next day we moved on. And farther down the coast it was more like the Africa I had dreamed about—wild and lovely, the people dark and beautiful, the palm trees tall, the sun bright, and the rivers deep" (15).

Hughes further reinforces the cultural importance of water by recalling how his poem "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" was born during his trip to Mexico."[W]e crossed the Mississippi, slowly, over a long bridge. I looked out the window of the Pullman at the great muddy river flowing down toward the heart of the South, and I began to think what that river, the old Mississippi, had meant to Negroes in the past—how to be sold down the river was the worst fate that could overtake a slave in times of bondage" (55). The poem helps Hughes to form a linkage with antebellum slavery and, by extension, the slave narrative. The symbolic aspect of the *lieu de memoire* is the river, as it functions as the representation of the black soul: "My soul has grown deep like the rivers" (55).

Conclusion

Langston Hughes' autobiography, *The Big Sea*, demonstrates that the slave narrative influenced the text through form, content, and message. Naturally, not all elements of the slave narrative can be found in the text. *The Big Sea* in fact provides a behind-the-scenes view of the internal dynamics of the Harlem Renaissance, revealing the ruptures of intra-racial cooperation, the clash between the values of Seventh Street and the Washington cultural elite, along with Hughes' acrimonious conflict with Zora Neale Hurston over the publication of a jointly authored play titled "Mule Bone" (314). The Harlem Renaissance is a special, race-specific, essentialist version of modernism. It is a break with the accommodationist cultural

past, amounting to the declaration of cultural independence and the coming of age of Black America.

Thus, it follows the above that the most significant aspect of the related works is the enunciation of identity. Hughes breaks away from his previous self, limited by de facto segregation, and declares individual and artistic independence. Similarly to Frederick Douglass, Hughes retraces how he "discovers the path to true self-hood and freedom." He aims to return to his African roots, but the mission does not reach its original objective. The literary or genre-based connection is implied by the life writing aspect. Hughes' text displays the main features of both the slave narrative and the autobiography. He let his nets down in the big sea of literature (311) and dedicated himself to literary retrospection. The text implies that he asserted himself against the racial mountain. Faithfully performing the main function of the slave narrative, that is, to write the slave into being, Hughes does the same by describing his own attempts to reach the status of a full-fledged, legitimate literary figure.

Hughes invokes the slave narrative due to a strong internal compulsion to pay homage to his forebears, but he is remarkably influenced by the self-assertive and self-emancipatory dimensions of the given literary product as well. Accordingly, the message of *The Big Sea* can be summed up in a modernist version of Douglass' famous chiasmic statement, "You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man"(1676) as "you have seen how an artist was made a victim of segregation; you shall see how the victim of segregation was made an artist."In sum, Langston Hughes maximizes the potentials inherent in autobiographical literature as he converts an unwritten self into literary representation.

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"Tinkers" in Verse: The Dublin Gate Theatre's Production of Donagh MacDonagh's *God's Gentry* (1951)

José Lanters

Abstract

In his ballad opera *God's Gentry*, produced in 1951 at the Dublin Gate Theatre under the direction of Hilton Edwards, Donagh MacDonagh set out to satirize totalitarian regimes and the welfare state by making the "class" of the tinkers the rulers of Ireland for a year, led by Marks ("Marx") Mongan and aided by the old Irish god Balor of the Evil Eye. Written in verse and interspersed with popular folk tunes to which MacDonagh wrote new lyrics, the play imagines the tinkers' outlook on life as the antithesis of capitalism, law and order, and Christian family values. Nora, the village shopkeeper's daughter, is seduced by the free and merry ways of Marks and his people, but when the nation is declared bankrupt and the pagan, socialist "tinker's republic" collapses, her jilting of Marks and her return to settled life signal a more general reversal of the nation to bourgeois values. This essay considers the way in which Travelling people are represented in the text and on the stage both as metaphorical stand-ins for politicians governing Ireland and nations beyond its borders and as an actual Irish minority perceived as an unregulated and transgressive entity—a "nation within a nation"—by the settled population. The article also considers how the life of the Travellers was imagined aesthetically in what MacDonagh referred to as the "grand" settings and costumes designed for the Gate production by Micheál Mac Liammóir, who also played the part of Marks.

Keywords: Verse drama, ballad opera, Travellers, tinkers, satire, welfare state

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Donagh MacDonagh (1912-1968) was the son of Muriel Gifford and Thomas MacDonagh, who was executed for his part in the 1916 Easter Rebellion. Having studied at University College, Dublin (UCD), MacDonagh became a barrister in 1935 and was appointed a district judge in 1941, first in Mayo and later in Wexford. He was also a writer, and between 1946 and 1959 composed several verse dramas, of which the first two, *Happy as Larry* and *God's Gentry*, had the most success on the stage. MacDonagh's interest in the genre came from his admiration for the verse plays of Austin Clarke, who in 1917 had succeeded his father as lecturer in English at UCD, and who, apart from his poetry, "is chiefly remembered for the way in which, through

the formation of [...] the Lyric Theatre Company in 1944, he kept poetic drama in Ireland alive" (McHugh 52). The Lyric revived interest in dramatists like T. S. Eliot, W. H. Auden, Christopher Isherwood, and Christopher Fry, who had reintroduced poetic drama in Britain in the 1930s and '40s. Realizing that verse drama was not a universally popular genre, MacDonagh "thought that it might be possible, by using the technique of the Marx Brothers and the circus, to lure the unsuspecting public into the theatre and then land dollops of verse in their laps" (qtd. in Hogan 154-55). According to Robert Hogan, *Happy as Larry* became "one of the more successful modern attempts to weld together poetry and drama" because MacDonagh avoids burdensome poetic images and metaphors in favor of the short lines and simplicity of diction and meter of the ballad form (155). The play was rejected by the Abbey Theatre in 1946, since its managing director, Ernest Blythe, "[did] not think it would run a week," but when Clarke's Lyric Company performed the play in Dublin (on, of all places, the Abbey stage) it was so successful that it transferred to the larger Gaiety Theatre to accommodate the demand for seats (*Irish Times* 7 February 1952).[1] In 1951, the Abbey also rejected *God's Gentry*. When the play was successfully staged at the Belfast Arts Theatre in August-September of that year, it came to the attention of Hilton Edwards and Micheál Mac Liammóir, who chose to present it as the Gate Theatre's 1951 Christmas production. *God's Gentry* ran for eleven weeks at the Gate, making it one of the longest runs since the company's inception in 1928.

Described in the program for the Gate production as an "Irish Folk Musical Comedy," *God's Gentry* is a ballad opera along the lines of John Gay's *Beggar's Opera*. The play calls for a cast of about twenty actors, of whom at least four should be strong singers. The simple musical accompaniment is supplied by a violin and an accordion. As a broadcaster on Radio Éireann, MacDonagh had, from 1939 to 1943, presented a program about the ballad tradition, which left him with a large collection of traditional songs. For the play, he composed new lyrics to tunes like "Will You Come to the Bower?" and "The Sash My Father Wore." According to the *Sunday Independent* (2 September 1951: 7), the style of singing and the "swinging dance movements" of the Belfast Arts Theatre production had been more suited to "musical comedy than to the folk genre," but the *Irish Times* (28 December 1951) found that, under Edwards' direction, the Gate production had entirely remedied this "major weakness," while the Belfast set designs, pleasing as they were, had been "surpassed completely" by Mac Liammóir's settings and costumes.

God's Gentry depicts what happens when the tinkers take over the government of Ireland for a year, aided by the mythological figure Balor of the Evil Eye. The term "tinkers," the traditional name for Ireland's traveling people, is today regarded as pejorative. In post-independence Ireland, Travellers, perceived by the sedentary population as deviating from the cultural and ethnic norm, often became the medium through which questions of Irishness were explored, and the entity against which that quality was defined. Along these lines, MacDonagh makes the wandering, light-fingered tinkers in his play the antithesis of the property-owning, law-abiding village

1 Citations from newspapers and magazines without page references are taken from the book of press cuttings in the Gate Theatre Archive at Northwestern University.

shopkeeper. Hilton Edwards may have appeared to be more inclusive when, in a press release preserved in the Gate Theatre Archive, he described *God's Gentry* as a "tinker bacchanalia [...] as authentically Irish as, and not entirely divorced from the atmosphere of, 'The Crock of Gold' and 'The Demi-Gods'," [2] but relegating the tinkers to an "authentic" realm of romantic Irish fantasy makes it possible to ignore the harsh realities Travellers face in Irish society every day. It was not until 2017 that the Irish Travellers were formally recognized as an ethnic minority within the Irish State; the official recognition was generally seen as an acknowledgement of the discrimination the Traveller community had faced, and still faces, in Ireland. A report by the Economic and Social Research Institute published that year "highlighted the 'extreme disadvantage' suffered by Travellers across a range of indicators, including health, housing, education, employment and mortality" (*Irish Times* 1 March 2017: 8).

Like James Stephens in his fiction, MacDonagh in his verse play brings the mundane world of rural Ireland into contact with the realm of Irish mythology. In a lecture entitled "Poetry and Drama" presented at Harvard University in November 1950, one year before *God's Gentry* opened at the Gate, T. S. Eliot addressed "the problems of poetic drama, and the conditions which it must fulfill if it is to justify itself" (31). Referencing the subject matter of his own early verse play, *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), he noted the following:

> Verse plays, it has been generally held, should either take their subject matter from some mythology, or else should be about some remote historical period, far enough away from the present for the characters not to need to be recognizable as human beings, and therefore for them to be licensed to talk in verse. Picturesque period costume renders verse much more acceptable. (34)

Eliot explains that he himself subsequently moved away from these restrictions; MacDonagh's *God's Gentry*, however, with its distinctive costumes, slightly otherworldly tinker characters, and the appearance of Balor of the Evil Eye, perfectly adheres to the prescription.

Much more so than in James Stephens' fantasies published in the second decade of the twentieth century, MacDonagh's mid-century tinkers, while colorful, are presented as a potential threat to the rising bourgeoisie in their disregard for property, the law, labor, and even the boundaries of the state. Jim Mac Laughlin suggests that in the 1950s, "the majority of Irish Travellers were rural dwellers" who lived in "small encampments throughout the countryside" and "travelled with comparative ease among the settled population" (47). The Mayo tinkers in *God's Gentry* reflect this situation, but the negative opinions about Travellers expressed in the play by the shopkeeper and the gardaí are indicative of a bias that would become increasingly pronounced from the 1960s onward, when traditional Traveller occupations began to disappear, and more Travellers were drawn to urban areas to avail themselves of unemployment assistance. Reviewers of the play's 1951 production, like the play's author, associated tinkers with transgressive behavior. The *Irish Independent* (30

2 James Stephens, *The Crock of Gold* (1912) and *The Demi-Gods* (1914).

August 1951: 6) observed that the tinkers in *God's Gentry* "might have stepped out of the witness box after some elaborate law suit, so racy and well observed are they." A subsequent notice in the same paper similarly stated that MacDonagh's play "is all about tinkers—which would seem a fitting subject for a District Judge" (*Irish Independent* 18 December 1951: 6). Referring to the "human, erring Irish tinker," *Dublin Opinion* (February 1952) nevertheless thought such a character made "better material than the too 'literary' gypsy that cut such a figure in the romances of the Nineteenth Century."

In an essay also entitled "God's Gentry," published in 1964 in the Catholic magazine *The Word*, MacDonagh openly expressed his own biases against Travellers. "The tinkers are a nation within a nation," he writes. "Nobody knows how many of them there are. Though they live among, and largely on, the settled members of the community, there is virtually no communication between the two worlds." Yet despite this alleged separation, MacDonagh is happy enough to dismantle what he considers "the false sentimentality which sees in these free-souled nomads a negation of the invisible chains of custom and convention." While he acknowledges that the Travellers "deal in horses, rags, bottles, and horse-hair," he does not consider this labor, just as his description of "their annual and pointless peregrination through their well-worn circuits" entirely divorces travelling from the necessity to make a living. Travellers might want to be called "travelling dealers" rather than tinkers or itinerants, but MacDonagh insists that "we will have to call them [tinkers] no matter how they may protest." Tinkers, he goes on, stick together with "the solidarity of the non-working class," and if they have money, it must be because they believe "that they are entitled to take anything that is not nailed down." MacDonagh concludes the article by explaining how he came to write his ballad opera: "when I was seeking a theme for satirizing totalitarian governments and the welfare state, I hit on the idea of making the tinkers the rulers of Ireland with the aid of the old Irish god, Balor of the Evil Eye." Apart from everything else, then, he also presents Irish Travellers as pagans, although they traditionally adhere to the Catholic faith.

MacDonagh's satire in *God's Gentry* is rather thin, but it essentially depicts communism and the welfare state as self-defeating systems that provide free handouts to the work-shy. Elsewhere in post-war Europe, labor movements had given an impetus to the development of various forms of social security, but in predominantly rural Ireland, policies were heavily influenced by the Catholic Church, which feared such services would "lower the sense of personal responsibility and seriously weaken the moral fiber of the people" (Barrington 235). For that reason, the Mother and Child Service proposed in 1951 by Minister for Health Noel Browne, which would provide free medical care for mothers and children with the aim of reducing Ireland's high rate of child mortality, was opposed by the Catholic hierarchy and rejected by his fellow politicians. Browne's resignation led to the fall of the Irish government later that year. A weakened Social Welfare Act was passed by the new administration in 1952. Anti-communist sentiment was rife in Ireland at mid-century. When Orson Welles (who had started his acting career at the Gate) arrived at the theater in December 1951 as Edwards' guest to see Maura Laverty's play *Tolka Row*, which immediately preceded the Gate's production of *God's Gentry*, hundreds of demonstrators gathered outside

the entrance. Believing Welles to be a communist, they carried banners with slogans like, "Not wanted, Welles; Stalin's star," so that the actor felt compelled to state in an interview, "I am not a Communist. I have no Communist sympathies, and my anti-Communist record is [...] well known" (*Belfast Newsletter* 19 December 1951: 5).

God's Gentry takes place in the little Mayo village of Knockaderry on St John's Eve, which falls on June 24, around the summer solstice, and is also known as "summer Christmas." It is celebrated with picnics and bonfires, which are a continuation of pre-Christian customs. The play sets the tinkers against John Melody, the local shopkeeper described in the cast of characters as "a hard-faced, hard-headed Mayo gombeen man or usurious trader" (1).[3] As Mac Liammóir himself later described his set design (in a letter to Desmond Murphy of the Portumna Players dated 2 January 1959), Melody's shop was placed on the actors' left, the town backed by Croagh Patrick (a mountain traditionally associated with St Patrick) took up the whole of the cyclorama, and on the actors' right there was the side of an old tower with a big archway through which the tinkers came swarming onto the stage. The *Sunday Express* (13 January 1952) reported that Mac Liammóir had early on realized that the influence of Jack Yeats present in his initial designs was "not altogether in sympathy with the author's idea," and that he had discovered just the effect he wanted in drawings made by George McFall, referred to by the paper as an "unknown stage-hand," who therefore deserves some credit for the design's success.[4] Perhaps lacking other frames of reference, the *Irish Times* (28 December 1951) nevertheless described Mac Liammóir's design as "an enchanting, primitive Jack Yeats tumbling into an Atlantic fjord, backed by mountains." It was Edwards' idea to extend the tinker world beyond the frame of the Gate's small stage. The *Evening Herald* (27 December 1951: 2) described the "surprise" that greeted the audience as they entered the theater: "Two extra platform stages have been built, permitting the action of the play to flow about the first three rows of seats. These 'outside' settings are wonderfully evocative of the tinker world—canopies of hessian plain and coloured; tinware slung on ropes; porter barrels; wagon wheels. The tinker characters enter from a cavern where the orchestra used to be."

When the tinkers arrive on stage, they chant: "Tonight, brave tinkers, let us show / That we're the masters of Mayo. / We'll burst the bars and shutters. / We'll batter down the door. / We'll clear the gold and silver. / We'll ransack and explore" (10). They also declare their allegiance to Balor of the Evil Eye, a "poor old heathen, beaten god" last seen just before the arrival of St Patrick in 432: "Though men who live in houses say / Tonight's the feast of headless John / We know that Balor rules the fires / From Ballina to Babylon" (11). John Melody's contrasting piety has a vicious edge:

> More and more tinkers, the stinkers.
> Are you bred like good Christians

3 The text of *God's Gentry* has not been published, but MacDonagh's son, Niall, has made this play and other writings by his father available online.

4 McFall served as the stage manager of the Gaiety Theatre for almost five decades, until his retirement in 1996.

> In bed? Or is it you come
> By the heat of the sun, like maggots?
> If I were the Lord (and may He be adored),
> I'd see that you breed but one year in three;
> And even at that, I suppose, like rats
> You'd have litters of whey headed, tow headed
> Hay headed, straw headed, red headed brats. (12)

John's daughter Nora is being wooed by the handsome tinker lad, Marks Mongan, whose name and politics are evocative of Karl Marx. His infatuation with Nora gives him some of the best poetic lines in the play: looking up at her window, he describes his beloved's appearance as softly radiant, like "a moon through pearly night clouds / Pure frost on early windows, glittering dew on cobwebs, / A star seen from a well shaft", and wonders "what language could beguile her?" (15). Although Nora knows her father "hates all men who are landless and homeless" (15), she is eventually won over by Marks' version of "Will you Come to the Bower?," in which he presents an idealized tinker life in harmony with the natural world, where she will "shine in the midst of the fairest of dancers" (16). While Nora's parents are praying in church, Marks puts up a ladder to her bedroom window, down which she climbs to run off with him. The other tinkers then use the ladder to enter the premises to steal from the shop whatever is not nailed down. Since John Melody was too mean to pay for any insurance, preferring instead to rely on prayer to keep the tinkers "out of my little paradise" (21), he feels thoroughly cheated when, on his return from his devotions, he finds his shop robbed and his daughter gone: "I'll demand / My money back for all those candles wasted" (22).

Mac Liammóir, who was fifty-one years old when the play opened, reluctantly took on the part of Marks, described in the script as a lad of about twenty. *Passing Variety* (February 1952) thought he "looked very youthful indeed" and that he "played the lead in a manner which allowed him to be at once the philandering young tinker and the cynical commentator on the story's ramifications." While the *Irish Independent* (27 December 1951: 6) did not find him at his best, the *Irish Times* (28 December 1951) noted he played the part "with a wit and style that covered inadequate equipment for the song-sequences." The *Evening Herald* (27 December 1951: 2) also thought the verse was "finely spoken" and added that "there is for good measure a spot of dancing by the star." The part of Nora was played by the young Waterford actress Eilagh Noonan, whose "pink and white charm," according to the *Evening Mail* (27 December 1951) formed an effective contrast to "the tinkers in their tattered shawls."

In Act 2 of *God's Gentry*, Marks and Nora arrive in the tinker camp. Mac Liammóir's rendering of the bonfire on the hillside and the old-fashioned wooden caravan struck the reviewer for the *Evening Mail* (27 December 1951) as "a poem in colour and design." Nora wants to go home when she finds out that the tinkers have robbed her father, but Marks argues that they are merely redistributing the nation's wealth:

[...] what is wrong
In equalizing weak and strong?
The State has taxed the wealthy man
And who can dare to tax that plan?
The wealthy man has robbed for sure
Or else he'd certainly be poor.
The state, well knowing his bad deed,
Shares out his wealth to those in need.
We modestly collaborate
With civil servants and the state. (27)

Nora becomes involved in an altercation with a young tinker woman, Betsy Connors, but she wins the scuffle; the other tinkers hint at the fact that Betsy had already jumped across a broom with Marks—which is how settled people imagined Travellers got married—, but Marks tells Nora not to worry about that detail: "No court would recognize it" (31). When John Melody turns up in the camp with the guards, it is Betsy who reveals where the tinkers have hidden the goods stolen from the shop. About to be arrested, the tinkers remember it is Balor's day, and appeal to the old god to return "from the footnotes of mythology" and save them from "the tinker's doom" (35).

When Balor appears, he seems to be "a small, apologetic looking little man in a long black coat" standing on a large rock (35). Edwards wrote to Denis Johnston that he had not cast himself in the part of Balor because it required "slightness of stature and a very definite Irish voice," both of which he lacked, and "however Godlike we English are to them now, I feel that the ancient gods should at least be Irish" (qtd. in Fitz-Simon 178). The character was played instead by Cecil Barror, an actor who, like MacDonagh, had trained as a barrister. Melody suspects Balor of being "a red agent" sent by Stalin (36), but the tinkers proceed to elect the old god president, whereupon he steps from behind the rock and—the actor being on stilts—turns out to be ten feet tall. He is given a black hat to match the long coat, as well as a pair of spectacles and a briefcase, an outfit which, according to Christopher Fitz-Simon, created "a very distinct impression of Eamon de Valéra [sic]" (178). As president of the "great, democratic and idle Republic" of the tinkers (38), Balor decrees that the laws are abolished, all goods—especially drink—are supplied free "if you are a tinker" (38), and that the border has been eliminated. Preserved in the Gate Theatre Archive is a rather risqué sketch, perhaps by Mac Liammóir, perhaps by one of the actors, of an impressive and virile-looking Balor: one-eyed, his grinning face grotesquely mask-like, he is depicted as a broad-shouldered, narrow-waisted giant, shirtless, but with a studded leather belt strapped diagonally across his chest, a thin line of hair running from his stomach down to the unbuttoned front of his trousers. According to the notes accompanying the drawing, which are in Mac Liammóir's hand, the figure should be executed in modeled plywood to a height of twelve feet. Unsurprisingly, the design—if it was ever meant to be seriously contemplated at all—found no place in the production; the sketch itself is not filed with Mac Liammóir's other designs in the Archive but tucked away in one of the actor's scripts.

Act 3 of *God's Gentry* takes place a year later, when it is revealed how Balor's presidency has played out. The tinkers are "brightly and garishly dressed" (40) in finery, the exception being the traitor Betsy Connors, who is "banished and banned from the tinker kingdom of wealth" (45) and still wears the same clothes as in Act 2. The tinkers drink porter from gilded mugs, served by the guards. Marks does not disapprove of the drinking but urges moderation: "Waste that is willful brings want that is woeful" (42); the others ignore his warnings to "go easy," because they believe Balor can work miracles. Meanwhile, John Melody takes a leaf out of the tinkers' book: he sneaks in and steals their last barrel of beer. When Marks calls on Balor for help to produce more food and porter, the little man has lost his stilts and declares that the miracle bank is bankrupt. Like every politician, he had promised more than he could deliver, and explains to the tinkers that "drink must have an end if there's none to brew it; / There's twelve months' work now to be done, and you're the ones to do it" (54). Marks urges his fellow tinkers to "step forward on the road to work / [...] not for ourselves alone, but work / For Ireland's good," but they reject the idea of a "workers' republic" because "A working tinker is absurd, / A walking contradiction" (56). Before disappearing once more into the footnotes of mythology, Balor decrees that henceforth all property not nailed down shall belong to the tinkers—which formalizes what had already been the case before he came to power—and passes an Act of Oblivion to wipe away all memory of recent events. The Guards depart for the village with John Melody, who, given Balor's decree, will have to spend the night in the police cell for failing to secure his property. Now that the tinkers are tinkers again, and Marks is once more "an itinerant lout" (52), Nora wants to return to the shop; Marks agrees because "no woman who grew / In a cottage garden could take to the wilds" (59), although he predicts that, once she is back in her "little white bed," she will remember "The great bed of earth, and my love, like a wave" (60). When he finds out that he has also lost Betsy to Harry Ward, he is philosophical: "the air is still heavy with wings and the river / Still busy with fish and in every hedge / There are girls growing ripe and from this day I'll pluck them / For that is a tinker's privilege" (60). In conclusion, the entire cast sings, to the tune of "Molly Bawn," "Oh who wouldn't be a tinker when he's free" (60).

The reviewer for the *Irish Independent* (27 December 1951: 6) thought that the reincarnation of Balor as a twentieth-century politician was "a nice pantomimic touch," but that, overall, the play seemed "curiously uneven, seesawing between sophistication and immaturity." Edwards, too, privately confessed to Johnston: "I think there is some very poor stuff in it after the lovely first act, and no sense of character whatsoever" (qtd. in Fitz-Simon 178). But he was happy the show was doing well. What made the production so successful was its approximation to a form of total theater that was unheard of in Ireland in 1951. The playwright Thomas Kilroy recalled that he only saw this kind of stage choreography for the first time in Paris in 1967: "Coming from Dublin theatre and seeing this kind of work in the sixties was just mind-blowing" (Brennan and Dubost 128). As for *God's Gentry*, *Dublin Opinion* (February 1952) found it hard to assess the "value of the play itself apart from the fascinations of the production," which included "burlesque, high comedy, low comedy, rough poetry, not so rough poetry, and touches of beauty, with music and dancing thrown in." The

Sunday Independent (30 December 1951: 4) also thought the merit of the production lay in the combination of its parts: "Here at any rate, in spite of some *longueurs* and the restrictions of a theatre too small for it, is a jolly pictorial lyrical-musical play in which the singing tinkers, the melodeon and fiddle players, the planners, designers and producer, no less than the author, are all nearly equal contributors [...] to the success of a show which pleases the audience highly without quite evoking unreserved enthusiasm."

The costumes Mac Liammóir designed for the play received a great deal of attention. The *Evening Mail* (27 December 1951) noted that the tinkers' clothes in the first two Acts of the Gate production were "more realistic and drab" than those in the original Belfast performance, but that this allowed for a "blossoming out into contrasted grandeur" in Act 3, when the tinkers have become the wealthy rulers of the nation. Several newspapers reported that, to ensure authenticity in the costumes, Mac Liammóir had spent a few afternoons gathering inspiration in the tinker settlement behind St Patrick's Cathedral. Whatever the truth of this assertion, there is, even in the more "realistic" first two Acts, an element of stylization in the headscarves, shawls, and patches that distinguish the tinkers' attire, especially given the designer's adherence to a distinctive color scheme. In a gouache he painted for *God's Gentry*, Mac Liammóir depicted two lissome figures, a male and a female tinker dancing in symmetry, dressed in shades of orange-brown and purple. In a slightly tongue-in-cheek piece in the *Irish Press* (15 December 1951: 3) the pseudonymous "Edain" noted that Mac Liammóir had "refused" to put the tinker women in red petticoats because that article of clothing denoted "a hardworking Connemara woman," whereas tinkers—by implication, then, not hardworking—"wear something that, from a distance, merges into the landscape" like autumn leaves. It is unlikely that red petticoats ever crossed Mac Liammóir's mind as plausible Traveller attire, but in his 1959 letter to Desmond Murphy he did note that the orange shade of the costumes he designed "gave a uniform effect as of autumn leaves." "Edain" imagined Mac Liammóir, who was a fluent Irish speaker, concocting the costumes' colors from natural substances like "saffron and *scraithchloch*" (a lichen which produces a yellow dye): "Cauldrons of the stuff boil in the kitchen of No. 4 Harcourt Place[5] with Micheál himself, like a witch in Macbeth, supervising operations and murmuring incantations like '*t-anam 'n deabhal*'."[6] In actuality, it was the Gate's dressmaker, Christine Keeley, who dyed yards and yards of hessian to achieve the desired effect.

Mac Liammóir's archived notes to Keeley describe in detail the aesthetic he had in mind for the costumes in Act 3, when the tinkers have become the gentry. In his designs for six women's evening gowns, he combined elements from the natural world with objects traditionally made and sold by Travellers. Ironically, in this way the very products of the labor *God's Gentry* suggests the Travellers do not perform are here reduced to decorative ornaments stripped of their useful function. All dresses were to be made in hessian, carefully cut and dyed dull mustard leaf yellow to suggest what Mac Liammóir called "a corrupt gala." The other colors permitted were heliotrope,

5 Properly 4 Harcourt Terrace, Edwards' and Mac Liammóir's home address.

6 Irish for "your soul to the devil."

also used in the earlier Acts for head kerchiefs, and touches of black and "a shrill arsenic green."

> Girdles, trimmings, and bracelets in rope, twine, and raffia. Gloves of a smart, French cut, but in holes: the shirt hems left unhemmed and shredded. Head ornaments of nutmeg graters, brushes, egg-whisks, pot-cleaners, wild flowers. [...] Cans and mugs gilded. The tiaras and drooping plumes: there is pampas grass to be found somewhere, we could dye it. Make-up the same light-gold tan, but lips and eyes have gone through a lot since Acts 1 and 2. Perhaps gilded lids and fuchsia lip-stick: Sally suggests gilt pine-cones for necklaces.[7]

The costume design essentializes the Traveller style as an aesthetic of poverty: even though the tinkers are wealthy and drink from gilded mugs, their fancy clothes remain ragged and torn. Some of this effect, referred to by Hilton Edwards in a press release as "a tatterdamalion grandeur," is captured in a production photograph preserved in the Gate Theatre Archive, featuring almost the entire cast underneath the canopy overhanging the platform stage to the left of the main stage. It shows Marks situated in the middle of the band of tinkers, some standing, some reclining, the women wearing their hessian gala dresses and head pieces, the men in dinner jackets with wide hessian lapels. The fiddler and accordion player are among them, clothed in the same fashion. Balor is seated on the far right in his black coat and hat; equally peripheral, John Melody stands next to him, dressed in a dark suit, hat, and tie. Their formal stiffness forms a contrast with the fluid and relaxed attitude of the tinkers.

Edwards and Mac Liammóir revived their production of *God's Gentry* in 1960, at the larger Gaiety Theatre, which allowed them to include more elaborate singing and dancing. The BBC had broadcast a radio version of the play in 1953 (with Siobhán McKenna as Nora), RTÉ radio aired the drama in 1960, and in 1974 also adapted it for television. The *Sligo Champion* (15 March 1974: 4) noted about the screen presentation that it could "best be described as a light-hearted musical romp with an abundance of traditional Irish music, in which the people we now know as travellers are unashamedly called tinkers," but otherwise expressed no concerns about the representation of the minority. The play was very popular in amateur dramatic circles. Ian R. Walsh has argued that MacDonagh's first play, *Happy as Larry*, is an important work that deserves to be revived because its deliberately theatricalized form allies it "with the wider experimentations of twentieth-century playwrights and theatre makers in Europe such as Brecht, Meyerhold, Dürrenmatt and others" who moved away from "the confining dramaturgy of realism" (119). Much the same could be said about *God's Gentry*. However, it is hard to see how MacDonagh's often reductive and offensive representation of Travellers as work-shy, thieving, promiscuous, and generally transgressive rogues could be staged today. *God's Gentry* ticks every box of mid-century anti-Traveller prejudice, according to which, in Jim Mac Laughlin's words, "Travellers were seen as an 'unmeltable' social bloc that had no place in modern Ireland. Their very ability to survive was considered a threat to hegemonic

7 The actress Sally Travers, who played Betsy Connors.

notions of respectability, work and property" (66). Indeed, towards the end of *God's Gentry*, Balor makes a distinction between "Tinkers and people, humans and tinkers" (57), as if Travellers are fictional or mythological creatures like himself rather than real people and citizens of contemporary Ireland.

In 1957, MacDonagh's verse play *Step-in-the-Hollow* was successfully produced at the Gate, although it was not received with the same enthusiasm as its predecessor. A straightforward farce, it deals with the complications that ensue when a lecherous old district judge is almost caught in the bedroom of a not very bright young woman named Teazie and is then asked by her conniving mother to put an innocent young man on trial for the offense he had himself committed. Edwards played the judge with "over-ripe bawdy gusto" (*Irish Times* 12 March 1957: 2), but he was unhappy with the quality of the verse, which he thought was very uneven. Many of the play's "funny" lines—for example, when the judge dismisses Teazie's dimwittedness by asking, "Since when have girls been chosen for their brains? She has the body of an Aphrodite", to which another character replies, "And brains would go to her head!" (219)—are embarrassing to a twenty-first century ear. MacDonagh's play *Lady Spider*, previously broadcast as a radio play by both the BBC and Radio Éireann, was presented on stage in 1959 by Orion Productions in association with the Dublin Theatre Festival at the tiny Gas Company Theatre in Dun Laoghaire. A retelling of the myth of Deirdre of the Sorrows, it presents the tragic heroine as "an insatiable female spider devouring her lovers," in what amounts to "a critical analysis of human love stripped of all its attendant dreams" (Kilroy 717). The reviewer for the *Irish Examiner* (21 September 1959: 4) noted that the play was presented in "loosely-grouped tableaux" and that its "real movement" lay in "its heady verse." This static quality makes the work of less interest than MacDonagh's more overtly theatrical plays, which not only successfully took verse drama into the mid-twentieth century, but also used "a freer and less conventional technique" than was habitual for Irish drama at the time, as Edwards and Mac Liammóir made a point of stressing in the program for their production of *God's Gentry*. However, because MacDonagh's verse plays of the 1950s are problematic in their political incorrectness, they are unlikely to be resurrected again from the archives of Irish theater history.

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Heroes on Stage: Robert Emmet, Charles Parnell, and Michael Collins in Three Irish Plays from Interwar Avant-garde to the 1990s

Wei H. Kao

Abstract

Once they enter the zone of public memory, historical figures, however celebrated they might be, are no longer able to speak for themselves, but become objectified by historians, creative writers, and interested parties down through the generations. Their portraits of revolutionaries might potentially counteract the subjugation imposed by colonial and anti-colonial powers and give them a more humane touch that prompts the audiences' independent judgments. Representations of these historical figures might therefore put their contributions, personalities and even charisma under the microscope, challenging the historiography that tends to apotheosize them as heroes. The plays under discussion, chosen for their particularly avant-garde innovations and not yet fully discussed in the literature, are Dennis Johnston's *The Old Lady Says "No!"* (1929), Larry Kirwan's *Mister Parnell* (1992), and Tom MacIntyre's *Good Evening, Mr Collins* (1995). These plays feature Robert Emmet, Charles Parnell, and Michael Collins, renowned yet still controversial Irish revolutionaries, respectively.

Keywords: Robert Emmet, Charles Parnell, Michael Collins, historiography, Avant-garde, Irish drama

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Introduction: Finding Hidden Realities

Theatrical engagement with iconic figures involved in seminal moments of Irish history can be considered as almost a distinctive tradition in Irish writing for the stage. If so, it is a tradition in which dramaturgical innovation challenges counter-revolutionary tendencies in dramatizations of political events, which often "de-sensationalise . . . the images of political violence . . . with complicating and distancing ironies" (Grene 47). Epic content generates experimental dramaturgies, and audiences of these plays are confronted with alternative, sometimes disturbing, realities which reject inherited ideological assumptions.

Despite the fact that the Abbey Theatre, on its foundation as the Irish Literary Theatre in 1899, aimed to be an experimental and less commercial venue that encouraged playwrights to be more adventurous in form and theme, it became

less subversive before Lady Gregory retired in 1928. Although the Abbey was not entirely resistant to European innovations before 1928, the Peacock and the Gate produced a much larger number of dramas that highlighted European aesthetics and sensibility.[1] It was not until F. R. Higgins and Ernest Blythe joined the Board of the Abbey Theatre in the 1930s that the company started to stage a small number of more unconventional plays, for instance *Katie Roche* (1936), an expressionist play by Teresa Deevy. However, it has been argued that "for twenty years the Abbey did not put on a play dangerous enough to provoke violent controversy" following "the ruction over *The Plough and the Stars* in 1926" (Ferrar 8), but produced peasant kitchen plays that mostly portrayed "the life of artisans and country people" (Malone 296).[2] Incidentally, in continental Europe, August Strindberg, Luigi Pirandello, Bertolt Brecht, Jean Giraudoux, Arthur Schnitzler, and others had been prolifically influencing world theater before and during the interwar period.[3] Finding it difficult to persuade Abbey board members to be less Irish-orientated and more international, and perhaps worried about losing its own audience, Yeats, upon the advice of Lennox Robinson and others, helped establish the Dublin Drama League in 1918 "for the purpose of seeing plays which we otherwise would have no chance of seeing," as Robinson stated in a letter to James Stephens (qtd. in O'Neill 113.). This fringe theater aimed to introduce avant-garde or experimental plays of the time to Dublin audiences. It served to inspire a number of young playwrights, such as Denis Johnston and Sean O'Casey among others.

Given the fact that the Abbey Theatre had kept the primary "Irish" aim to the fore in de-Anglicizing theatrical performances, not all Irish writers were agreeable to mythologizing the past, making heroes of revolutionaries, and putting the emphasis on the glorious side of the Easter Rising. To counteract such cultural nationalism and to keep the dramatic presentation of historical figures more polemical than authoritative, some playwrights chose not to follow the convention of the well-made, realistic play. Instead, they experimented with non-naturalistic stagecraft by creating new theatricalities and showing their protagonists' minds in chaos, the violence of nationalistic ideology, and the sexual expression and class struggle implicit yet fundamental in nation formation. This essay will therefore focus on three history plays that feature renowned yet controversial revolutionaries, namely Robert Emmet (1778-1803), Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-1891) and Michael Collins (1890-1922), whose public and private selves are dramatized and interrogated in a non-linear manner with the aim of revealing an alternative understanding of their inner voices. These plays

1 Although Yeats introduced Japanese Noh elements (e.g. staging, music and movement) to the Irish stage and had "invented a form of drama, distinguished, indirect, and symbolic, . . . an aristocratic form," he rejected O'Casey's expressionist anti-war play, *The Silver Tassie*, in 1928, and prompted the playwright, who was furious, to premiere it at the Apollo Theatre in London in 1929. (Yeats, "Introduction" 1).

2 For a while the choice of going to either theater was one between "Sodom and Begorrah." ("Sodome, My Love" par. 1). As to Irish peasant kitchen dramas, see Hans-Georg Stalder's *Anglo-Irish Peasant Drama: The Motifs of Land and Emigration*.

3 For more details, see Ian R. Walsh's *Experimental Irish Theatre: After W. B. Yeats*.

are Denis Johnston's *The Old Lady Says "No!"* (1929), Larry Kirwan's *Mister Parnell* (1992), and Tom MacIntyre's *Good Evening, Mr Collins* (1995).[4]

Pushing the Boundaries in Theatre: A Brief History

Despite the fact that Abbey realism was the dominant form of theatrical expression in early-twentieth-century Ireland, having contributed some of the most powerful plays to appear on stage, some writers appealed for a more European outlook for the theater, on the grounds that its stage had been over-dominated by insularity and was inward looking.[5] Notably, the board members of the Abbey Theatre were not always open to theatrical innovations and cultural challenges in the way its founders had promised in their manifesto: "[We] believe that our desire to bring upon the stage the deeper thoughts and emotions of Ireland will ensure for us a tolerant welcome, and that freedom to experiment which is not found in theatres of England" (Gregory 402). Although it is true that *The Playboy of the Western World* in 1907 and *The Plough and the Stars* in 1926 illustrate the Abbey's courage to make a breakthrough in demonstrating more authentic yet unpopular Irish realities, the move was a flash in the pan. Many productions were not free from "stage-Irish, unintentional self-parody," not only following "melodramatic formulae" but reflecting perhaps "national self-blindness" to its isolationism (Ferrar 8). Displeased with the growing conservatism of the Abbey, George William Russell (AE) therefore contended that "[w]e cannot be intellectually self-sustaining any more than England, France, Italy or Germany could. . . . We must penetrate the Irish culture with world wisdom, or it will cease to be a culture, and our literature will lose its vitality and become a literature of conventions" (qtd. in O'Neill 113).

To make the Irish stage a more adventurous, outward looking and less parochial place, the Gate Theatre, founded in 1928 by Hilton Edwards and Micheál Mac Liammóir, was a venue that introduced European and American playwrights and works that would not be commissioned by the Abbey.[6] Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* (1867), Oscar Wilde's *Salomé* (1891), Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* (1920) and *The Hairy Ape* (1922), and Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine* (1923) were noted examples that exhibited avant-garde or modernist theatrical experiments popular at the time. Specifically, The Dublin Drama League, New Players and the Pike often presented new dramas that had been successful in London, Paris and other European

4 Although the three plays by Johnston, Kirwan and Macintyre concern figures from different historical contexts, they have been chosen in terms of their peculiar or experimental dramaturgies. It could also be noted that the majority of plays about Emmet, Parnell and Collins were written in either a journalistic or melodramatic manner, and some were not particularly creative in form and content.

5 These writers include, for example, J. M. Synge, Lennox Robinson, T. C. Murray, Sean O'Casey, Padraic Colum, St John Ervine, Teresa Deevy, and others.

6 Regarding the conflicts and collisions within and between the Abbey, Peacock, and Gate theaters in the early twentieth century, please see Elaine Sisson's article, "'A Note on What Happened:' Experimental Influences on the Irish Stage 1919-1929."

cities, or classic plays that, according to D. E. S Maxwell, "invite[d] a greater variety of production and acting than the Abbey repertoire" (28).[7]

For Irish playwrights, including Sean O'Casey and Denis Johnston, who had been suspicious of nationalistic propaganda and the over-romanticization of revolutionaries, the then current non-realistic dramaturgies, for example German Expressionism, prompted them to ask hard questions and, to some extent, deliver their own hard answers in thought-provoking forms. Their interest in non-Irish/Celtic expression was, however, beset by the Abbey's cold eye on the theatrical innovations burgeoning on the European mainland, as it had primarily sought to be a national theater rather than a venue for international input. O'Casey, as a victim of the nonchalant attitude of the Abbey towards his fourth play, *The Silver Tassie* (1928), was infuriated by Yeats's conventionalism that barred him from seeing the novelties of his new play. The text was referred to only as "a series of almost unrelated scenes . . . there is no dominating character, no dominating action, neither psychological unity nor unity of action," as Yeats put it in a letter of rejection (741). O'Casey's use of both realistic and non-realistic techniques in portraying the horrors of World War I and its aftermath was obviously too radical for a national theater not able to accommodate alternative innovations.[8]

As. Maxwell observes, the embrace of new theatrical forms of expression, or the avant-garde, continued James Joyce's attempt to undermine traditional forms with "disjunctions, elisions, *dérèglements* of consciousness" (emphasis in the original 30). What Joyce did was politically "symbolic of the revolution against the bourgeoisie" (Innes 20). That said, having been critical of the realism and propagandist nature of nationalist writings, authors delved into the inner qualities of their protagonists by not always specifying surface details that historians would emphasize but often by juxtaposing dream and reality in episodic scenes. This resulted in the questioning of politicized historiography, followed by reconstructions of hidden or lesser-known realities. Alongside the agenda of European expressionist artists, Johnston and O'Casey, as mentioned earlier, also lodged a shared protest against the institutionalized brutalities of war, industrialization and authoritarianism, in an attempt to tackle the Irish question with more humanitarian concerns. Moreover, playwrights seeking to make a breakthrough for the theatrical realism popular on the Irish and English stage since the late nineteenth century found that non-conventional and minimalist expressions, employed to varying degrees, enabled audiences to approach different human situations more intimately and to confront truth directly, although often in nightmarish ways, through the characters' dreams of the subconscious or other surreal scenarios.

Although the three plays under discussion feature Robert Emmet, Charles Parnell and Michael Collins, respectively, none of them are represented as patriots that

7 For more details on how the Gate has struck a path different from that of the Abbey and helped revolutionize dramaturgies, see *Cultural Convergence: The Dublin Gate Theatre, 1928-1960*, edited by Ondřej Pilný, Ruud van den Beuken and Ian R. Walsh, as well as Walsh's *Experimental Irish Theatre: After W. B. Yeats*.

8 For details, see David Krause's *Sean O'Casey, The Man and His Work*, p. 90.

audiences might have been familiar with. They are generally seen as representatives of states of mind and shift away from realistic portraits. At times they turn into caricatures, often grotesque, that unsettle stereotypes which had been simplified for political causes. The other characters encountering these figures might, notably, also be reduced to symbols reflecting certain ideas or groups in society without individualities. In particular, through multiscenic designs the audience is able to encounter the private selves of the characters to the extent that the past is reconfigured for alternative or open interpretations.

Denis Johnston's *The Old Lady Says "No!"* (1929): Putting an End to the Emmet Story

Among many plays written about Robert Emmet on both sides of the Atlantic since the nineteenth century,[9] Johnston's *The Old Lady Says "No!"* is atypical in that it does not follow the realistic, well-made convention that most existing works had done. Furthermore, it resists the urge to dramatize the details of how Emmet organized the 1803 uprising, absconded, and took risks to meet his sweetheart. It satirizes Emmet right from the beginning of the play, when the unnamed Speaker—who plays the revolutionary on the run and who is later arrested by Major Sirr—seems to have been concussed after being struck accidentally by a Redcoat. The Speaker, having regained consciousness with help from a doctor who rushes to the stage from the audience stalls, starts to believe that he is really Emmet and is unable to tell physical reality from the theatrical illusion of which he is a part.

Johnston's unprecedented and innovative approach was a bold metatheatrical experiment that sought to mask the distinction between the actor and the historical personage in order to critique the existing over-romanticized propaganda about Emmet. As he put it in his memoir, "I was not going to concern myself with propaganda. I was going to describe soberly and sensibly exactly what I saw, and give the people at home the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, whether happy or unfavorable" (Johnston 216). Although he set out "to paint Ireland and her problems in their true colours" (qtd. in Ferrar 17),[10] his daring revision of a worn-out heroic story was not accepted by the Abbey even after several resubmissions. It is well known that the script came back to him with a sheet of paper on which "The Old Lady Says 'No!'"

9 Robert Emmet has been a popular subject in theater, represented in history plays and melodramas as a fighter or a romantic suitor, in English or Irish. Plays in English include Nathaniel Harrington Bannister's *Robert Emmet* (1840), Dion Boucicault's *Robert Emmet* (1884), Joseph I. C. Clarke's *Robert Emmet: A Tragedy of Irish History* (1888), Julius Tietze Tietzelieve's *Robert Emmet: Ireland's Patriot Martyr* (1902), James Pilgrim's *Robert Emmet* (1903), Henry Connell Manga's *Robert Emmet* (1904), Norreys Connell's *An Imaginary Conversation* (1909), Johanna Redmond's *Falsely True: An Incident After the Rising in 1803* (1911), Lennox Robinson's *The Dreamers* (1915), Micheál Mac Liammóir's *The Ford of the Hurdles: A Masque of Dublin* (1929), Paul Vincent Carroll's *Death Closes All* (1947) and *The Conspirators* (1937), Valentin Iremonger's *Wrap Up My Green Jacket* (1948; radio drama), James Ignatius Fanning's *Melody Alone* (1960), and Donal Giltinan's *A Light In the Sky* (1962). Plays in Irish include Maura Molloy's *Summer's Day* (1935).

10 Ferrar quoted this statement from Johnston's 1947 essay, "The Present State of Irish Letters."

was written—the original title was *Shadowdance*. No matter whether it was a suggested new title or not, it was the "expressionist tricks," as he believed, that could not be recognized and accommodated by the Abbey's board members at the time, although he knew that his play would "be described as anti-Irish" (Johnston 348).

Johnston's exposure of discord between apparent reality and stage performance serves to show how a historical personage is created or distorted, and how the story is (or is not) coherent. Specifically, whether Emmet can be reconstructed as a vivid and convincing character depends on how historians, storytellers, songwriters and playwrights organize or dismiss a given amount of information. Nevertheless, without there being much documentation relating to this eighteenth-century figure, the received knowledge is mostly built upon the heroic image that his patriotic and sensational speech from the dock reinforced.[11] His farewell speech inspired many prospective republican leaders who quoted his words to boost their own charisma as merely an expedient for personal political advancement.[12]

The Old Lady Says "No!" effectively illuminates how the given image of Emmet is trimmed to meet political expectations. In particular, the unnamed Speaker and other characters, both male and female, play multiple roles in the prearranged play-within-the-play, suggesting that what appears to the audience is more or less the result of a series of inventions. Noticeably, apart from the Speaker who interchanges between Emmet the revolutionary and himself as an actor, Emmet's girlfriend, Sarah Curran, also plays the old Flower Woman impersonating the "Shan Van Vocht," or Cathleen ni Houlihan, recruiting young Irishmen to fight for Irish independence. Major Sirr interchanges with the statue of Henry Grattan, Emmet's contemporary who was in favor of parliamentary reform. The Stage Hand, who is supposed to work behind the curtain, performs the role of Minister for Arts and Crafts joining the party held by Lady Trimmer, an impersonation of Lady Gregory.

With the stage lighting turned on and off to indicate when these actors are in and out of the performance, the audience experiences the possibility that acting can be simply for acting's sake, and so can storytelling, even if the storyline and time-shift are anachronistic. In this connection, the audience encounters more personages from different periods of time on stage, for example O'Cooney (based on Sean O'Casey), O'Mooney (on Patrick Tuohy), O'Rooney (on Liam O'Flaherty), Maeve (on the mythological queen of Connacht), and so on. Metatheatrically, by exhibiting so great a number of characters in the same time and space, the playwright demonstrates how elements of a heroic narrative can be recombined to serve different purposes.

Take one scene set in a room resembling Lady Gregory's Coole Park House, for instance. This scene celebrates the success of the Irish literary movement, and features guests ranging from government officials to writers and actors, including the Speaker who insists that he is really Emmet. One of the guests, Maeve, has a

11 Emmet was later convicted of treason and hanged. The full script of Emmet's speech from the dock during the trial can be seen at "Robert Emmet's speech from the dock on the eve of his execution." *Sinn Fein,* September 19, 2003.

12 For example, Patrick Pearse engaged himself with the Emmet legacy in 1916 by eulogizing the latter as having "redeemed Ireland from acquiescence in the Union. His attempt was not a failure but a triumph for that deathless thing we call Irish nationality" (qtd. in Whelan 54).

strong Irish accent acquired, according to herself, at an acting school in Lower Abbey Street. Satirically, her acquired accent is enough to impress the non-native speakers in the party, whereas to the Anglo-Irish hosts, such as Lady Trimmer, the exaggerated accent, even though unauthentic, is amusing. On the other hand, Lady Trimmer, "dressed in widow's weeds," in joining the Minister to announce the death of a poet as a national loss, and reading Yeats' line from *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, "So Yellow-haired Donough is dead" (Johnston 389-400), points to Johnston's cynicism about the overrated Gaelic Revival among the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy.[13] With that being said, the dramatic mimicry of the house party at Lady Gregory's Coole Park is not intended to pay respect to cultural revivalists but, skeptical of the direction they were heading in, points to a likelihood that Ireland might become more provincial than international under the guidance of these socially privileged people.[14] Apparently, this was not a view that the Abbey board members would have found agreeable and they were likely to have taken offence at it.

It can be claimed that the metatheatrical scenes in *The Old Lady Says "No!"*—through the interventions of stage lighting and of the Stage Hand—are to some degree taken from Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921), in which audiences are informed that characters perform roles, rather than contributing to a coherent narrative. Johnston's "life-long engagement with Pirandello," according to Daragh O'Connell, began with his early participation in the Dublin Drama League, playing a role himself in Pirandello's *The Rules of the Game* in November 1928, and writing the libretto for *Six Characters in Search of an Author* in 1957 (86). Specifically, in *The Old Lady Says "No!"*, it is the Speaker who demonstrates how an actor conducts the self-conscious performance by switching between roles. When the Speaker finds himself unable to convince others that he is really Emmet, he smartly "assume[s] a Parnellesque attitude," claiming "Until the party deposes me I am leader" (Johnston 376). It is not until later, when The Blind Man points out to the Speaker that Emmet has been dead since long before, that he starts to remove his pretense and ask around repetitively if he/Emmet is dead, "I am dead this hundred years and more?"; "I am only a play-actor—unless I dare to contradict the dead! Must I do that?" (Johnston 392, 398). Ironically, the concussion that the Speaker suffers at the beginning of the play seems to remind the audience of the difference between propaganda and truth. The way for the actor to recover his own identity is by putting Emmet to death, as the end of the play shows, while the actor also believes at the same time that he is dead, given that he never figures out that there are discrepancies between a heroic story and reality.

It can be assumed that Johnston's motivation for writing *The Old Lady Says "No!",* a challenging piece for any Irish theater, was not merely to add to the existing Emmet

13 Christopher Murray argues that *The Old Lady Says "No!"* is not only "satirical of the nationalist ethos and tradition, by means of the literary and cultural icons and forms popularised by the Abbey Theatre", but aims to "irreverently" debunk and travesty Yeats's heroic ideal and allegory as presented in his *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (121).

14 *The Old Lady Says "No!"* was rejected by the Abbey but welcomed and produced successfully by The Gate Theatre, which aimed to "show the world to Ireland" rather than "show Ireland to herself" (Mac Liammóir, 355). "[F]acing a period of insularism," the Abbey at the time was entrenched "in a local conservative realism" (Bastos 211).

repertoire but more likely to debunk the over-celebrated Emmet story, despite the fact that this play would be deemed a threat to Irish patriotism. According to Christopher Murray, Johnston did want to "show Ireland to herself; indeed he wanted to rub noses in the muck of facile mythologizing. He needed a forum where questions of identity and Irish politics could be forcibly put" (123). However, some reviewers condemned the play as an incomprehensible "madhouse play" and "the confusion arising from a lack of intellectual coherence" (qtd. in Peacock 125).

Nevertheless, Johnston's deployment of metatheatrical devices by getting Sarah Curran and the Speaker to recite fragments of patriotic verses—mostly from *The Dublin Book of Verse*, a popular anthology published during the Irish Revival in 1909—recollects the excessive romantic elements added to the Emmet story *after* he was executed in 1803.[15] What the playwright intended to do was to end this story by not only showing how "the figure of Robert Emmet had congealed into a cliché" (Poulain 124), but by having the Speaker announce "Let my epitaph be written" at the end of the play and then finally die—with a rug covering his body placed there by a doctor (Johnston 404). The death of Emmet on stage implies that Johnston anticipated a waning of nationalist fervor and a movement among Irish theater practitioners beyond insularity and complacent introspection.

Larry Kirwan's *Mister Parnell* (1992): De-mythologizing Parnell

In 1891, after the tragic death of Charles Stewart Parnell—also an Anglo-Irish Protestant nationalist like Emmet[16]—, the controversy about the "Uncrowned King of Ireland" and his scandalous love affair with Katherine O'Shea, wife of Captain William O'Shea, a Catholic Nationalist MP for County Clare, seemed to reach a watershed point. Some of Parnell's opponents tended towards forgetting and forgiving, whereas his old adherents spared no effort in linking his "sacrificial" end to *noblesse oblige* and carried it to sublime heights. His funeral in Dublin, attended by more than 200,000 people, was reputed to be one of the biggest funerals ever held in Ireland. Many of Parnell's supporters reckoned that if he had remained in the leadership, the Irish Parliamentary Party would not have split, Home Rule might have been achieved earlier, and the partition between Northern Ireland and the Republic would not have come about.

In contrast to Johnston, who lived through Ireland's revolutionary period in the early twentieth century, Kirwan, a playwright and musician born in 1954 in Wexford, was brought up in a family where "Republicanism . . . [was] more like a religion, a spiritual path, even a cult, and my grandfather initiated me into it" ("Forgetting to Remember" 44). However, he was not fully absorbed into this "cult" but recognized himself more "[as] a socialist . . . , I resented that [James Connolly] had been

15 See Daragh O'Connell's "Pirandello and Joyce say 'Yes!' in Denis Johnston's *The Old Lady Says 'No!.*".81.

16 According to Patrick Mackin, Parnell's "campaign of appeal to the Fenian tradition gave him a revolutionary image . . . [and] may well have been a latter-day Robert Emmet" (par. 3).

railroaded by tears-in-the-beer nationalism" (Kirwan, "Bill Nevins talks with Black 47's" par. 61). His nationalist upbringing and socialist inclinations shaped him, as a dramatist, prompting interest in how even a peerless political figure could be brought into complex power struggles. As a writer who understands competing political philosophies, Kirwan expects the audience, if possible, to "take control of their future by asking questions, not following leaders" ("Forgetting to Remember" 46). *Mister Parnell*, in this vein, dramatizes how the protagonist's personal circumstance was over-manipulated by his opponents, alongside Parnell's responses to accusations. Most importantly, the play provides an original angle from which to evaluate Parnell's love affairs and political downfall, particularly as regards women's sense and sensibility.

Mister Parnell, which premiered at Synchronicity Space, New York, in 1992, is an example of Epic Theatre, in which Parnell's story is presented in non-linear narrative episodes. The story opens in a linear fashion, revealing the causes of his political turmoil, though stage lighting and singing, both individual and in groups, are employed to create alienation effects for audiences of onlookers to Parnell's romance with his mistress. As in Johnston's *The Old Lady Says "No!"*, Kirwan's characters stay on stage most of the time, waiting for their cue from an unnamed "Chairwoman," who works as a stage manager "introducing the seated speakers" (Kirwan 137). The fact that the cast members can only perform a share of their experience when they are cued suggests that no single perspective can be predominant over historiography. With the audience constantly watching each of the cast members, male or female, victim or not, the play invites spectators to form their own perspectives, on a love affair that transformed the political landscape of modern Ireland.

Take the portrayal of Katherine O'Shea, for example: this play does not caricature her as a frivolous coquette or "a can of worms" (138), as Kirwan asserts from the anti-Parnellites' point of view. Instead, she is presented as a lonely wife with a husband who had been unfaithful to her with a number of women—including her own sister, Anna Steele—prior to Katherine's encounter with Parnell. This revelation, shown at the beginning of the play, prompts the audience towards a possible motive behind Captain O'Shea and Anna's decision to publicize Katherine's love affair; the greater imperative is less to defend a "Christian marriage," as O'Shea claims (Kirwan 157), but to get a share of the huge inheritance that Katherine had received from her aunt.

Timothy Healy, a Member of the Irish Party in Parliament, switches sides from ardent support for Parnell and joins William Gladstone, Parnell's political rival, to boost his own chances of succeeding a wounded leader. What Healy did not foresee, ironically, is the ubiquity of Parnell "all over their 'new' Ireland, in the form of street names and statuary; 'They never even named a toilet after me,'" Healy confides to the audience at the end of the play (Kirwan 198). However, as the audience could see from a distance, Parnell's death does not change the fact that, in his private life, he is far from being a man of courage and honesty, eventually planning to exile himself to Spain with his mistress and children and to change his name entirely. As the play shows, he does not embrace martyrdom voluntarily, as later propaganda asserted: "as soon as he slid into that cold earth, he became the martyr [people] always wanted" (Kirwan 197). Kirwan shows Parnell always protective of Katherine and their relationship, believing that his public duties and private life can be separated.

It seems to him that a private romance would hardly lead to the split of the Irish Parliamentary Party and even cost him his life. He never even intends to publicize it for personal interest.[17]

What should also be noted is that the play does not simply delineate Parnell as a central character in a biographical manner. Through the characters around Parnell, a Parnell story is reconstructed to show that he is not necessarily an intruder in someone else's marriage but a better companion for Katherine O'Shea than her husband. He is portrayed as a more humane character than O'Shea, a victim of a political power struggle, and a father who wants to protect his children. He is not a heroic and Messianic figure but has weaknesses that every human being might have.[18] Furthermore, the title of the play, *Mister Parnell*, suggests the deconstruction of the Parnellite myth by referring to the protagonist as a mister, rather than a party leader or an uncrowned king. In other words, Parnell's ethical transgression might be morally unacceptable, but the playwright eschews moral judgment, leaving it for each audience member to develop their own understanding.

As to the aesthetics of the play, *Mister Parnell* illustrates the effects of mixing realism with expressionism. The latter is reinforced by unnamed figures representative of social opinions, such as "Bishop," "Union Jack," "Parnellite," "Tenant Farmer," and so on. There are characters who play double roles, for instance Chairwoman and Rosheen, Union Jack and Parnellite. The double roles and the antagonistic opinions they represent suggest that all the characters, including Parnell, are dominated by external forces that always redraw their boundaries or enlarge their religious, moral, and political demarcations.

Tom MacIntyre's *Good Evening, Mr Collins* (1995): An Icon Questioned

Among tragic heroes in modern Irish history, including but not limited to Emmet and Parnell, Michael Collins was no less controversial as regards his role in the negotiations with the British government for the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921 and his rivalry with Éamon de Valera. His short but dramatic life has been the inspiration for many playwrights, for instance, Tom MacIntyre.

MacIntyre was brought up in East Cavan in a Presbyterian community, where Éamon de Valera, Patrick Pearse and Thomas McDonagh were referred to as "the felons of our land" by his grandmother, while "Collins [was] notably absent" in her

17 Parnell later compared himself with Moses when seeing the Irish Parliamentary Party split because of his scandal. As he put it in *Freeman's Journal* in 1890, "If I am to leave you . . . I should like – and it is not an unfair thing for me to ask – that I should come within sight of the promised land" (qtd. in Lyons, "The Parnell Theme in Literature," 71).

18 Henry Harrison MP, who acted as Parnell's *aide-de-camp* and provided service to Katherine after his death, wrote two books defending the couple based on the widow's personal accounts. It is said that the two books provide more favorable views of Parnell in his relationship with Katherine. For details, see his *Parnell Vindicated: The Lifting of the Veil* (1931) and *Parnell, Joseph Chamberlain and Mr Garvin* (1938). F.S.L. Lyons argued that Harrison "did more than anyone else to uncover what seems to have been the true facts" (*Charles Stewart Parnell* 324).

list of nuisances (MacIntyre 217). As a child whose understanding of the nation's heroes and villains came mainly from his family, and as a Protestant he was to take "the adversarial stance," developing a skeptical view of the said and the unsaid, not only in everyday speeches but also political narratives (MacIntyre, "Conversation" 309). A creative writer who had read widely "Meyerhold and Appia and Grotowski and the whole bunch" (MacIntyre, "Conversation" 310), he learned to approach his subject matter in critical ways that have "put the nation in the psychiatrist's chair," according to his biographer Justin O'Brien (qtd. in "Tom MacIntyre obituary" par. 9). The unseen yet fierce power struggle between Collins and de Valera, as well as the interplay of their true, private personalities, are investigated in this play.

Good Evening, Mr Collins, similarly to the two plays discussed above, is written in expressionist and minimalist styles which not only disrupt received understandings of Ireland's history and the birth of a nation, but reveal possible discrepancies in politically committed historiography. Audience members are thus prompted to the imaginative completion of gaps the playwright leaves in the play's dramatization of Collins and de Valera, their friendship, political antagonisms, and the darker sides of their personalities. To facilitate new perspectives, the playwright stipulates that the setting be "*minimalist. Essentials to be conveyed by lighting and soundtrack*," which enables flashbacks and flash-forwards to be staged (MacIntyre 161). Strategically, by reducing props, the minimalist stage paves the way for non-linear and more challenging perspectives as regards the characters under discussion.

Despite the title *Good Evening, Mr Collins*, the play features the public and private selves of Collins and de Valera in many unseen aspects, and neither appears to be as righteous and patriotic as their public images have always suggested. Each is seen as a not-quite-respectable womanizer, who maintains overlapping relationships with staff, followers, or married women. As they behave so disrespectfully toward women, they appear, in personal character, less as political rivals and more as birds of a feather. However, critical depictions of such notable figures are not simply malicious caricatures but are designed to reveal the chauvinistic nature of Irish republicanism in its inner circle, especially when it came to male bonding. What the playwright intends to reveal is that the charisma that these men had acquired can be seen as problematic and one-sided, although politically useful to galvanize their followers.

MacIntyre uses experimental dramaturgical elements in *Good Evening, Mr Collins*, including an off-stage perspective on these public figures and a metatheatrical device to satirize their violent acts and thoughts. For example, when Collins, at the beginning of the play, anachronistically quotes a statement of Bobby Sands (1954-81), a hunger striker and member of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA), "'Our revenge will be the laughter of our children'—somebody wrote," it suggests a link between these two men who both died as a consequence of the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty (MacIntyre 165). Collins was assassinated in an ambush in August 1922, aged 31; Sands died after 66 days on hunger strike in May 1981, aged 27. Both of them have been seen as martyrs of Irish republicanism, although it would be problematic to state that Collins was sacrificed for the peace which the British government had wishfully promised through the Treaty.

In the play, Collins is always belligerent and a strong supporter of retaliation and violence: "We pay them back in their own coin" (MacIntyre 166). In other words, to claim that he intended to be a peacemaker for the good of Ireland could be a misunderstanding, in that the signing of the Treaty, whether done by either Collins, de Valera or anyone else, would have been a difficult choice at the time. That de Valera consistently and silently watches Collins at the corner of the stage implies that Collins's trip to London with Arthur Griffith to meet Winston Churchill, and later the fatal ambush on his way to Cork, were engineered, directly or not, by de Valera, his colleague but also political rival.[19]

Furthermore, of much greater interest is the expressionist technique used in *Good Evening, Mr Collins*. In keeping with the dramaturgical strategies of Johnston and Kirwan, Collins's three female confidantes, Moya, Kitty Kiernan, and Hazel Lavery, are played by one actor throughout the play. This does not necessarily mean that the three women are the same in personality, but they are the most haunting figures for Collins in his private sphere. They do not appear all together but show up in Collins's life in private moments, when they "merge into one another, separate, merge again. They're ghosts, Collins's own private ghosts" (Carr 246). It is ironic that they never seem to have been taken seriously by historians and in the public media as independent persons who dare to express their desires and thoughts but merge into one character silenced on the social margin of an entirely patriarchal society. They are expected to be "ghosts" who are muted and romanticized as young or married women having an infatuation for a male politician. To some degree they are Collins's emotional pillars and should be documented as such, while a heroic narrative would be unlikely to benefit from being a petty or secret romance that would, however, lead to moral questions rather than political propaganda.

What the audience also sees is Collins's attitude towards Irish politics in the flashbacks and flash-forwards involving these women. He could be both an ironman or a warrior who takes revenge and violence for granted, and a fragile individual who hates patriotism, as he reveals to Kitty that "I am fed up with politics, often," and to Hazel about his depression: "This bitch of a country is sucking me dry. I'm a walking corpse in a land of corpses" (MacIntyre 170, 211). He might have been aware that he is a chesspiece of de Valera, who constantly supervises him on stage in silence and even urges him "to make a will," and he has no choice but to make himself look like a tragic hero who wants peace for Ireland more than any other politicians of the time (MacIntyre 208).

The distancing effect is also deftly employed in the series of short scenes that feature episodes in Collins's life. In one of the final scenes, Collins is invited to George Bernard Shaw's home for dinner during the Anglo-Irish Treaty negotiations in London and later to Sir Horace Plunkett's house at Foxrock, Dublin, days before his death. Shaw does not come under the spotlight from backstage but abruptly shows up downstage, saying to the audience that "you knew I'd appear—period piece—

19 For details on the friendship and rivalry between de Valera and Collins, please see Jack Lynch's "Collins and de Valera: Friends or Foes?" and Julia Walsh's "Eamon de Valera and the Rivalry That Led to War."

au contraire—indefatigable disturber of the peace!" (MacIntyre 213). His location downstage and the use of the term "period piece" may suggest MacIntyre's desire to distance Collins the character from Collins the hero, in pursuit of a kind of objectivity over political partiality. What is also peculiar about the use of the distancing effect is that when Shaw talks with Collins about his epitaph in this fictitious scenario, the audience see Collins trapped in a political dead end over the Treaty, and worried about his mixed reputation as an Irish Don Juan: "let us praise God that [Collins] had not to die in a—in a snuffy bed" (MacIntyre 214).[20] Although these scenes and flashbacks illustrate only some moments of Collins's career and private life, they position him as "a deeply confused, highly imaginative and willful man" (McGuinness xi).

Of greater note is the final scene that portrays Collins's last moments before death. The scene shows journalistically how the protagonist was gunned down in an ambush by anti-Treaty forces during the civil war, turning his head towards the audience in slow motion: "Collins swivels his head—slowly—leftward to view the audience . . . [and] turns and proceeds to a chaise-longue downstage right, stretches himself on it" (MacIntyre 216). Arguably, this slow-motion, expressionist treatment of his death and resurrection may prompt audience members to contemplate the violence of his death, imaginatively, for an extended period of time. Furthermore, they might feel disturbed and uncomfortable to be looked in the eye by a dying person and to witness his ghostly resurrection. With de Valera always sitting on the sidelines to watch Collins meeting his death, this minimalist play, which focuses entirely on its characters through flashbacks and flash-forwards, implies not only that the birth of the nation is problematic but that the relationship of de Valera and Collins is that between a "cheerless tyrant" and a "Cavalier," a stereotype of their rivalry passed on to MacIntyre from his grandparents when he was a child (MacIntyre 217). In staging two individuals with tragic flaws rather than charismatic heroes, this play provides an "idiosyncratic and perceptive treatment of Irish history . . . turn[ing] a strobe light on a twentieth-century Irish icon, sometimes to grotesque effect" (Mahony 238). Thus, MacIntyre's use of distancing effects not only challenges received historiography, but pushes audiences to go beyond linear narratives of flawless national heroes.

Conclusion: Problematizing Historiography

One common feature of the three plays is that audiences are placed in the position of outsiders who can re-evaluate these "uncrowned Kings of Ireland" through dramatizations, not based on stereotypical falsehoods but from different viewpoints, of their public and private selves.

As to Emmet in *The Old Lady Says "No!"*, the playwright does not reconstruct him as a loving suitor of Sarah Curran in particular nor put an emphasis on his heroic sacrifice as most Irish storytellers or dramatists have done. Not only does the central character get confused about Sarah, Deirdre, and the old Flower Woman, but he

20 The phrase about "dying in a snuffy bed" appears in Shaw's letter to Collins's sister after the assassination in Béalna Bláth in 1922.

also fails to tell the difference between himself as an actor and Emmet the historical figure after being concussed at the beginning of the play. His confusion suggests the contingency of a historiographical perspective, as the unnamed Speaker/narrator can no longer be impartial about the events, nor explain them consistently. He becomes, at best, a performer demonstrating a preferred political view and expected sentiments.

Such unreliability is also exemplified through a large number of quotations or paraphrased excerpts of poetry that Emmet and other characters use in their conversation. Some of the verses were actually written after Emmet's death, but without knowing this, the audience may simply be impressed by the stereotype that those excerpts build. The anachronistic use of quotations may imply that the past is not defined by what happened before, but by current sentiments. In the case of Emmet, as he has long been regarded as a fighter for Irish independence by radical republicans, it seems justifiable to heroize him in order to endorse violence and bloodshed. Arguably, by including expressionist and anachronistic elements in the play and provoking confusions and discomfort among the audience and critics, the playwright might be seeking to challenge the celebrated Irish heroism and to question the mystification of political figures in history, restoring them as living individuals rather than clichés or idealized images.

In this connection, Kirwan's *Mister Parnell* also presents how problematic it is for a protagonist to emerge from his moral and political downfall to achieve popular martyrdom within a short period of time. The playwright anticipates MacIntyre by focusing not only on Parnell the person, but also on the ways in which he interacts with others in public and private spheres. In this representation no one is less hypocritical or high-minded when it comes to their private interests and desires. The tragic end of Parnell therefore illustrates how and why a scapegoat like him would be ostracized under circumstances of religious and political fervor. In other words, it is popular political preference or correctness that would define or deny the legitimacy of a fallen hero and how he should be recognized on social media and in the future. Dramaturgically, as in the case of Johnston's Speaker, the Chairwoman who performs the roles of stage manager and one of Parnell's woman admirers, along with non-verbal devices such as the rotational use of stage lighting, effectively alienates the audience from familiar accounts of characters who have haunted Irish republicans of later generations.

MacIntyre's *Good Evening, Mr Collins*, in a similar vein, illustrates how a history play can be more polemical than a single story with a one-sided perspective. The minimalist conception of the stage puts Collins and his comrades/enemies under the microscope and enables audiences to observe more closely how elusive, vengeful and complicated Collins is and whether de Valera is a suspect in the matter of Collins's death. In addition, the jumble of short scenes that present events in fragments implies that history as lived can only be thought of as a coherent story if many possible realignments are excluded. It could therefore be contended that Shaw's proposed task of writing Collins's epitaph is impossible to complete, even by Shaw himself, as Collins's contribution to the partition of Ireland remains obscure and awaits further interrogation.

The three plays under discussion were written across a long span of time, from Johnston (1929), to Kirwan (1992) and MacIntyre (1995), their common intention

being to take experimental, radical or unorthodox approaches to these revolutionaries. Johnston survived mid-twentieth-century Irish censorship, and Kirwan and MacIntyre may be thought of as inheritors of a *jeu d'esprit* visible in Johnston's and others' oppositional engagement with the European avant-garde in the early years of the Irish Free State.

The experimental approaches used in the three playwrights' works and their provocative endings initiated a shifting relationship between performers, spectators, and revolutionaries of the past. As audiences enjoy a privileged position from which to observe the history under question from multiple viewpoints, the task of understanding Emmet, Parnell and Collins, and evaluating their contributions to Ireland rests primarily with them. Finally, regardless of how modern Irish history should be understood as an open question, the three playwrights have bridged Irish theater to its European counterpart in a cross-cultural scenario and illuminated another revisionist dimension for Irish people.

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In Memoriam

In Memory of Tibor Frank (1948-2022)

Enikő Bollobás

Humboldt Prize-winning historian Tibor Frank, professor emeritus of Eötvös Loránd University, full member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and corresponding fellow of the Royal Historical Society in London, passed away on 15 September 2022, at the age of 74.

First, a brief account of his family background: Tibor Frank came from a Jewish Hungarian family with a rich history. His ancestors included Mór Wahrmann, Hungary's first Jewish member of Parliament after the 1867 Compromise, and the initiator of the unification of Pest, Buda and Óbuda in the Pest Parliament. At the beginning of the 2000s, on the initiative of Tibor Frank, a small street in Új-Lipótváros was named after Wahrmann (when it became clear that the street which had once borne his name, but had since become Victor Hugo Street, could not be returned to its original name). At the same time, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences established the Mór Wahrmann Award, and in 2009, a collection of Mór Wahrmann's papers, collected meticulously by Tibor Frank, was published under the title *Honszeretet és felekezeti hűség* [Patriotism and Religious Loyalty], referring to the nineteenth-century politician's fundamental position and the dual commitments that were central to his political activities. As Wahrmann wrote, "One cannot be a true patriot without being true to one's creed, or a good citizen while neglecting religion. One's ardent patriotism must go hand in hand with unbreakable loyalty and devotion to one's faith."

Tibor Frank's great-grandmother, Vilma Adlerné Goldstein, was a famous chamber pianist as permanent accompanist and co-performer of the Hubay-Popper String Quartet. Tibor lovingly preserved the objects left by his famous great-grandmother, including her likeness as well as her Bösendorfer concert piano. In the 1950s, Tibor's grandmother was forced to part with this piano, but fifty years later, the historian and great-grandson found this marvellous instrument and had it repaired at considerable expense. It stood in the family living room. Tibor also collected his great-grandmother's documents, arranging them in the same closed cabinet they were originally housed in. The scores of the Hubay-Popper concerts are kept here in chronological order, alongside the posters announcing performances–including, for example, a poster for a performance from the 1890s, which shows not only the names of the quartet members and the pianist, but also that of the composer, who was also present at the concert (and who had several of his compositions premiered by the quartet), in the following form: "Dr János [Johannes] Brahms." Incidentally, Vilma Adlerné Goldstein was not only known throughout the city for her art, but also for the magnificent salon she ran for many years, which Tibor Frank wrote about in detail in his book *Szalonvilág* [The World of the Salon].

Thirdly, I mention an ancestor whom he knew personally, although only until he was five years old: this was his maternal grandfather, Dr Ármin Flesch, a renowned paediatrician and the founder and director of the Madarász Street Children's Hospital. He was also the founder of Hungarian paediatrics. In his memory and to support Hungarian paediatrics, Tibor established a foundation and award.

Tibor Frank cherished the memory of his ancestors with great devotion, and collected various mementoes of them, including family documents. As a historian and descendent of the family, he considered it his duty to preserve their past in defiance of the destructive forces of history.

*

And now about his work: from 1971 until his death, Tibor Frank taught at ELTE, though only doctoral courses in his final years, and he led the PhD programme in American Studies. Earlier in his career, he regularly taught at the Santa Barbara Campus of the University of California, and at Columbia University, New York.

He obtained his Doctor of Science degree from the Hungarian Academy in 1998; in more than 50 years of his academic career, he wrote 19 books and edited 28 collection volumes, for which he could claim 2,500 references. He won the Humboldt Prize in 2002, the Albert Szentgyörgyi Prize in 2005, the ELTE Pro Facultate Prize in 2014, and the Eötvös Ring in 2018. He was a corresponding member of the Royal Historical Society of London from 2006, was elected a corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 2013, and became a full member in 2019.

Migration Studies were perhaps foremost among his many research areas; on the topic of Hungarian-American and European-American relations, he wrote two books of several hundred pages each, as well as 45–50 studies published in domestic and international journals. These studies deal with the immigration of the poor masses arriving at Ellis Island (including, among others, data concerning about 30,000 Hungarians from the ships' lists), and also provide a complex cultural history of the Hungarian intelligentsia, which was compelled to emigrate in two main waves. On the latter topic, two of his books were published by Peter Lang Press, under the titles of G*enius in Exile: Professional Immigration from Interwar Hungary to the United States*, in 2006, and *Double Exile: Migrations of Jewish-Hungarian Professionals through Germany to the United States, 1919–1945*, in 2009. Regarding Hungarian intellectual emigration, Tibor Frank claimed that the determined anti-Nazi attitude of those involved can be explained by the two-step emigration of the "[Jewish] Hungarian genius" (i.e. along the Budapest–Berlin–New York route). As a result of their escape from Germany, which was experienced as a "second trauma," they virtually all became actively anti-Hitler—to such a degree that it had a direct influence on American (nuclear) weaponry, and indirectly contributed to the United States entering the war.

He dealt with the topic of the history of perception in two books and numerous studies, primarily examining and analysing the perception of Hungary and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, as well as of Lajos Kossuth, which took shape in British and American public opinion.

Another field in which Tibor Frank specialized was the history of diplomacy. He published the papers and memoirs of John F. Montgomery, the American ambassador

in Budapest in the volume *Magyarország, a vonakodó csatlós* [Hungary: The Reluctant Henchman], with annotations requiring serious philological work. This book was published in three languages—Hungarian, English, and German—significantly helping to modify the "Hitler's last henchman" image of Hungary. He also published the reports of the British diplomat R. B. D. Morier, later ambassador to St. Petersburg, on the preparation of the 1867 Compromise.

The key topics he examined earlier in his career included Lajos Kossuth's exile, the activities Kossuth himself undertook in exile, and the operations of the Austrian secret service agents embedded in Kossuth's circle. His study of Gusztáv Zerffi's work as a secret agent and, more broadly, the entire Austrian secret service apparatus through nearly 2,000 reports, was published in the USA (Columbia UP), Austria (Böhlau Verlag), and Japan (Sairyusha) after its Hungarian publication in 1985, bringing serious international recognition to its author. In his book on Zerffi, Frank Tibor argued that the Austrian secret police served as a model for later secret services, including the Gestapo and of course—if the reader reads between the lines—the contemporary secret police in János Kádár's Hungary.

Hungary after the 1867 Compromise was another field in which he specialized. In Tibor Frank's interpretation, the Compromise was the result of a particular human and political attitude, which—if only briefly—led to a kind of "state of grace" in Hungarian history, when the political model of conflict management prevailed. The aforementioned work, *Patriotism and Religious Loyalty,* which included Mór Wahrmann's collected speeches and articles, as well as studies related to him and his time, also dealt with this period.

Finally, we should mention his efforts to promote Hungarian history abroad, the outstanding exemplar of which is *A History of Hungary* (Indiana UP, 1990), which he edited together with Peter F. Sugar and Péter Hanák.

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In summary, it can be said that Tibor Frank's work enriched both Hungarian and universal (mainly English and American, German and Austrian) history. This is partly due to the fact that he was a trilingual author who, in addition to Hungarian, wrote equally well in English and German. With his multilingualism, he significantly contributed to the cause of making Hungarian history known abroad, in which area—as is widely known—our shortcomings are painfully apparent.

His life's work shows a particular coherence, not only because the various materials he worked with are connected to each other by a hundred threads, but also because his interpretation seems to come together in one grand narrative. After all, Tibor Frank usually talked about Hungarian history in a way that also helped to clarify the place of Hungarians in the world. On the other hand, we can also say that while looking out at the world, he never lost sight of the history and destiny of Hungarians.

Tibor Frank was a great scholar, an attentive colleague, a teacher who always cared for his students, and a loyal friend. We shall cherish and preserve his memory.

A Most Distinguished Hungarian Scholar of Eugene O'Neill
In Memoriam Péter Egri (1932-2002)

Mária Kurdi

Péter Egri (1932-2002) would have attained the age of ninety this year, has he not been, unfortunately, dead for twenty years. He became professor and chair of the English Department of Kossuth Lajos University, Debrecen, in the 1970s, then professor and for some years chair of the English Department in Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. The range of his scholarly interests was both wide and far-reaching. Shortly after Egri's untimely death Zoltán Abádi Nagy wrote "A Memorial Tribute," which says: "Péter Egri, who excelled in English, Irish and American comparative studies and aesthetics, was a man of several careers in literature alone; with musical and fine arts history and aesthetics added, a combination emerged that was unique on the Hungarian scene of the past few decades" (10). The richness of Egri's scholarly production is available in sixteen books, some edited volumes, over two hundred studies and essays, as well as shorter writings published in Hungary and in some other countries. In view of the scope of his achievement he can rightly be called a "scholar of comparative literary and cultural studies." As such, he was both an Anglicist and an Americanist, who addressed works by William Shakespeare, Mark Twain, Stephen Crane, Aldous Huxley, J. M. Synge, G. B. Shaw, W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot, Eugene O'Neill, James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, Edward Albee, Tom Stoppard and others in his publications. At the beginning of his career, Egri also researched and wrote about modern Hungarian authors including Attila József and Tibor Déry.[1]

Especially from the 1980s on, Egri had started to publish studies and books on Eugene O'Neill, the great American representative of modernist drama whose oeuvre spanned from just before World War I to just after World War II, exploring issues such as identity crisis, the frustration of love and the gaps between individual desires and social obligations. His research of O'Neill, Egri must have realized, should be firmly rooted in a thorough-going study of the European modernist theatres, which he accomplished in the book *Törésvonalak: drámai irányok az európai századfordulón* (Faultlines: Dramatic Trends at the Turn of the Century in Europe, 1983). By writing this book, he actually explored potential modernist influences on O'Neill, coming from Wilde, Strindberg, Chekhov and Yeats, to mention only a few of the relevant

1 Some of the data and ideas in this article have also been published in my book *Approaches to Irish Theatre through a Hungarian's Lens: Essays and Review Articles.* Pécs: UP, Institute of English Studies, 2018. 67-83.

authors. One of Egri's essays written in the wake of the book, "Synge and O'Neill: Inspiration and Influence" (1987), joins *Törésvonalak* in mapping the experimental strategies of modern European drama by tracing echoes of Syngean motifs and dramaturgies in O'Neill's work.

Egri's essays on O'Neill written in the 1980s address a great variety of topics including questions of form, genre and psychosocial issues, over a range of O'Neill's plays from the early work to the late masterpieces.[2] A significant part of these essays appeared abroad, mainly in the US, for instance several of them in *The Eugene O'Neill Newsletter* including two articles about how O'Neill fared on the Hungarian stage, or in edited collections such as *Critical Essays on Eugene O'Neill* (edited by James J. Martine, Boston MA: G. K. Hall, 1984). The latter volume published Egri's analysis of the interface between alienation and form in the expressionist play *The Hairy Ape* (1922), which is cited, among others, by Robert M. Dowling's seminal biography, *Eugene O'Neill: A Life in Four Acts* (Yale University Press, 2014). A recent book, *Eugene O'Neill and the Reinvention of Theatre Aesthetics* by Thierry Dubost refers to and argues with Egri's views on the intricacies of form in O'Neill's early plays (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2019). In *The Cambridge Companion to Eugene O'Neill* Brenda Murphy refers to his comparative work on the short stories as antecedents for the plays in the case of Chekhov and O'Neill (240). Eileen Hermann-Miller's *The Misprized Modernist* (Davis: University of California, 1998) also quotes from Egri's analysis of the epic features underlying the structure of *Strange Interlude* (1932). Sampling Egri's concern with the later plays, his article presenting a comparative discussion of origins and originality in *The Iceman Cometh* (1939) can be seen cited by *The Eugene O'Neill Companion*, the work of Margaret Loftus Ranald (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982). O'Neill's debt to Ibsen, Strindberg and Chekhov, as Egri assesses it, is commented on in *Eugene O'Neill and the Emergence of American Drama*, edited by Marc Maufort (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1989). Not surprisingly, the comprehensive *Eugene O'Neill: an Annotated International bibliography 1973-1999* by Madeline C. Smith and Richard Eaton (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2001) includes several references to Egri's essays, articles and books dealing with the playwright's works.

The mid- and late 1980s saw the publication of three books on O'Neill by Egri, concerned primarily with the role of form and drama poetics in articulating the American experience. His book-length comparative analysis, *Chekhov and O'Neill: The Uses of the Short Story in Chekhov's and O'Neill's Plays* (1986), addresses the generic interface between short story and drama in respective works of the two playwrights. By looking at several of the two writers' short stories Egri inquires into the use of narrative in drama, characteristic of several plays in both dramatic oeuvres. The enthusiastic reception and informed appreciation of *Chekhov and O'Neill* in both Hungary and abroad made it Egri's probably most acclaimed book, attested also by the number of reviews appearing about it, for instance by Joyce Flynn, reviewer for the *Irish Literary Supplement*, who celebrates the analytical powers and achievement of the Hungarian scholar's study. Flynn emphasizes that

2 For Egri's whole scholarly output see Lehel Vadon: "Péter Egri's Scholarly Achievements: His Bibliography." *Eger Journal of American Studies* VIII (2002): 39-68.

"the resemblances [between Chekhov and O'Neill] Egri highlights are persuasive: the most useful to teachers of O'Neill's drama being the allusions to Chekhov's *The Seagull*, and the insight into Edmund's self-concept as an artist in his speeches late in *Long Day's Journey into Night*" (30).

Egri's next book, *The Birth of American Tragedy* was published in 1988, the year of the O'Neill centenary, with a considerable part of it focusing on O'Neill, who made modern American drama truly international. A critical summary of theories is also inserted in this work about why the genre had come of age so relatively late in the USA. The last chapter discusses *Long Day's Journey into Night* as a seminal play in which the epic, lyric and tragic modes are fused, and thus achieve stylistic variations in the text, while dramatizing four types of conflict among the characters (Egri, *The Birth* 154-81). *The Birth of American Tragedy* also generated appreciative reviews. In *Comparative Drama* Michael Hinden introduces the book as an informed study and his summary is absolutely in favor of its analytical power: "Students of O'Neill will be impressed with the book's thorough scholarship and intellectual sweep. *The Birth of American Tragedy* is a formidable resource whose gifts may be extracted by judicious skimming" (402-03). Frederick C. Wilkins, in *The Eugene O'Neill Review*, also acknowledges the merits of Egri's detailed and contextualized discussion of *Long Day's Journey*, claiming that his "analysis of the family dynamics and his delineation of the playwright's 'concept of relative determinism' rank with the best" (86).

Egri's third book devoted to O'Neill, *Elidegenedés és drámaforma: Az amerikai álom társadalomtörténete és lélekrajza O'Neill drámaciklusában* (Alienation and the Dramatic Form: The Social History and Psychological Portrait of the American Dream in O'Neill's Cycle of Plays) was published in 1988 also. Focusing on *A Tale of Possessors Self-Dispossessed*, the playwright's monumental but incomplete cycle, Egri highlights O'Neill's experimental techniques with which he dramatizes the tension between the American dream and American reality. The introduction to the book describes the experience of social and psychological alienation in the playwright's life, which Egri sees as an impetus for O'Neill to conceive the writing of the cycle. However, Egri argues, the spatial, temporal, and complex dimensions of the concept defied being squared to fit the conventions of the dramatic form (7-50). The book discusses the three surviving plays of the cycle, originally planned to contain eleven parts. Egri regards *A Touch of the Poet* (1942) as a play in which the integrated short story elements suggest affinity with the oral traditions of Irish drama on the one hand, and with the structure of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* on the other (115-16). Moreover, Egri contends that both O'Neill and Chekhov presented a double view of their respective "heroes," Melody and Vanya, resulting in the conspicuous tragicomic effects of the plays (106-07). *More Stately Mansions* (date of publication: 1964) features in Egri's book under the title "Novel in the Drama," which assesses the epic features of representing a family's self-dispossession by O'Neill. The analysis highlights that the three main characters develop split selves and wish to regain their personal autonomy by merging themselves with another individual (130-39). An unfinished drama, *The Calms of Capricon* (date of publication: 1982), closes the incomplete cycle of O'Neill. Egri's book analyzes it in a chapter referring to various modern drama models which may have been sources of the heterogeneity in the style of the play (176-81). Although

left incomplete, the cycle, Egri argues, is worthy of attention because it reflects the author's struggle with form at a stage of his career from which he stepped on toward creating the stylistic synthesis to be observed in *Long Day's Journey* primarily (200-04).

Undoubtedly, Péter Egri contributed a whole lot to international O'Neill scholarship, probably leading the line among the countries behind the Iron Curtain. A not at all insignificant aspect of his scholarly heritage is his unique methodology of presenting research findings, new ideas, and thoughtful comments, always ready to pinpoint artistic cross-fertilization. The prose style of his critical works is idiosyncratic because of its subtle, witty and precise use of language and sharp logic of argumentation, revealing the immensity of his erudition, untiringly inquisitive spirit, and thorough understanding of the manifold complexities and values of the arts. For some reason, O'Neill's drama attracts very few ardent researchers, and does not intrigue theatre people to produce the plays in Hungary these days. However, once this situation changes, and it probably will, Péter Egri's critical works on the playwright are a must to read, study and engage with.

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Reviews

Keable, Ian. *The Century of Deception: The Birth of the Hoax in Eighteenth-Century England*. **London: The Westbourne Press, 2021. 305 pp. 978-1-908-90644-1**

Andrew C. Rouse

A much-awaited new volume (with a pre-publication option) by Ian Keable made its way to the physical and online stores last year. Those who have already savoured Keable's book on the life and magic of Charles Dickens (*Charles Dickens Magician: Conjuring in Life, Letters and Literature,* 2014, privately published) will already know him as more than a professional magician, indeed a multiple award-winning inner member of the Magic Circle, but a wordsmith of some considerable talent and a meticulous researcher. His monthly newsletter demonstrates how he can pitch his prose according to the task in hand with literary sleight of hand. This is enjoyable as well as informative reading.

The eighteenth century, Keable claims, was the age when the hoax came into its own in England, although certainly earlier examples do exist—the Donation of Constantine (eighth century) being just one that comes to mind. But certainly, the spread of popular print and the "newspaper" would have been convenient vehicles for spreading at speed "facts" to the gullible. Keable's book, if nothing else, shows the modern reader that "It must be true—I read it in the papers/I heard it from this reliable source" is no modern mantra but has existed for a very long time. However, from examples from an earlier period given by Keable in the Prologue, it can be seen how apt the eighteenth century was for deception. "One of the most authenticated, pre-eighteenth-century hoaxes was conducted by William Perry [. . .] he claimed in 1620 that he was bewitched, as a result of which he began to vomit 'rags, thred, straw, crooked pinnes' [. . .]. All of our knowledge related to the case is limited to, and wholly dependent on, two pamphlets: there are no newspapers, trial transcripts, theatrical reconstructions or satirical cartoons to provide any supporting testimony" (Keable 8). A century later, the *Daily Courant*, England's first daily newspaper, had already been in circulation for almost two decades, being followed by many other journalistic ventures. Even more evident on the streets was the swathe of broadsheet ballads that had begun to emerge at the end of the sixteenth century but which by now were equally an omnipresent source both of entertainment and what was perceived as fact but which, like today, was as likely to be disinformation or at best fancy.

Gullibility—a necessary prerequisite to a successful hoax—was widespread and democratic. Among those mentioned astouched in one way or another by the eighteenth-century hoax are Henry Fielding, Samuel Johnson and Jonathan Swift—

Johnson was an admirer of the hoaxster George Psalmanazar, who features in the opening chapter, "Lately Arrived from Formosa" (13-32). Fielding's involvement in the supposed abduction and incarceration of Elizabeth Canning ("This Resolutely-Virtuous Creature," 132-60) was in his role of magistrate, which makes the fact that he was entirely taken in more notable than had he simply been a writer of fiction. Swift, unsurprisingly, was more perspicacious, and using a pseudonym produced three hoax letters of his own under the name of Bickerstaffin order to attack the astrologer Partridge, predicting the poor man's death and cruelly plaguing him throughout the remainder of his life.

No less-known than the Bickerstaff episode is the remarkable claim by a woman, Mary Toft, that she had given birth to rabbits ("An Extraordinary Delivery of Rabbits," 524-80). The credulity of the age is well demonstrated in Keable's narrative of the affair as he lists one by one the eminent surgeons (note, not physicians). From the initial local Guildford surgeon John Howard, who "delivered the stomach, intestines and three paws of a cat... he stayed around long enough for a rabbit's head and foot to appear. With enough body parts to assemble some sort of complete creature in place, Howard was a convert" (54). The deliveries of dead rabbits continued. Howard was cautious, however. Keable lists the progression of various medical men of eminence. The visit of the courtier Henry Davenant paved the way for the arrival of Nathaniel St André, surgeon to none other than George I, who had previously treated and remained friends with the poet Alexander Pope. Next in line was Cyriacus Ahlers, another of the king's surgeons. A week later, "the ultimate authority got involved... Sir Richard Manningham, considered to be the leading man-midwife of his day" (57). Fearing Manningham's scepticism, St André managed to involve the esteemed anatomist and forceps pioneer James Douglas. However, his strategy backfired as Manningham and Douglas finally exposed the fraud (58).

Meanwhile, the popular press was having a ball, and while learned doctors were entertaining the idea that Toft truly had given birth to rabbits (not to mention cat parts!), the pamphleteers and etchers took full advantage of the opportunity to ridicule the imposture, led by no lesser celebrity than William Hogarth, whose *Cunicularii, or The Wise Men of Godliman in Consultation* (1726) depicts the whole throng of medicos around Mary Toft's four-poster bed as she gives birth to a swarm of rabbits, many of which are already scampering around on the floor. She appears again, this time stretched out in labour on the floor among in his *Credulity, Superstition, and Fanaticism.* Another portrait of Toft seats her rather more demurely in a chair with a solitary rabbit on her lap. Originally a painting by John Laguerre, the subsequent engraving by T. Maddocks would have been better known, as, unlike the painting,it would have been mass-produced while the topic was hot.

Although Keable does not specifically address the issue of the early modern novelists of the day vis a vis the hoax, familiar men of letters appear dotted about throughout the book. It is worth noting that Daniel Defoe does not appear among them, perhaps the greatest hoaxster of the literary world, as he successfully had readers believe that his works were not fiction but factual reports written by the main protagonist. The use of the first person in prose-writing may now be no more than an artistic decision, a conceit, but at least some of the readers of "works by" Robinson

Crusoe, Captain Singleton and Moll Flanders would have been duped into believing that these figures actually existed, especially as Defoe frequently used a pen name (he used some 200 of them!). Neither was he alone in this; other authors had recourse to the same subterfuge. It is possible that with prose fiction in its infancy, authorship was not seen as respectable; or the less-than-respectable or exotic supposed authors—a felon, an adventurer, and so forth—extracted a vicarious curiosity, thereby anticipating greater sales. Many street ballads of the day had (excruciatingly) long titles that attempted to induce a belief that their contents were factual, at least in the journalistic sense. In this way, the initially incredible claims investigated in this volume by Keable with the trained eye of the professional magician sensitive to deception are not so remote from the general access in our own digital age to semi-truths masquerading as fact, both in print, in politics and in dramatic portrayals. The present long-running series *The Crown*is a perfect example of how a little truth is interlaced with fiction to produce an alternative reality.

Maybe the most notable conclusion that can be drawn in this punctiliously-researched and nicely-written examination of eighteenth-century hoaxes is the exposure of how easily not only common people but respected figures of the day—an era in which analytical science was increasingly holding sway over superstition and uncritical belief—were indeed drawn into each hoax with such gullibility, even when the hoax in question was so outrageous as giving birth to rabbits. Keable is in a privileged position in that his business is public deception, and that while his audiences cerebrally are aware that they are being duped, in being unable to fathom the trick, they are prone to choosing belief in what their eyes have purportedly witnessed. And he shares his experience in his analysis of how the hoaxes are pulled off, as, for instance, at the commencement of Chapter Nine: "A Chinese Temple Rising Out of The Clouds" (213-32) which begins, "The wider the gap between the anticipation and the outcome, the more likely it is that people will feel they have been hoaxed"(213). The hoaxes in this book differ from such monetary cons as the South Sea Bubble, which ruined a great many people before being ridiculed by Hogarth in his engraving. For the most part, neither the protagonists nor those duped by them come to much harm: indeed, the hoaxster George Psalmanazar not only successfully carried his hoax as being the first Formosan to reach Europe for many years, but became intimate with a number of literary figures, most closely with the lexicographer Samuel Johnson.

In *The Century of Deception*, Ian Keable has discovered an off-beat topic and turned it into a captivating piece of reading that will draw a broad variety of readership, from the casual reader to the scholar of eighteenth-century studies, the avid reader of non-fiction to the journalist, the student of early popular print and the legal eagle. He has spread his net of enquiry further than in his earlier volume on Charles Dickens, and the result is most compelling. A great read.

Charlton, Linda. *Jane Austen and Reflective Selfhood: Rereading the Self.* **London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022. 259 pp. 978-3-031-12159-3**

Rebeka Petra Simon

The scholarly discourse surrounding Jane Austen is ever growing. One of its most frequently discussed topics is related to her remarkable ability to portray the complexities of human relationships. In 2020 Tom Keymer published his book *Writing, Society, Politics* on Austen and addressed the scholarly criticism of her novels, including feminism, narrative techniques, and politics. In the same year, *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen* was published electronically to reach a wider audience. Linda Charlton's book *Jane Austen and Reflective Selfhood: Rereading the Self* is a contribution to this tradition; however, her analysis examines Austen's works through the lens of eighteenth-century philosophies of selfhood. Charlton argues that Austen's works interact with fundamental problems of individual identity and moral judgment. She delves into the complexities of Austen's characters and their journeys of self-discovery to show how Austen provides an insight into the nature of selfhood and personal transformation. Furthermore, Charlton relates the reading practices of characters to their capacity for self-recognition. The book's eight chapters provide detailed close readings of Austen's fiction, allowing readers to explore the nuances and intricacies of her characters and their journeys of self-formation.

The introductory chapter of the monograph,"Selfhood and the Novel," lays the theoretical foundation of Charlton's main argument. The works of Locke, Hume, and Adam Smith are referenced for their understanding of the role memory and imagination play in creating an individual's sense of self (27). Chapter Two, "Memory: Continuity, Coherence and Self-Construction," examines the sense of self developed by the heroines of four novels by Austen. Charlton introduces the ways in which Locke and Hume emphasize the importance of memory in determining one's identity and self-construction, as "we are, in effect, what we remember about ourselves" (36). Marianne Dashwood, Elizabeth Bennett, Fanny Price, and Anne Elliot all engage with their memories to shape their sense of identity and establish a coherent understanding of themselves. One of the most fascinating arguments of this chapter concerns *Persuasion,* the novel usually referred to as having been written by the mature Austen. Charlton shows how this maturity is reflected in the protagonist's approach to memories. Unlike other heroines, Anne regulates her recollections of the past, which leads to self-knowledge. By juxtaposing how each character reflects on the past, Charlton calls attention to the transformative power of self-reflection and memory in Jane Austen's works.

The third chapter, "Imagination and the Creative Self: The Reader and the Writer," examines imagination and the creative self in Austen's novels and philosophy. Locke and Hume cautioned against the consequences of "unregulated imagination" (69), as in Enlightenment philosophy imagination was seen as a constituent of selfhood. Charlton argues that imagination complements reason in *Northanger Abbey* and *Emma*. Her reading highlights the creativity of the protagonists and interprets their attitudes in the context of the contemporary debates about reading. She argues that Catherine's misreading of the events in *Northanger Abbey* can be better understood if observed from the perspective of the philosophy of selfhood, according to which "both identity and judgment arise from the accumulation of experience" (74). In Charlton's view, this experience originates from Catherine's reading of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. A later novel, *Emma*, highlights the paradoxical nature of imagination, which arises from two opposing views on reading: whether one should indulge in "serious reading," or in "creative imagination." Here, the heroine chooses creative imagination to "fill the approaching void in her life" (83). Emma denies certain facts so that reality comply with her desired narratives. The conclusion of the novel in terms of the philosophical debate on imagination is that both aspects are necessary to find the truth about life.

In addition to memory and imagination, Charlton examines the concept of probability in the works of Austen. In the fourth chapter, "Proofs, Probabilities and Ambiguities," Charlton asserts that Austen explores the power of the probable and the improbable, which can be seen not only in the content of the novels but in their style as well. Memory, imagination and probability shape self-formation and judgment. Charlton shows how Austen's use of different narrative techniques subverts the reader's expectations. She also provides a detailed analysis of how society's expectations are subverted in Austen's works, most notably in *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice.* The first subchapter examines the ways in which the probability of judgment plays a significant role in the lives of the protagonists. Elinor and Elizabeth must learn to take the improbable into account when evaluating and judging matters. The second subchapter focuses on the narrative styles of *Lady Susan*, *Northanger Abbey,* and *Mansfield Park.* Charlton notes that the range of narrative techniques used by Austen leads to ambiguities which, because they oppose the probable, subvert readers' expectations.

Chapter Five of Charlton's book,"Sympathy: Self and Society," examines Austen's portrayal of the multi-dimensional self. According to Charlton, Austen addresses this tension in the same manner as Adam Smith does in his work, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). Charlton emphasizes that "Austen revisits the concept of sympathy throughout her writing and each representation exemplifies Smith's focus on the significance of context" (138). Her analysis of *Lady Susan*, *Northanger Abbey*, *Mansfield Park*, and *Emma* reveals that the characters' ability of judgment is essential when sympathy is inhibited by an unwillingness to consider other points of view. The protagonists of these novels fail to perform sympathy effectively. They act, Charlton argues, according to Smith's beliefs when they make objective judgments through regulating sympathy. However, by so doing, they go against societal expectations by learning that true moral value can be concealed by charm and is not equivalent to social position and wealth. The sixth chapter, "The Reflecting Self: Self-Examination

and Moral Judgement," examines the interplay between feeling, reflection, and judgment. Charlton's insight, in line with Smith's ideas, is that taking into account the perspective of others is essential for objective self-examination. She not only aligns Austen's portrayal of the reflective self with Smith's concept of the agent and judge, but also presents a challenge to the predominant emphasis on free indirect discourse as a definitive indicator of self-examination. While free indirect discourse is often seen as a reliable indicator of self-examination, Charlton expands her analysis to include additional narrative techniques such as psycho-narration and quoted monologues. By doing so, she provides a more comprehensive exploration of the characters' introspection and offers a deeper understanding of their moral judgment.

"Reflection, Reading Practice and Self-Formation" is the most complex and compelling chapter of the book. Here, Charlton effectively ties together the overarching themes of her analysis. What makes this chapter particularly interesting is its inclusion of not only Austen's six renowned novels but also her juvenile works. By broadening her scope of analysis, Charlton uncovers a compelling dimension of Austen's work: she argues that Austen's fiction "accentuates the practice of reading as it applies to the interpretation of both text and character" (214). Critics often point out that in *Northanger Abbey* Henry's dismissal of his father's cruelty shows that he misreads people, similarly to Catherine. Charlton joins this discussion and states that "Catherine's reading is in the end more critical than Henry's because it is informed by her experience as a young woman in a patriarchal society: she therefore sees the deeper, more sinister implications of what he dismisses as a good read" (225). Although I agree that Catherine's experiences make her a critical reader, the claim that she is more critical than Henry seems to be an exaggeration. Charlton argues that Catherine relies on her experiences as a young woman and interprets the General's acts on these grounds. This ability shows that Catherine has "learned to read critically, balancing feeling with reason" (226). However, it may also be argued that Henry does the same when he defends his father. He might fail to judge his father's character objectively, but this has more to do with respect for his father or, better to say, the power dynamic within the family rather than his reading practices. He initially makes the evaluation of his father's actions based on his knowledge of the same patriarchal society. However, Henry later changes his judgment because of the General's mistreatment of Catherine. Also, Charlton goes beyond the literary aspects of Austen's novels and reflects on the gendered assumptions surrounding reading in the eighteenth century. She convincingly argues that Austen applied Smith's theory of critical distance, and her characters challenge contemporary attitudes towards the act of reading. The chapter successfully captures the complexity of Austen's literary world while offering thought-provoking insights into the transformative power of reading and its relevance to the interpretation of both text and character.

The concluding chapter, "The Effect of a Second Perusal," ties together the book's main arguments and emphasizes how Jane Austen's work engages with fundamental questions about individual identity and moral judgment, which find their roots in the philosophy of selfhood. By skillfully intertwining the exploration of selfhood with a unique narrative style, Austen's works challenge readers to critically analyze both the characters within her novels and their own understandings of the world. The

conclusion serves as a call to actively engage with Austen's texts, inviting readers to reflect upon and explore the profound themes and questions raised by their encounters with her literary works.

One of the most notable strengths of the book *Jane Austen and Reflective Selfhood: Rereading the Self* lies in Linda Charlton's ability to situate Austen's novels within the time's broader literary and philosophical context. Charlton's book offers a fresh perspective on Austen's works, inviting readers to embark on a journey of self-discovery alongside Austen's beloved characters. Including *Lady Susan* and her juvenile writings in the list of analyzed works is a valuable addition to the book and helps to emphasize these early pieces' relevance in Austen scholarship. Through her analysis, Charlton highlights how memory, imagination, probability, sympathy, and self-examination contribute to the characters' self-formation and moral judgment.

Liggins, Emma. *The Haunted House in Women's Ghost Stories: Gender, Space and Modernity, 1850–1945*. **London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. 307 pp. ISBN 978-3-030-40751-3**

Viktória Osoliová

People have always been interested in the supernatural, which reveals our fascination with ghosts, spectral appearances and haunting. The popularity of the ghost story in the Victorian period has been thoroughly explored in relation to spiritualism, superstition, funerary practices, despite skepticism about the supernatural. Ghost literature became increasingly popular, especially among female authors. *The Haunted House in Women's Ghost Stories: Gender, Space and Modernity, 1850–1945* by Emma Liggins focuses on Victorian and modernist haunted house narratives in ghost stories by female authors such as Elizabeth Gaskell, Margaret Oliphant, Vernon Lee, Edith Wharton, May Sinclair, and Elizabeth Bowen.

This well-researched book reveals how female authors from the mid-nineteenth to the twentieth century used spatial tropes to articulate their anxieties about domesticity. Liggins' aim is to re-examine female ghost story writers and to provide a "feminist history of the ghost story" (2) by offering new perspectives about this under-researched genre, incorporating feminist insights and spatial theories. Drawing on spatial, architectural, and psychological analyses, this engaging book reconsiders the gendering of space in the ghost story. It explores ideas about gender, space, and identity, referring to theorists like Gaston Bachelard, Henri Lefebvre, Elizabeth Grosz and Luce Irigaray.

Liggins puts a special emphasis on space and various architectural dimensions that have occupied a prominent place in Gothic fiction since its inception. The chapters look at haunted houses and other architectural features such as mansions, gardens, villas, Italian churches, and ruins in women's ghost stories. Liggins explores spatialities connected to women, the ways in which they inhabit and navigate space in the Gothic mode. The broad time span covered by the book is meant to highlight women's experience of domestic spaces and their roles in the household across many decades. Liggins explains that the gendering of space has not been fully explored in the context of the ghost story and the Gothic haunted house, and she traces the development of the haunted house narrative in order to explore the relationship between the home as site of terror and women's fears, desires, and perceptions of gendered space. Liggins also discusses how women reacted to the modernization of the home at the turn of the century, including the servant problem and changing household relationships.

The organization of this book is logical, and the author's argument is coherent. Structurally, the book consists of one introductory chapter and six chapters, each divided into subchapters. The book uses a chronological order which maps the gendered implication of space and the changing household relations through various decades in female-authored Gothic fiction. In each chapter, Liggins explains the historical and cultural context of the authors and incorporates non-fictional writing on architecture, interior design, technology, and the servant problem. Each chapter focuses on one author and includes a brief bibliography of theories and interpretations, as well as summaries of the short stories. In the introductory chapter, Liggins presents the writers to be analyzed, the main themes, motifs, key concepts, and the theoretical context within which the book can be read.

The second chapter explores the representation of haunted space in Elizabeth Gaskell's ghost stories of the 1850s in relation to women's experiences of spatial restriction within the Victorian household. The short stories are read in the light of Victorian concerns about the family, women's place in the family, women's right to property and how these influence women's perception of space. To do so, Liggins brings into focus such non-fiction works as Catherine's Crowe's chapter on "Haunted Houses" in *The Night Side of Nature* (1848), and Gaskell's own essay, "Clopton House." Liggins considers the eighteenth-century Radcliffean castle with its forbidden spaces and locked doors in relation to Victorian spatial divisions. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre's concept of forbidden space, Liggins argues that the Victorian house's doors and windows act as barriers. These spatial restrictions in "The Old Nurse's Story," "The Poor Clare" and "The Grey Woman" signify women's imprisonment in the patriarchal society.

In the third chapter, Liggins offers insights into Margaret Oliphant's ghost stories of the 1880s and 1890s, collected in *Tales of the Seen and Unseen*. This collection explores the visibility/invisibility of the figure of the ghost and relates it to the Victorian woman's visibility and invisibility in a patriarchal society. Liggins considers typical Victorian spaces such as libraries, drawing-rooms, and gardens which illustrate women's financial exclusion, female inheritance, and women's sense of being shut out from domestic comfort. Liggins explores how these gendered spaces appear in Oliphant's ghost stories to reflect women's fears. In "The Library Window," a young girl is attracted to a ghostly library, while in "The Portrait," a father and son are haunted by the ghost of the mother in the drawing-room. In these short stories, Liggins reads the library as a masculine space and the drawing-room as a feminine space. Liggins draws on Gaston Bachelard's inside/outside dialectic and interprets the haunted garden in "Earthbound" and "Lady's Walk" as a place which belongs to the house but at the same time is also outside it.

The fourth chapter deals with Italian settings for the ghost story in Vernon Lee's (Violet Paget's pseudonym) short stories. Ever since the Gothic mode's inception, Italy has been portrayed as a haunted space. Liggins focuses on Italian ruinous spaces in Vernon Lee's ghost stories, where the ruin becomes "an uncanny, in-between space" (119). Her Italian ghost stories are saturated with descriptions of gloomy, decaying, and ruinous buildings. Liggins reads the stories in the light of Lee's travel writings and diary about Italy and through the lens of ruin studies, which examines

the turn-of-the-century fascination with decaying buildings. "The Legend of Madame Krasinska" is about an old Italian house which becomes a crypt, while "The Doll" features a female collector and a museum-like old house and a decaying doll. Liggins also draws on Dylan Trigg's work, *The Aesthetics of Decay*, as well as Rose Macaulay's contemplation on "ruin-pleasure," *The Pleasure of Ruins* (1953).

The fifth chapter investigates the differences between the old-fashioned Victorian house and the modernist house with its modern devices such as electricity and telephone in Edith Wharton's ghost stories from the early twentieth century. The chapter studies the gendered dimensions of the modernist haunted interior and the transformation of domestic space by technology. Liggins explores the newly modernized household in Wharton's ghost stories, and the ways in which it impacted its female inhabitants in frightening ways. In "Pomegranate Seed," the female protagonist is haunted by her husband's dead first wife, who is somehow responsible for the husband's unexplained disappearance. In "Afterward," the female protagonist's husband also vanishes, leaving the wife abandoned in the domestic space. "The Duchess at Prayer" is influenced by Vernon Lee's representations of Italy. The story is set in a ruined villa in Italy, where the jealous husband of the adulterous duchess orders a statue of his wife to be placed over the entrance to the crypt where she meets her lover, entombing him alive.

The sixth chapter focuses on May Sinclair's exploration of patriarchal spaces in the ghost stories of the 1910s and 1920s. Sinclair's stories are set in claustrophobic spaces. The haunted houses in her stories are smaller, and the smallness of domestic space, crowded with outdated furniture conveys a sense of claustrophobia. In this chapter, the author's most innovative section is dedicated to analyzing the bedroom. The bedroom is a recurring trope in Sinclair's stories and symbolizes death/mourning and sexual intimacy. Drawing on theories by Luce Irigaray and Elizabeth Grosz on women's reoccupation of space, Liggins reads bedrooms as sexual and maternal spaces in "The Intercessor" and "If the Dead Knew."

The last chapter explores the twentieth-century world and the modern house in Elizabeth Bowen's ghost stories of the 1920s and 1940s. The period between the two world wars brought about many changes, especially a radical transformation in the domestic sphere. In the second section of this chapter, Liggins examines Bowen's spectralization of suburban houses and interprets them as feminized spaces. Liggins reads Bowen's haunted house narrative in relation to anxieties about the ideal home and perfect housewife in the interwar period. In the third section of this chapter, Liggins places Bowen's short stories within the theoretical frameworks of War Gothic and ruin studies because of their explorations of emptiness, loss, inhabitability, and the spectral connections between bomb-damaged houses of London.

Overall, *The Haunted House in Women's Ghost Stories: Gender, Space and Modernity, 1850–1945* is an excellent book for academics and students of English and American studies interested in Gothic studies, the ghost story, Female Gothic, Victorian and modernist women's writing, gender studies, and spatial studies.

Cox, Jessica. *Neo-Victorianism and Sensation Fiction*. **Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. 251 pp. ISBN: 978-3-030-2989-8**

Özlem Demirel

Sensation fiction was irresistibly popular yet problematic during the nineteenth century, often because it attempted to subvert nineteenth-century values and social norms and scandalized Victorian society. Its contestable position and the intricate relationship with the historical period that created the genre itself made sensation fiction a distinctive genre in both academic and popular interest in Victorian literary studies. Its enormous influence on twentieth- and twenty-first-century literature and the apt for reading Victorians from a contemporary and postmodern perspective show the acknowledgement of the genre in critical discourse.

In *Neo-Victorianism and Sensation Fiction,* Jessica Cox elucidates the cultural and literary legacies of the sensation genre and the way the genre survived in numerous neo-Victorian novels. Cox aims to discuss various key facts, such as "the role of sensation fiction within neo-Victorian literature, culture and critical discourse" (2), dividing her book into two parts; the first half deals with the operation of how Victorian has turned into neo-Victorian. Her research mainly centers upon the subgenres of popular fiction (e.g. Gothic, detective fiction, and Young Adult fiction). The second part investigates several neo-sensational tropes, including the representation of (sexual) trauma, connections with archaeology and history, and matters of inheritance, to demonstrate the diversity of the sensation genre's legacy. The monograph gives us a full-length critical overview of neo-sensation writing, spanning its Victorian sensation forebears. The book seems to be a valuable source for future research with its variety and quality of chapters that are carefully organized and supported by diverse examples from (neo-)Victorian sensation novels.

Cox logically structures her chapters according to the above-mentioned subgenres, making them easy to follow and informative. In the introductory chapter, she addresses the issue of focusing more on literary fiction within the neo-Victorian critical discourse and explains her deliberate choices of the texts and subgenres from popular fiction. By discussing the role of sensation fiction within neo-Victorian popular novels, she aims to prove its (i.e., neo-Victorianism's) indebtedness to one of the iconic forms of nineteenth-century popular fiction, which "marks" her contribution to the field as "a significant intervention" (3). Nonetheless, in the following section of her introduction, she draws attention to Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860), aiming to demonstrate the diversity of sensation fiction's legacy through Collins's literary piece and its neo-Victorian afterlives.

The next chapter, "Neo-Gothic Sensations," briefly outlines the transformation from Gothic fiction to sensation novel in which boundary-crossing women heroines are substituted for Gothic evil characters. As Cox's choice of works illustrates, there is not an uncanny depiction of Dr Jekyll's Hyde; there is Lady Audley instead, who is so charming yet she uses pleasing manners as a *façade* to manipulate others and to cover her offences. Cox then points out that sensation novelists demonstrate their concerns that are related to the past by rewriting Gothic figures (e.g., the spectral returns of characters).[1] The resonances of this interest in the past and reworking the Gothic elements also reverberate in neo-Victorian fiction.

Cox brings the theme of "Gothic doubling" (46) to the heart of her discussion in the second chapter. While she illustrates the parallel storyline between Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) and Daphne Du Maurier's *My Cousin Rachel* (1951), she also evinces that the hidden subtexts appear as one of the essential doublings in both novels because they unveil how women experienced male authority. Cox moves further from Du Maurier's novel to Joanne Harris's *Sleep, Pale Sister* (1994), one of the reworkings of Collins's novel, stating that the patriarchal structure discloses itself throughout the story. Through her detailed examination of four texts, Cox argues that the Gothic trope of imprisonment is a recurrent topic to accentuate in what ways patriarchal structure suppresses women in all literary texts. Herein it seems that Du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938) would also be an appropriate work to make a comparison between two genres in relation to Gothic tropes.

In the third chapter, Cox's analysis centers upon the connection between the detective genre and sensation fiction, acknowledging the first as the "most successful and enduring legacy" (74) of the latter. She first focuses on illustrating "the prevalence of detective elements in the sensation novel" (78) through three well-known works: *The Woman in White*, *Lady Audley's Secret*, and *East Lynne* (1861) by Ellen Wood. In doing so, she outlines the prominent features of sensation-detective fiction (e.g., the amateur detective, family secrets, and domesticity). However, although sensation fiction penetrated detective novels in the nineteenth century, the earliest examples often conceal the relationship between the two genres, such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Sign of Four* (1890). Nonetheless, this *concealed* relationship turns into a legacy in neo-Victorian afterlives. The "amateur detective" (86), for example, is employed heavily in neo-sensation detective fiction, while there is also the concept of "the widow-detective" (90) that is associated with one's marital status, which echoes the Victorian ancestors/predecessors. However, in the case of the widow-detective in neo-sensation detective novels, marriage is no longer a burden. To fully understand the theme of the widow-detective in neo-sensation writing, Brian Thompson's *Bella Wallis Victorian Mysteries* series would be useful works to explore and analyze.

Moving from detective to Young Adult fiction, chapter four explores the several parallels between Young Adult and Victorian sensation fiction, in which Cox considers the Victorian sensation novel as YA literature. Both blur the lines between genres, and

1 In sensation fiction, characters are not haunted by ghosts/supernatural beings, but often by the secrets of their past. The spectral returns of characters (i.e., Lady Audley's fake death) appear as a recurrent theme in sensation fiction.

"encompass [. . .] multiple genres" (107); they "are distinctly contemporary genres, concerned more with the present than the past" (114). There are, of course, many similarities between the two genres and the influence of sensation fiction on YA neo-Victorian novels is precisely traceable. Yet, the essential point for Cox is that "the representation of feisty, assertive female leads in contemporary YA neo-Victorian fiction" (115) functions as "a direct echo" (115) and a legacy of the sensation novel. The latter part of this chapter discusses Young Adult fiction and its place in the New Literary Marketplace. To underpin her claims, she analyzes two specific neo-Victorian Young Adult novels, Philip Pullman's *The Ruby in the Smoke* (1985) and Mary Hooper's *Fallen Grace* (2010), both of which share parallels with sensation fiction.

In the fifth chapter, Cox addresses one of her central themes by stating that "[t]he notion of the past haunting the present is central to both Victorian and neo-Victorian sensation fiction. The reason for this haunting often lies in the traumatic events of the past and their long-lasting effect on those involved" (141). She focuses on representations of (sexual) trauma in Collins's *The Woman in White* and its several afterlives. Cox first demonstrates how the concept of trauma is manifested in the novel and in Collins's other works, such as *Men and Wife* (1870); in doing so, she calls attention to Collins's use of the trauma narrative.[2] She then moves on to the concept of trauma in adaptations of *The Woman in White*, which proves that its neo-Victorian counterparts reuse such abuses. For instance, James Wilson's *The Dark Clue* (2001) shows that Walter's obsession with Marian culminates in rape and, as Cox puts it, "in [Sarah] Waters's *Fingersmith* [2002], Maud is exposed to pornographic materials from a young age" (153).

In chapter six, Cox calls attention to historical and archaeological explorations, because they appear as recurring themes in neo-sensation fiction. As she suggests, the reason for this often comes from the interest in "writing of the past from the perspective of the present, and constructing a narrative that is of both past and present" (170). The chapter investigates the "representations of archaeology in popular historical fiction" (166), such as Victoria Holt's *Shivering Sands* (1969) and Elizabeth Peabody's *Crocodile on the Sandbank* (1975). She highlights the issue of the reconstruction of the past in a contemporary period. More precisely, excavated artefacts prove/suggest that the Victorian past can only be fully perceived by assembling small pieces, which require "restoration" (166). Yet, this will lead to a possible "misconstruction" (166) because, as Cox suggests, "the impossibility of recovering an entirely authentic past [...] will inevitably damage or taint those objects from the past which remain" (188).

The seventh chapter deals with the motif of "inheritance" as a recurrent sensational trope in neo-Victorian novels, which in this case marks them as "neo-sensation." It also delves into "the implications of the pervasive use of the language of inheritance in neo-Victorian criticism" (195). By exploring inheritance as a legacy of Victorian sensation, Cox points out that "exploring issues of identity through the figure of the mother" (200) comes to the forefront in neo-Victorian novels, such as *The Quincunx* (1989) by Charles Palliser, *Her Fearful Symmetry* (2009) by Audrey Niffenegger,

2 Collins's use of the trauma narrative is often concerned with the "portrayal of an abusive marriage," "illicit sexual relations," and the figure of "the sexually abused woman."

and *The Asylum* (2013) by John Harwood. Nevertheless, Cox ends her chapter by highlighting that the inheritance theme functions as a tool for conceiving the intricacy of the present by calling for "an examination and understanding of the past" (199).

The concluding chapter discusses Austin Fryers's *A New Lady Audley* (1891) as a "parody-burlesque of *Lady Audley's Secret*" (219) and its possible position as a potential neo-sensation novel written during the Victorian age. Although there are several alterations in the parodic version (e.g., the absence of the original characters), "the 'magnificent ancestral home'" and "grounds which have been subject to significant improvements" (222) remain the same. Yet, as Cox suggests, the storyline of Fryers's novel "contains strong echoes of the earlier narrative" (222). This relation might invite a more complicated discussion, because this parodic adaptation was written in the nineteenth century, yet, in a way, it functions as a neo-Victorian sensation afterlife. To argue in favour of demonstrating such a complex example, Cox would include another possible work to strengthen her analysis: Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* (1893). The reason for her doing so is that Grand's novel was not only written in the nineteenth century, but also contains sensational tropes, such as hauntings and doublings. It would even be worth deeply researching the relationship between the sensation genre and New Woman fiction, possibly offering another chapter.

The weight of the evidence suggests that the influence of sensation fiction is evident in neo-Victorian literature, which, in fact, marks neo-Victorianism itself as an important legacy of the sensation genre. Although Cox offers a number of popular Victorian and neo-Victorian novels in relation to sensation fiction, it seems that the legacies of the genre might not be seen as clear-cut as she proposes due to its intermingled nature with other genres. Nonetheless, though there are possible above-mentioned weaker points in her research, it seems fair to side with Cox: her well-rounded examination of neo-Victorian writers' persistent return to many sensational tropes proves neo-sensation fiction's noteworthy and critical position within neo-Victorian scholarship. Furthermore, her focus on popular fiction distinguishes her investigation from many previous attempts which discuss neo-Victorian legacies, since she disagrees with the idea that neo-Victorianism can only be perceived by literary fiction that addresses/examines the past. She also calls attention to the general neglect of sensation fiction's influence on popular culture by neo-Victorian critical scholarship. Therefore, she chooses her primary texts from the subgenres of popular fiction (e.g., YA fiction and the Gothic), challenging those criticisms that often privilege literary fiction.[3] Cox successfully provides the basis for a future work on (neo-)sensation fiction. A great merit of her approach is that she offers a scholarly discussion of works that have largely been overlooked in critical scholarship.

3 Grace Moore (2011) and Beth Palmer (2009), for example, both comment on the afterlife of the Victorian sensation novel, concentrating on certain literary novels such as Sarah Waters's *Fingersmith*.

Fitzpatrick, Lisa, and Shonagh Hill, eds. *Plays by Women in Ireland (1926-33): Feminist Theatres of Freedom and Resistance.* **London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022. 265 pp. ISBN 978-1-350-23463-5**

Mária Kurdi

This anthology of five plays written during the Free State years in Ireland closely follows *Irish Women Dramatists 1908-2001* edited by Eileen Kearney and Charlotte Headrick (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 2014). Both books support the idea that, although not really visible and acknowledged until the last couple of decades, there has been a female tradition in Irish playwriting throughout the last century running parallel with the much earlier identified one of male authors. The collection under review here differs from the book by Kearney and Headrick, in which the group of seven plays spans the last century, whereas the works Fitzpatrick and Hill included, *Distinguished Villa* by Kate O'Brien (1926), *The Woman* by Margaret O'Leary (1929), *Youth's the Season — ?* by Mary Manning (1931), *Witch's Brew* by Dorothy Macardle (1931), and *Bluebeard* by Mary Devenport O'Neill (1933) all came to life within less than a decade. Thus they reflect on similar or intertwining problems that many individuals experienced during the period, from various angles and using idiosyncratic dramaturgies.

Fitzpatrick and Hill contextualize the plays in their critically informed general introduction to the volume, as well as in the authors' respective portraits to enhance the sense of connections for the reader of today. The editors depict the culture of the Irish interwar era as largely inward-looking and morally restrictive due to the new Irish state's postcolonial nationalism, as patriarchal as before or even more so, and its strong ties with the Catholic Church. Despite the fact that female participation in the revolutionary movement leading up to independence in 1922 was considerable, the government of the state-building years discriminated against women, assigning to them chiefly domestic roles and curtailing their ambitions to take part in public affairs. However, as Fitzpatrick and Hill claim, "[A]gainst the conservatism of the period, a counterculture of experimentation was evolving: most obviously evidenced through the establishment of the Peacock stage at the Abbey Theatre in 1927 and the Gate Theatre in 1928[.]," adding that both the Abbey and the Gate produced women playwrights' works in the 1920s and 1930s, including some of those featuring in this anthology (3-4). It should not be overlooked, though, that there were cases when the male theatre managers or censors asked for changes in the text (Fitzpatrick and Hill 8). The respective plots of the five plays selected for this book are all grounded in the

contemporary social world of contradictions, long-surviving conventions, and moral controversies, inspiring the reader to identify core themes, subtle devices, and spatial metaphors that span across the texts in various forms and with diverse emphases. The primary theme of the plays is women's emotional life and sexuality versus the expectations that they become self-effacing wives and mothers according to the Church-supported cultural and political ideals of the Free State.

Although set in England, the problems depicted in *Distinguished Villa* can be seen as those of post-independence Irish middle-class life. There are three women in the play: Mabel, a housewife, Gwen, her younger sister, and their lodger named Frances. Mabel is proud of being highly respected in the neighborhood for the neatness of her home and her spotless observation of moral norms. Gwen is engaged to John, who begins to take more interest in Frances when recognizing the latter girl's relaxed and kind attitude to him and becoming aware of their personal similarities. Another young man, the flamboyant Alec, confesses his love for and proposes to Frances but is rejected by the girl, who notices the superficiality of her suitor's character. The unfolding love between Frances and John and their dreams of a life together is fatally shattered when the pregnant Gwen lies that John is the father of her child due to a brief sexual adventure together and now he must marry her out of duty. Indeed, Alec, with whom Gwen had a fling, is the father, but he shirks taking responsibility. The tragic outcome of the play is all the more enhanced by Mabel's husband, Natty's depression and suicide, after he suffered from the coldness and selfishness of his wife for years. A telling, structural device of *Distinguished Villa* is the juxtaposing and contrasting of crucial scenes, for instance, the one in which Gwen ties John to her by lying that the baby is his, with the farewell scene of the lovers, Frances and John. The young women's difference becomes also underscored: Frances shows strength in giving up her love while Gwen is too weak to go on as an unmarried mother, and instead enters a loveless marriage for the social protection it provides. At the end, John says: "Things like this are done slowly. Our methods are refined in Distinguished Villa" (67). "Things" involves Natty's ruined life and tragic death, first of all, but also the dubious result of Mabel's imposition of her rigorous views on Gwen. O'Brien offers here a ruthless critique of the destructive moral principles of the era. Calling the house a "distinguished villa," a designation so much favored by Mabel, is deeply ironical and as a spatial metaphor its meaning can be extended to post-independence Irish society with its hypocrisy and the inculcated need to keep up appearances at all cost.

The Woman by Margaret O'Leary is set in the country where the love of the land and the tending to animals is one of the sustaining forces, anticipating the plays of John B. Keane. However, the focus is on Ellen Dunn, to whom the title refers as "the woman," the generic term underscoring her essential difference from the other female characters in the play, her mother, her present lover, Maurice O'Hara's mother, and Kitty Doyle, a childhood friend of Maurice, secretly in love with him. Ellen affirms that she does not want to live like other women, broken in by their husbands to become self-effacing wives and mothers, but look for a lover with whom she can go to a faraway country where the sun always shines, and they can be free from the material needs and greed which characterizes "this dirty hole [is] driving me mad" (106). Maurice is not her first lover; she has been changing them to find the "real"

partner, but in vain. In the final scene with all the others around her, the power of Ellen's character reveals itself: disappointed also in Maurice's love she bravely decides to go ahead alone to reach a perfect land, which can only be beyond this world, mesmerizing even those hostile to her by awakening their secret desires. The similarity with the last scene of the heroine's facing death boldly in Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats* is striking. Though *The Woman* had some admirers when produced on the Abbey stage, its reception remained mixed according to Fitzpatrick and Hill, probably because the contemporary audience could not understand the heroine's restlessness and contradictory behavior (69-70). O'Leary, in fact, provides a context for Ellen's extremism. She lives with her mother and brother in a seedy place, witnessing manifestations of their greed day by day. Moreover, at one point in the play she makes a vague reference to a kind of childhood trauma, perhaps severe abuse, she experienced: on hearing Maurice's mother about God's protection of humans, she retorts: "Why didn't he protect me then – a little helpless child"? (115).

Mary Manning's *Youth's the Season — ?* is a city play described as a "tragi-comedy of Dublin life." The main characters are Mrs Millington, her children Deirdre, Connie, and Desmond, and their close friends, Toots and Terence. The Millington family belongs to the Anglo-Irish middle class, living in a house where the eighteenth-century furnishing of the drawing room represents traditions and some faded elegance like its mistress'. It is the setting of acts one and three, encircling act two, which is set in Desmond's art studio, a place of fluidity where he arranges a party to celebrate his twenty-first birthday. Deirdre, Connie, and Toots, in their own ways, seem to embody the New Woman: Deirdre studies at university and looks down on romantic love; Connie is in love with Terence, a minor poet who drinks too much and has no financial security, while Toots believes in personal freedom. However, the social expectations and rigorous norms of post-independence Dublin determine their life course even if indirectly. When Deirdre is facing the possibility of losing her suitor, the hospital doctor, Gerald to another woman, she feels utterly jealous and uses very conventional tactics to keep the man. Connie is rejected by Terence, whose identity crisis culminates in restlessness and self-hatred, leading to his suicide on the day following the party. The girl escapes her disappointment by accepting the proposal of the businessman Harry, model of the He-Man whom official Ireland needs to maintain normalcy and achieve prosperity. The play ends with Toots's sobbing and shouting: "I can't unlock the door! Help me, Desmond! Somebody! Let me out"! (217). Her futile effort to run out of the drawing room where Terence has just shot himself dead, and a bewildered Desmond is promising to buy a bowler hat and work in the office of his father instead of cherishing dreams about becoming a designer, is symbolic of a young woman's confined life in the Ireland of the time.

Fitzpatrick and Hill claim that the first three of the plays can be described by stage realism, yet their women "characters' irrepressible corporeal energies, as expressed in the stage directions, are undeniable" (8), which is most conspicuous in the volatile acts of Ellen Dunn, "the woman." However, the realistic nature of these three plays is complicated by structural, spatial, and linguistic devices, which certainly distinguish each, suffice it to refer to the Wildean overtones of the talk of those young people in *Youth's the Season — ?* who can be called a lost generation. *Witch's Brew* and

Bluebeard operate with a more experimental aesthetic, using supernatural and folklore elements to represent performative female identities. Macardle's *Witch's Brew* evokes reminiscences of Yeats's *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894), but the supernatural journeys of the bride characters in the respective plays are just the opposite of each other. In the latter work, a fairy child lures the young bride away from her husband and family, while Macardle's Una is saved from the influence of the witch and pagan beliefs by the love of fifteen-year-old Nessa, her sister-in-law. Nessa is ready to make a blood sacrifice for Una but Kiaran, the saintly hermit, interferes: the shedding of his blood and the blest water he sprinkles over her bring Una back to ordinary life. In Yeats the strength of pagan beliefs, in Macardle, that of Christianity, becomes emphasized. *Bluebeard* by Mary Devenport O'Neill adapts the myth in the form of a ballet-poem where the physical movements, dance and singing of the ghosts of the six murdered former wives express feminine triumph over Baron Bluebeard's patriarchal dominance and cruel deeds.

An invaluable merit of the anthology under review here is that it comprises two plays which have never been available in print, and three which were published close to the time of their writing in the 1920s or 1930s, but not reprinted since. As Fitzpatrick and Hill assert, "It is our hope that making these plays accessible will lead to their revival, fuller inclusion in teaching and scholarship, and consequently, a reframing of Irish theatre history" (13). Given the unfailing scholarly interest in the history of modern Irish drama and its gendered innovations, this wish will hardly remain unfulfilled.

Rákóczy, Anita, Mariko Hori Tanaka, Nicholas E. Johnson, eds. *Influencing Beckett / Beckett Influencing.* Budapest: L'Harmattan, Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, 2020. 168 pp. ISBN 978-2-343-21911-0

Mária Kurdi

Although Beckett is a highly acclaimed author in Hungary whose works are available in translation, and his plays have been staged several times since the Hungarian premiere of *Waiting for Godot* in 1965, books written about him by Hungarian authors were unduly delayed. This strange, long-standing situation became luckily altered by the publication of the essay collection under review here in 2020. The essays were originally papers given at the Samuel Beckett Working Group meeting held at Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Budapest, organized by the three scholars who edited the collection. The preface to the book is written by renowned Beckett scholar Linda Ben-Zvi, also one of the organizers as representative of IFTR, the International Federation for Theatre Research, "the largest theatre organization in the world." The Beckett Working Group of the organization had its first meeting in Tel Aviv in 1996, and in 2017 it was hosted by Károli Gáspár University of Budapest. From the start, Ben-Zvi emphasizes, discussions have been enlivened by the diverse cultural experiences of the international mix of group members, ranging from PhD students to professors (9). In accordance, the authors of the present essay collection are from several countries, including Hungary.

Beckett himself was, as is well known, a uniquely international author: born in Ireland, he became one of the self-exiled Irish modernists beside Joyce and Sean O'Casey who lived abroad, namely in France, most of his life. Since Beckett used both English and French in writing, three countries, Ireland, Britain, and France claim that his oeuvre is part of their national literature and theatre history. Therefore, the focus of this book, influences on Beckett and Beckett influencing others, understood in the broad sense of the word, is a most appropriate one to allow the contributors to add to international Beckett scholarship with their essays. The book is divided into three parts: "Influencing Beckett," "Beckett Influencing," and "Practitioner Voices," of which the last title indicates that the importance of "theatre matters" beside textual analyses is both acknowledged and emphasized to complete the scope of the volume. Beckett lived through the age of high modernism and well into what is arguably called the postmodern era and has invited attention from scholars specializing in a variety of critical discourses which have emerged and flourished over the years. No wonder, then, that the essays in the collection display a considerable variety as well.

In the "Influencing Beckett" part Teresa Rosell Nicolás (University of Barcelona) opens the line of chapters under the title "In Search of Lost Image," which unmistakably nods to Proust's novel cycle *In Search of Lost Time* (1909-1922). One of Beckett's early prose pieces was his extended essay on Proust (*Proust*, 1931) and the concomitant issues of how to represent memory, voluntary as well as involuntary. It is the latter that the author pinpoints as characteristic of Beckett's memory plays, especially *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958), which she studies hypothesizing that it is an anti-Proustian play because "Dramatically, Krapp as a character does experience not evolution but regression; tragically, *Krapp's Last Tape* represents the reversal of the Proustian revelation, and instead it shows the deep truth of an unattainable image" (30). Alongside, the author looks at *L'image*, a monologue written also in 1958, and concludes that the "Proustian privileged moments, in Beckett's oeuvre, particularly in *Krapp's Last Tape* and *L'image*, reminiscences which are entirely fragile and aroused with a painful effort, are associated to the memory of someone lost" (31). The second essay in this part, "The Theatricalization of *Endgame* as the Painterly World of Bram and Geer van Velde: Changing Perspectives in the Poetics of Cubism and Sartre's Phenomenology" by Laurens De Vos (University of Amsterdam), explores painterly influence on Beckett. As the third piece, "Samuel Beckett and the Sinic World" by Patrick Armstrong (University of Cambridge), reaches back to *Krapp's Last Tape* as an antecedent of *That Time* (1975). However, the difference between the two plays lies in the echoes of Eastern philosophy characteristic of the later work, where Beckett assimilated the Buddhist "concept of cyclical time," Armstrong opines (55). This, one should add, results in a more complex portrayal of the protagonist's memories of his life course than what *Krapp's Last Tape* offers.

The second part of the book, "Beckett Influencing" is the longest unit with five essays which form one group quite loosely. Jonathan Bignell's (University of Reading) "'Random dottiness': Samuel Beckett and the Reception of Harold Pinter's Early Dramas" introduces a relatively new comparative aspect: the parallel journey of their works in the media, radio, and then television. Another major contemporary playwright, Caryl Churchill's relation to Beckett in the mirror of her latest plays is examined by Mariko Hori Tanaka (Aoyama Gakuin University, Tokyo). Churchill, Tanaka writes, represents post-traumatic subjects in her later work, reminiscent of Beckett's displaced and degraded characters. With its four elderly women on the stage, the author finds Churchill's *Escaped Alone* (2016) similar to Beckett's *Come and Go* (1966), while also conveying "the importance of passing on knowledge of the apocalyptic disaster to posterity," which is enhanced by the title quoting from the Book of Job (79). Churchill's *Far Away* (2000) and *Here We Go* (2015) are discussed in the essay as dramatized examples of the "pre-traumatic syndrome," a term borrowed from Paul K. Saint-Amour, as well as of humans imagining, even wishing that they belonged to a lower form of life, which reveal a subtle complication of Beckett's legacy (83-85).

"Shoes That Are Left Behind: Gábor Tompa's Beckett Heritage" by Anita Rákóczy (Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church, Budapest) discusses the power of Beckettian inspiration in a Transylvanian-born Hungarian director's innovative re-imagining of some Beckett plays for the stage, beginning in 1979 when, as a student, he produced *Happy Days*. The title of the essay refers to a random display

of footwear as part of the setting in Tompa's 2005 direction of *Godot,* which evoked the collective trauma of the Holocaust by reference to the horrific event when a group of Jews were ordered to take off their shoes before they were shot into the Danube. Another innovation of this *Godot* was, Rákóczy points out, the casting of Lucky by an actress who started to present the character's unique monologue slowly, sounding "like a prophecy, scanned, gradually accelerating, with her standing straight, right in the middle of the stage, and looking up towards the sky all the while" (93). This dramaturgical choice may be interpreted as a rendering of "pre-traumatic syndrome," connecting up with Beckett's and Churchill's late plays which suggest the terrifying approach of an unknown disaster. The remaining two essays in Part II of the collection carry on the analysis of the links postmodern art can have with Beckett. Llewellyn Brown's (Lycée international de Saint-Germaine-en-Laye) "Body, the Gaze, and Abstraction: From Samuel Beckett to Bruce Nauman" calls attention to installation and video artist Nauman's "Slow Angle Walk (Beckett Walk)" (1968), "a one-hour monochrome video that explicitly pays tribute to Beckett's writings" (101). Yoshiko Takebe (Shujitsu University, Japan) in "Translating Silence: Between Beckett, Chekhov, and Hirata" addresses parallels between *Three Sisters* and *Come and Go* and traces silence in them as it fertilizes the artistic context to Japanese playwright and director Oriza Hirata's production of Chekhov's play with an android taking the part of the youngest sister. As the author assesses this striking innovation, "By including an android ... the non-verbal modalities are more emphasized, encouraging the actors and the audience to become more conscious of what it means to be human" (120).

In part III of the collection, under the rather comprehensive title "Practitioner Voices," three papers give a diverse picture of broadcasting, translating and digitalizing Beckett's work, set in relevant contexts. Márton Mesterházi (Hungarian Radio), in his "How We Made the Hungarian Version of Samuel Beckett's *All That Fall*" describes the difficulties they had to cope with in 1960s socialist Hungary to get permission for broadcasting this play on the radio. Grotesquely, in the politicized culture of the period, a catchphrase helped them achieve their goal: "The Czech comrades have already done it" (133). Next to Mesterházi's, Gábor Romhányi Török's (free-lance translator and scholar) "My Way with the Work of Samuel Beckett" is a personal account of his making most of Beckett's prose available in Hungarian translation, including the novel trilogy. As a decisive experience, Romhányi Török discusses his attraction to the early, less known Beckettian novel *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* (1932), first published posthumously in 1993 and soon translated into Hungarian by him. For him, this work deserves special recognition: "The novel is an encyclopaedia of Beckett's literary concepts. He certainly made use of it in composing his other novels. ... It is the peak of early Beckett prose, and we are witnesses of the desperate struggle against the influence of Joyce and Proust, and of the shift towards his later style" (141). Finally, Nicholas E. Johnson, Néill O'Dwyer, and Enda Bates's (all based in Trinity College, Dublin) paper, "Samuel Beckett's *Play* in Digital Culture: Technologies of Influence" provides a timely, experimental approach to a Beckett text.

All in all, the diversity of the book carries a strong inspiration for further research. Several scholars agree that each nation has its own Beckett and these "Becketts" can be brought into fruitful dialogue in an internationally authored work such as *Influencing*

Beckett / Beckett Influencing. Beside the editors and authors, L'Harmattan publisher at Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary deserves all praise and respect for enriching our Beckett scholarship with this pioneer collection. Once the line has begun, other book-length studies delving into Beckett's oeuvre by Hungarian authors or (co)editors are coming to the fore; Anita Rákóczy's monograph, *Samuel Beckett's* Endgame *and Hungarian Opening Gambits* (Budapest-Paris: L'Harmattan, 2021) is followed by a book of Erika Mihálycsa (Babes-Bolyai University), titled *"A wretchedness to defend": Reading Beckett's Letters* (New HJEAS Book Series, Debrecen: University of Debrecen, 2022). May lovers of Beckett enjoy the publication of many more studies and volumes pursuing novel ideas inspired by his works in Hungary.

Notes on Contributors

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include *Radical Contemporary Theatre Practices by Women in Ireland* (co-edited with Miriam Haughton, Carysfort Press, 2015) and *The Theatre of Deirdre Kinahan*, co-edited with Lisa Fitzpatrick (Peter Lang, 2022). She has numerous scholarly articles in international and Hungarian journals and essay collections. Currently she is editing one of the *HJEAS* Books, New Series, on age, ageing and ageism in contemporary Anglophone literatures and theatre, to be published in 2023.

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Book series published by the University of Pécs, Institute of English Studies
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