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Cover: One of six studies toward an *Image of Samuel Beckett* 1980. Louis Le Brocquy. *Images*, 1975-1987. Dublin: The Arts Council.

Clouds: *O Império das Luzes* (1953) by René Magritte (oil on canvas 37 x 45 cm. - a fragment). Collection Arnold Weissberger, New York. In: René Magritte. Trans. Berta Rodrigues Silveira. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Civilização Brasileira, 1995.38

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For Maria Helena Kopschitz

Contents

Introduction

Abei Journal No. 8 is dedicated to the well-known Brazilian scholar Maria Helena Kopschitz, from *Universidade Federal Fluminense* in Rio de Janeiro, who has been responsible for important pioneering studies and translations of Beckett's work. Her translation of *"Clouds … Only Clouds"* opens this issue, in which we celebrate Beckett's centenary. This year's Journal also includes some studies by Brazilian scholars and an interview granted to the Irish-Argentine writer Juan José Delaney by Antoni Libera, a Polish writer and theatre director who knew Beckett when he was translating and directing his plays.

Articles on fiction by Peter James Harris and Mary S. Pierse, drama by Robert Tracy and history and culture by James Doan and Davide Benini are followed by our customary section, *Voices from Brazil*, in which João Roberto Faria discusses important Brazilian writers, such as José de Alencar and Machado de Assis in "Representations of Women in Nineteenth-Century Brazilian Literature".

Published in the year in which ABEI held the *First Symposium of Irish Studies in South America* our Journal commemorates the consolidation of the area of Irish Studies in Brazil, now in its twenty-fifth year.

Praça do Corpo Santo, Pernambuco. By L.Schlappriz, 1863.
(In Pedro Corrêa do Lago (org.) *Iconografia Brasileira* São Paulo: Itaú Cultural, 2001. 233).

Samuel Beckett

... nuvens apenas ...

peça para televisão

Samuel Beckett

Escrita em inglês, outubro-novembro de 1976. *Primeira exibição em televisão na BBC2,* 17 *de abril de* 1977. *Publicada pela primeira vez por Faber and Faber, Londres,* 1977, *no livro* Ends and Odds *("Impasses e Ímpares" ou "Resíduos e Refugos").*

Personagens e cenário

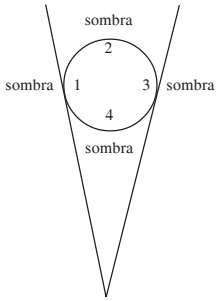
H (homem) Tomada de cena próxima, por detrás do homem sentado em cadeira invisível e inclinado sobre mesa invisível.
Roupão e gorro cinza claro. Chão escuro. Tomada de cena igual na peça toda.

H1 (H no set) Chapéu e sobretudo escuros, roupão e gorro claros.

M (mulher) Plano fechado (close up) de rosto de mulher, reduzido quanto possível aos olhos e à boca. Sempre a mesma tomada de cena.

S (set) Longa tomada de uma cena da locação vazia ou com HI. A mesma até o fim.

V Voz de H.



Set. Circular, cerca de 5m de diâmetro, circundado de sombra escura. *Iluminação:* luz gradual, a partir da periferia escura, até o ponto máximo no centro.

1. Oeste, estradas.
2. Norte, santuário.
3. Leste, cafua.

4. De pé (no set).
5. Câmera.

1. *Escuro.* 5 *segundos.*
2. *Clarear em direção a* H. 5 *segundos.*
3. V: Quando eu pensava nela era sempre noite. Eu entrava –
4. *Dissolver para* S *vazio.* 5 *segundos.* H1 *de chapéu e sobretudo emerge da sombra oeste, avança cinco passos e pára voltado para a sombra leste.* 2 *segundos.*
5. V: Não –
6. Dissolver em direção a H. 2 *segundos.*
7. V: Não está certo. Quando ela aparecia era sempre noite. Eu entrava -
8. Dissolver para S *vazio.* 5 *segundos.* H1 *de chapéu e sobretudo emerge da sombra oeste, avança cinco passos e pára voltado para a sombra leste.* 5 *segundos.*
9. V: Certo. Entrava, tendo caminhado pelas estradas desde o raiar do dia, voltava para casa à noite, ficava de pé escutando (5 *segundos),* finalmente me dirigia para a cafua.
10. H1 *avança cinco passos e desaparece na sombra leste. 2 segundos.*
11. V: Tirava meu chapéu e o sobretudo, punha o roupão e o gorro, reaparecia –
12. Hl *de roupão e gorro emerge da sombra leste, avança cinco passos e pára voltado para a sombra oeste.* 5 *segundos.*
13. V: Reaparecia e ficava de pé, como antes, só que virado para o outro lado, exibindo o outro perfil (5 *segundos),* finalmente dava meia volta e desaparecia –
14. M1 *vira à direita, avança cinco passos e desaparece na sombra norte.* 5 *segundos.*
15. V: Desaparecia no meu minúsculo santuário e ficava ali encolhido, onde ninguém me podia ver, no escuro.
16. *Dissolver em direção a* H. 5 *segundos.*
17. V: Vamos conferir se está tudo certo.
18. *Dissolver para* S *vazio.* 2 *segundos.* H1 *de chapéu e sobretudo emerge da sombra oeste, avança cinco passos e pára voltado para a sombra leste.* 2 *segundos. Avança cinco passos e desaparece na sombra leste.* 2 *segundos. Emerge de roupão e gorro da sombra leste, avança cinco passos e pára voltado para a sombra oeste. 2 segundos. Vira à direita e avança cinco passos para desaparecer na sombra norte.* 2 *segundos.*
19. V: Certo.
20. *Dissolver em direção a* H. 2 *segundos.*
21. V: Então encolhido ali, em meu minúsculo santuário, no escuro, onde ninguém me podia ver, eu começava a suplicar-lhe, a ela, que aparecesse para mim. Há muito era esse meu ramerrão, minha rotina. Som nenhum, suplicando-lhe, a ela, no íntimo, que aparecesse para mim. No mais profundo fundo das horas mortas da noite, até me cansar e desistir. Ou, é claro, até –
22. Dissolver em direção a M. 2 *segundos.*
23. *Dissolver em direção a* H. 2 *segundos.*
24. V: Pois se ela nunca tivesse aparecido, nem uma única vez, durante todo aquele tempo, teria eu, poderia eu ter continuado a suplicar, todo aquele tempo? Não

simplesmente teria desaparecido no meu minúsculo santuário e me ocupado de outra coisa, ou de nada, me ocupar de nada? Até que chegava a hora, com o raiar do dia, de sair de novo, tirava o roupão e o gorro, punha chapéu e sobretudo e saía de novo a caminhar pelas estradas.

25. *Dissolver para* S *vazio.* 2 *segundos.* H1, *de roupão e gorro, emerge da sombra norte, avança cinco passos e pára voltado para a câmera.* 2 *segundos. Vira à esquerda e avança cinco passos para desaparecer na sombra leste.* 2 *segundos. Emerge de chapéu e sobretudo da sombra leste, avança cinco passos e pára voltado para a sombra oeste.* 2 *segundos. Avança cinco passos para desaparecer na sombra oeste.* 2 *segundos.*

26. V: Certo.

27. Dissolver em direção a H. 5 *segundos.*

28. V: Vamos agora distinguir três casos. Um: Ela aparecia e –

29. *Dissolver em direção a* M. 2 *segundos.*

30. Dissolver em direção a H. 2 *segundos.*

31. V: quase no mesmo instante ia embora ... Dois: Ela aparecia e-

32. *Dissolver em direção a* M. 5 *segundos.*

33. V: ficava um pouco. 5 *segundos.* Com aquele olhar perdido que eu, em vida, tanto suplicava que voltasse para mim. 5 *segundos.*

34. *Dissolver em direção a* H. 2 *segundos.*

35. V: Três: Aparecia e –

36. *Dissolver em direção a* M. 5 *segundos.*

37. V: depois de um momento –

38. *Lábios de* M *se movem, pronunciando de forma inaudível:* '...nuvens... nuvens apenas ... no céu...' V, *murmurando em sincronia com os lábios:* '... apenas nuvens...' *Lábios imóveis. 5 segundos.*

39. V: Certo.

40. *Dissolver em direção a* H. 5 *segundos.*

41. V: Vamos repassar tudo de novo.

42. *Dissolver para* S *vazio.* 2 *segundos.* H1 *de chapéu e sobretudo emerge da sombra oeste, avança cinco passos e pára voltado para a sombra leste.* 2 *segundos. Avança cinco passos para desaparecer na sombra leste.* 2 *segundos. Emerge de roupão e gorro da sombra leste, avança cinco passos e pára voltado para a sombra oeste. 2 segundos. Vira-à-direita e avança cinco passos para desaparecer na sombra norte.* 2 *segundos.*

43. *Dissolver em direção a* H. 5 *segundos.*

44. *Dissolver em direção a* M. 2 *segundos.*

45. *Dissolver em direção a* H. 2 *segundos.*

46. *Dissolver em direção a* M. 5 *segundos.*

47. V: Olba para mim. 5 *segundos.*

48. *Dissolver em direção a* H. 5 *segundos.*

49. *Dissolver em direção a* M. 2 *segundos. Os lábios da mulher se movem, pronunciando de forma inaudível:* '... nuvens ... nuvens apenas ... no céu...' *V. murmurando em sincronia com os lábios* '... nuvens apenas...' *Lábios ficam imóveis.* 5 *segundos.*

50. V: Fala comigo. 5 *segundos.*

51. *Dissolver em direção a* H. 5 *segundos.*
52. V: Certo. Havia, é claro, um quarto caso, ou caso-zero, como eu gostava de dizer, de longe o mais comum, na proporção de novecentos e noventa e nove para um, ou novecentos e noventa e oito para dois, quando eu suplicava em vão, noite a dentro, no mais profundo fundo das horas mortas da noite, até cansar e desistir, e me ocupava de algo mais ... compensador, tal como ... tal como ... raízes cúbicas, por exemplo, ou de nada, ocupar-me de nada, aquela MINA de mim, até que vinha a hora, com o raiar do dia, de sair de novo, abandonar meu minúsculo santuário, tirar roupão e gorro, pôr chapéu e sobretudo, e sair de novo, para caminhar pelas estradas. *[Pausa.]* Estradas das vizinhanças.
53. *Dissolver para* S *vazio.* 2 *segundos.* H1 *de roupão e gorro emerge da sombra norte, avança cinco passos e pára voltado para a câmera.* 2 *segundos. Vira à esquerda e avança cinco passos para desaparecer na sombra leste.* 2 *segundos. Emerge de chapéu e sobretudo da sombra leste, avança cinco passos e pára voltado para a sombra oeste.* 2 *segundos. Avança cinco passos para desaparecer na sombra oeste.* 2 *segundos.*
54. V: Certo.
55. *Dissolver em direção a* H. 5 *segundos.*
56. *Dissolver em direção a* M. 5 *segundos.*
57. V: '... nuvens no céu apenas... quando o horizonte esmaece...
ou pio sonolento de pássaro ... entre sombras que se adensam ...' *5 segundos.*
58. *Dissolve para* H. 5 *segundos.*
59. *Escurecer progressivamente sobre* H.
60. *Escuridão.* 5 *segundos.*

Tradução de Maria Helena Kopschitz
com sugestões de Haroldo de Campos).

Samuel Beckett and Television

Célia Berettini

Abstract: *This article focuses on the plays and adaptation written for television by Beckett, having already explored radio and even cinema, in addition to his works for theatre and texts in prose. With his stated preference for visual language and his obsession with minimalism, nothing better than television; besides,* without words*, he was able to give an original treatment to subjects previously covered: unhappy love, time, death and loneliness, often through melancholic recollection. He was thus an inventor of "a totally new genre": "visual poems or without words", some with music, as Martin Esslin classified these small masterpieces.*[*]

The première of *Waiting for Godot*, (written between October 1948 and January 1949) in Paris in 1953, brought Beckett both applause and criticism from spectators who could not imagine the worldwide reputation that he would go on to achieve – one of the pillars of contemporary theatre and a landmark in the history of the theatre. He went on to consolidate his fame with other notable plays: *Endgame*, *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Happy Days*. Then at the beginning of the 1960s, his work entered a new phase.

Dedicating himself more and more to the performance of his plays, he became increasingly worried about his playwriting: as a result his work became more formalist, with a more visual and balanced measure of verbal language or, rather, of *images* and *words*; further, his works became more static, lyrical rather than dramatic.

The 1960s was the richest, most productive and varied period of Beckett's career, culminating with his Nobel Prize (1969), and included writing for the theatre and texts in prose. The latter, though short, were highly creative, because Beckett was not only a minimalist, but also fascinated by new communication media. In the 1950s he had already produced his radio masterpiece *All That Fall*, and he now further explored the medium with two radio plays in which *music* is a character that engages in a dialogue with other characters, rather than being merely background music – *Words and Music* (1961) and *Cascando* (1962). He became briefly involved in *cinema*, with a silent film featuring Buster Keaton, *Film* (1963-4), and a further première with *Eh Joe* (1966) in *television*, in which he was to continue working almost up to his death.

Radio, cinema, television – represented a new Beckett. Radio was a challenge for him, having always being concerned with the *image*. It is sufficient to mention the famous pantomimes of the 1950s, which are a kind of symbolic ballet, although without music, with their expressive synthesis of man's existence in a hostile, irrational universe, where nothing justifies his arrival, since he is already condemned to death: *Act Without Words I* and *II* (1957 and 1959). It is true that words and sounds, in general, can create the visual, paint an environment, but *television* can be more complete. Beckett became an adept.

His transition to TV was facilitated by his previous collaboration with the BBC in London. The directors of his radio plays had gone into the new medium and, without officially granting him the title of "director", they accepted his collaboration, allowing him to follow and control the creative process of the video. He worked not only in London, but also in Stuttgart (Süddeutscher Rundfunk), where he became a director of his own texts, with Jim Lewis as a collaborator. As always, he demanded the utmost precision, in all aspects – movement, light, and sound. As he himself admitted, working in televised plays satisfied his need to be able to control the place where the characters develop, as well as to be in charge of the lighting.

Television enabled him to realise his long-held aspiration of escaping from verbal language and from literature, since they seemed limited to him. His dissatisfaction with words can be traced back to a letter written in German to Axel Kaunt in 1936, in which he confesses:

> To write in conventional English is becoming more and more difficult for me, although it seems absurd. And, *more and more*, my own language seems like *a veil to me that needs to be torn, in order to reach things* (or nothing) that are beyond … Considering that we cannot eliminate language with one blow alone, *we must at least not neglect anything that can contribute to its discredit* (...) (my italics)[1]

This serves to explain Beckett's partiality to television and, above all, his last plays, *Quad I* and *II* and *Nacht und Träume*, which can be considered neither within the category of ballet nor that of mime plays, since they represent "a totally new genre: visual poems", according to Martin Esslin.[2] These plays are purely visual, or silent, poems, since, being *without words*, they present, in Esslin's words, "the condensation of the maximum experience in a graphic metaphor".

Beckett's work for television became ever more economical, concentrated and refined. In his first television play, *Eh Joe* (1966), a feminine voice is heard echoing in the central character's conscience, with a coincidence between the voice and the camera, which focalises on the protagonist (in all the plays, this is a man, although the woman is mentally present). However, in *Ghost Trio*, written nine years later, the voice is no longer an interior monologue, because the woman who emits it does not participate in the action, but is merely the presenter or master of ceremonies, always followed by the camera, welcoming the spectators and describing the place of action to them until the

protagonist appears. Afterwards, the image talks through him. If, in the previous work, there was no music, in this one it plays a relevant part: it is the artistic expression of the protagonist's emotional state.

Eh Joe lasts 35:33 minutes and has only one character, Joe, in his fifties, who is seen by the camera, in his room, at ease in his dressing gown; at the beginning he is sitting on the edge of his bed with his back to the camera. Then he becomes agitated, begins to open and close the window, the door, the wardrobe, to lock all the exits and spy under his bed, until he relaxes with his eyes closed. The camera that focuses on him, following him, shows that he opens his eyes on hearing a feminine voice – the voice of his conscience, even if confused with his current lover. In nine progressive movements, the camera comes closer and closer to Joe's face, while the voice tells him about the young girl he abandoned who, in desperation, committed suicide. Voice and camera persecute him, and his face progressively becomes larger until it takes up the whole screen. Camera and voice are inflexible; the voice brings him happy and desperate memories.

In a certain sense this play comes close to the silent *Film*, in which the protagonist tries to avoid the glances, to lock all the openings to preserve his *I*; but the difference is that the protagonist is only seen from the front; only for a moment at the end of *Eh Joe* is the protagonist seen from the front, as, from a certain point, the camera comes closer, showing the anguish of his thoughts. His thoughts are provoked by the voice, and registered by the camera, which functions as a "revealing character", giving him no respite. The growing tension of the man listening to the voice is visible. He is imprisoned. Since the image and the voice are rigorously complementary, both disappear together. Final darkness and silence take over.

Much more elaborate and complex is *Ghost Trio*, written in 1975 and staged in 1977, in Stuttgart, Germany, under the title *Geister Trio*. Initially it was called *Tryst*. It deals with a desired "meeting", expected by the protagonist, but which fails to take place. The person expected, the loved woman, fails to arrive for the meeting, as in *Waiting for Godot*, a fact that is also transmitted by a young messenger, here merely discerned at the door, who then leaves, having made an imperceptible movement with his head, without words.

The play is short – 31:30 minutes – and has a plot in three parts. In the first, a feminine voice describes and introduces the elements that make up the image. As a presenter, the voice welcomes the spectators (for example it receives them with the advice that they should not increase the volume of their apparatuses), ironically describes the place in which the action will take place, i.e., the typical bedroom of the Beckett protagonists: sombre and bare, with just a simple bed near the window. This part ends with the introduction of protagonist *S* (silhouette), seated, leaning forward and holding a tape-recorder playing Beethoven, which gives the title to the play: *Ghost Trio*. This recorder, however, will only become visible at the end. In the second part, the female voice/presenter introduces the protagonist's *actions*. He moves towards the door, then

to the window, to the bed, to the mirror and, again, to the door, believing that the person he is expecting has arrived. In the third part, the voice that introduced *the image* remains silent, preparing the development of the action: action with neither words nor *image*. The action is restricted to the movements of the protagonist, who opens the window, but only sees the falling rain, and walks towards the mirror, where, for the first time, his savage traces are seen, and to the arrival of the messenger with the sad news that the loved one is not coming, reintroducing the image of the old protagonist with the greyish hair, once more seated and waiting … It is the subject of the desired meeting and the frustrated wait, reminiscent of that in *Waiting for Godot*, is embellished by the second movement of Beethoven's Trio for Piano, Viola and Cello, op. 70 no. 1, known as the *Ghost Trio*, coming from the tape-recorder. The man then lifts his head and, in a close-up, once more reveals his broken-up face, worn out by the years and his suffering – it is the *final image*, in an effective association of vision and sound. The composition, one of Beckett's favourites, expresses the emotion of the old man, who adopts it unconsciously; it is in harmony with his longing *I*, waiting for she who is dead, who did not and will not come.

It is an inspired play of longing and of waiting in vain, economically expressed. It has been described as a "poem without words", which, curiously, as Martin Esslin points out, presents a verbal plot through the feminine voice, while the protagonist remains silent and "the piece is mimed", in an inversion of the Elizabethan theatre, in which the play was preceded by a story, this one, indeed, mimed.

In the same year, 1977, and in the same place, Beckett presented his play *Nur noch gewölkt*, the German translation of … *but the clouds* … (1976), just 15-16 minutes long. The play was later translated into French by Edith Fournier. The title comes from the last stanza of a long poem by William Butler Yeats, "The Tower" (1926), of which Beckett evokes the last seven lines and specifically quotes the last four:

> But the clouds of the sky
> When the horizon fades
> Or a bird's sleepy cry
> Among the deepening shades.

The previous play expressed the pain for the loved one's absence, and here Beckett works with the reciprocal part of the same emotion: the longing of the dead one, with the obsessive appeal for her impossible return dominating the melancholic climate. The technique adopted is similar to that of *Ghost Trio*: the voice verbally introduces the elements that constitute the *image*; immediately afterwards, the image wordlessly speaks for itself. There is also an introductory voice, a male voice that expresses itself in the first person – that of the old protagonist, *H*, who is the one who remembers. He sits with his back to the public on a footstool, in a dressing gown, invisible,

leaning over an invisible table. Then another man appears on the stage, *H1*, the one remembered. It is the recollection of an old man who has a double. This character, wearing a hat and overcoat, comes out of the darkness, which becomes lighter towards the centre; he advances, becomes immobile, leaves again for the darkness from whence he came; he returns, dressed differently now: in a dressing gown, like *H*, and repeats the movements, but in another direction, in time with the voice. He repeats the sequence, going forwards and backwards in the darkness, while *H* refers to his loved one, pleading for her presence. Finally a female *face* (only the face) appears. *H1*'s lips, synchronised with the voice of *H*, pronounce the lines of the poem almost inaudibly. The quotation is repeated, as are the movements of *H1* and the focussing, whether on *H* or the face (lips, eyes), ending the text with the same lines being spoken and repeated. The play ends in darkness and silence. When Beethoven's music is not heard, the play is embellished by Yeats's poem, which Beckett had re-read shortly prior to writing the text. According to James Knowlson[3], the play's original working title was *Poetry only love*.

Beckett's penultimate work for television, written in English in 1982 under the German title, *Nacht und Träume*, is extremely light in tone. Inspired by one of the last of Schubert's *Lieder* (Opus 43, no. 2, in B major) and associated with a poem by the Austrian Heinrich Josef von Collin, it is another authentic visual poem. It takes place in a sombre and empty space, dimly lit by night light coming through the window, from above – it is a typical Beckett set, sombre and unwelcoming. It is also characteristic of the author's whole trajectory, with its protagonist an old grey-haired man, seated with his hands on a table. He is the dreamer, simply named *A*, or he who has a dream, escaping from reality; he dreams *himself* – he is *B* who appears on an invisible podium, one and a half metres high.

At the beginning only the head and hands of *A* can be seen very clearly; and a man's voice is heard humming the *Lied*, a melody that will be heard again only at the end, with the text in German, now very clearly:

Kehre wieder, heilige Nacht
holde Träume, Kehre wider
(Holy Night, return again
Fair dreams, return again)

This beautiful melody, another of Beckett's favourites, opens and closes the play, as though in a soft musical frame. As a matter of fact, the entire play is all softness and delicacy, with non-static images moving tenderly.

In the dream, *A* sees *B* seated with his head between his hands, like himself and also lit up, though more faintly; he also sees female hands, without a body, that rest lightly on the head of *B*, and disappear when he tries to see who it is. At one moment it is the left hand (*L*), at another it is the right (*R*) that offers him a goblet, from which he

then drinks; the *L* then returns with a cloth to dry his forehead, also delicately. He makes an effort to see the invisible face and the hands rapidly withdraw. He leaves the palm of his right hand upturned, and the female *R* hand joins it. Looking down, he lifts his other hand and covers the two already united. He then leans his head down upon them, with the female *L* hand softly posing on his reclined head.

It is a delicate and ethereal game of hands, which may seem excessively sentimental to some, but, emphasised by the light, is of an undeniably sweet beauty. The image of the dream, which had been on the right side, moves to the centre and occupies the space completely, with a series of movements that are immediately repeated more slowly, before the camera returns to its initial point. The dream disappears; *A*, the dreamer disappears. The light dims. It is the end, with Schubert's sweet music, underlining the delicacy of the feelings, on Christmas night, a special night for those who believe in it: *Nacht und Träume – Heilige Nacht*. But for Beckett? It is well known that his religious upbringing was very severe and austere on his mother's side, although tempered by his father.

The following work was completely different: *Quad I – II* (1980), a short piece, only 14:58 minutes long, also produced by the Süddeutscher Rundfunk and transmitted by the RFA in 1981, with Beckett as director, once again aided by Jim Lewis. It is an enigmatic, harsh work, which yields to no delicacy or sentimentalism. There is no music, poetry, or words. There is only *image*, and the sounds from the steps of four actors, covered by long, white tunics with hoods that hide their faces. Always silent, they walk through a certain area, monotonously, slowly, following their own course, rhythmically, each one with different steps, never stopping nor trying to escape from the space in which they are (a square), avoiding the centre (danger zone). From there comes the title, *Quad*, an abbreviation of quadrilateral.

The routes – 1, 2, 3 and 4 – are carefully, mathematically, indicated with combinations, forming *solos*, *duos* and *trios*, without any collision between the actors and with no rest. The author shows the paths by means of a diagram, reproducing a star within a square, which can lead to peculiar hypotheses. Could it be a kind of mysterious ritual, with these strange hooded figures moving as if in a silent dance without ever touching the centre? Only their steps are heard because, in filming, Beckett eliminated the percussion that accompanied them. He also replaced the coloured tunics (each character originally wore a different colour) with white ones, with the intention of creating an aura of simplicity and sobriety. Might the characters be clergymen, or followers of a mysterious cult? Martin Esslin argued that the play was "an emblematic creation" to be deciphered by the public. The play is certainly mysterious, with its characters, identified not by letters but by numbers alone, walking ceaselessly in silence.

Jim Lewis, interviewed by Sandra Solov, supplies the key to the riddle: it is the visualisation of time; and the characters are prisoners of time, because the square is a prison-square, the "quadrature of the detention", according to Beckett himself. But, being a prisoner of time (and of the camera that focuses on the square), it can be said, is to be, in short, a prisoner of life – a prisoner condemned to life and to death – until

death. It is an impressive work, austere in its simplicity and purity of image, without words and without music. According to Beckett, the rhythmic sound of the steps, in a black and white video, is a means of reaching the essential.

I would like to turn now to *What Where*. Although this play was written for the theatre, it was subsequently adapted for television by Beckett himself and, like his other television work in Stuttgart, was a collaboration with Lewis.[4] Short, just 15:43 minutes long, it is a strange piece: although the title suggests interrogations, the play does not present the corresponding answers, and interrogations are constant throughout the script. Some critics argue that it is a political interrogation. Is it an attack on totalitarianism? One of its themes is certainly that of torture, which had previously been discussed by the author in a radio text of the 1960s and in the stage play *Catastrophe* (1982). It is a registration, or, better, denunciation, of torture and the mechanical routine of an interrogation. The mechanistic nature of the process is represented by the fact that the play's three characters, with their phonetically similar names, Bem, Bim, Bom, seem to be equivalent in everything and could be reduced to one.

They are very similar to each other, not only because of their sombre external appearance, with their long greyish hair and long greyish tunics, but also because of their answers to questions formulated by the relentless investigator, Bam. The answers are always the same, uttered in the middle of a light-dark space. The three characters parade, always in the same rhythm, before Bam, who is perpetually demanding and dissatisfied. Bam's voice is not emitted directly, but comes from a loudspeaker suspended at the right. The disembodied voice sets the scene, announcing the entrance and exit of each of the interrogated, and also speaks of the passing of time. Time goes by and nothing changes. At the beginning, spring; at the end, winter, announces the voice, which concludes the text with: "Understand whoever can", an ironical line that sounds like a challenge and allows for different interpretations.

Referring to Bam, who asks questions and then corrects himself, criticising himself because he is dissatisfied with them, Martha Feshenfeld argues that everything happens as if the play were "being tested", that is, being judged, assessed by the "severe look of a judge who is its creator"[5]. So why not judge *What Where* from an aesthetic, rather than a political point of view? Could Beckett be concerned with aesthetics? Some critics argue that the play could also be art material itself, because literary art implies that the right words be extracted from a work that Beckett himself defined as being "absolute torture", and the concluding line, "Understand whoever can", is a challenge to the spectator/reader: discover the meaning.

With the exception of *What Where*, which is an adaptation for television of a work written for the theatre, the plays written specially for television share a common theme: *love* evoked or the evocation of a past love. If *time* imprisons man, untiringly, without a break, until death, well illustrated in *Quad*, which is as dry, harsh and hard as its subject, in the other plays examined here, time is also almighty. Time rules life and consumes love, or the loved one, without compassion. It condemns man to live, to grow old and to die.

The protagonists of all the plays are men with greyish hair, who have lived their lives and seen the death of their loved one, and are now unhappy. Condemned to loneliness, to nostalgia, they plead in vain for the return of the past. They are condemned by time to live longer, and also to live an empty life, in which waiting and hope are frustrated. Only the memory remains, the evocation of love. When this is associated with remorse, as in the first play, *Eh Joe*, it results in the anguished self-confrontation of the guilty conscience.

It will be recalled that, in 1930, while still very young, Beckett wrote his award-winning essay, "Proust"[6], on *A la recherche du temps perdu*, which is itself based on the negation of death and is considered to be a monument erected against the erosion of time. However, Beckett saw it as a pile of ruins or the victory of destruction, of death, because time can never be found again. Beckett's interpretation thus inverts the Proustian viewpoint: to evoke the dead past is not to resuscitate it. Samuel Beckett, television author, is, above all, a poet, a sensitive poet-painter who uses images in movement, completely abandoning, in certain plays, the articulate word. Creator of "visual poems", he produced a "new genre" that also deserves to be commemorated for its lyricism.

Notes

* Text revised by Peter James Harris (UNESP – State University of São Paulo)

1 Beckett sent the now-famous letter to Axel Kaunt, whom he met during a trip to Germany, in 1936. It is an important document in which he outlines his aesthetic programme at a very early stage in his writing career (In *Disjecta – Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*, edited by Ruby Cohn, 1984. 19-33).

2 M. Esslin focuses on Beckett's television plays, insisting on the novelty of his creation: "a totally new genre" (In *Revue d'Esthétique – Samuel Beckett*, 1986. 391-404).

3 J. Knowlson, important biographer of Samuel Beckett, supplies much information on his work (*Damned to Fame. The Life of Samuel Beckett*, 1997. 634).

4 J. Lewis, interviewed, comments on his work with Beckett during many stage productions, being very familiar both with the author's intentions and his demands. ("Beckett et la caméra". In *Revue d'Esthétique – Samuel Beckett*, 1986. 371-379)

5 Based on the political aspect of the work, M. Feshenfeld gives a very original, aesthetic interpretation. Form was, in fact, a concern for Beckett throughout his career.

6 Beckett wrote many works in which *time* and *evocation* are fundamentally important. The following radio plays are mentioned: *Embers* (1959), *Cascando* (1964), the televised work *Eh Joe* (1966) and those for the theatre, such as *Krapp'ss Last Tape* (1958) and *Not I* (1972), among others.

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Concrete, Virtual and Imaginary Space: Beckett's Stage Directions

Luiz Fernando Ramos

Abstract: *Samuel Beckett has made a peculiar use of stage directions in his theatre. Since the first plays, as* Waiting for Godot*, they became essential tools in order to establish a precise and restricted way of staging and guaranteeing the stage physicality he must have had in mind. After the sixties Beckett started to stage his own plays and his writing became yet more centered in rigorous stage directions. This article aims to describe, through the use he makes of stage directions, his evolution from being just a dramatist, in the fifties, till becoming a complete artist of the theatre in the eighties. In doing that intends to prove the utility of looking for stage directions in drama analysis, and to show how, from this point of view, Beckett's theatre gets close of the work of artists commonly viewed as radically anti-theatrical, as is the case of Robert Wilson.*

Despite being a phenomenon of the forties, the theatre of Samuel Beckett reaches the end of the twentieth century still enigmatic, defying labels. Irrespective of the difficulties encountered when classifying his theatrical work, Beckett can be seen as a post-modern dramatist as already argued. (Pavis 48-74) The aim here is to investigate a specific feature of Beckett's theatricality: the role of the stage directions in the framing of his theatre. In doing that, more than attempting to reinforce Beckett's postmodernist characteristics, I intend to focus on what seems to be a key to understanding his dramaturgy not just as a literary work but as an intrinsically theatrical matter. Through an analysis and several conclusions related to stage directions, it is possible to link Beckett with artists apparently distant from him as, for example, Robert Wilson.

Are stage directions relevant to theatrical analysis? Theatre researchers have raised objections to this hypothesis. My first step will be to reply to their arguments and to argue that the examination of stage directions, granting ability to inform about the intrinsic theatricality of the dramatic text, can reveal a textual model where one finds a personal style of dealing with the stage physicality.

Would the assumption that the analysis of stage directions is only literary, entail the exclusion of a possible relationship between the text – which deals with either a future or a past scene – and the physical scene, that is, the actual realisation? Would it be

possible to say that the stage direction text will, in no way, carry back to the play projected by it? Jean Alter believes so. When approaching the question through the literary prism, he discards the stage direction as a proper subject of theatrical critical discourse.(Alter 163-4) To him; the idea of an imaginary play offers no stable referents upon which a discussion could be held. The operator's projection of the virtuality of a concrete scene is so complex – involving so many variants – that it becomes arbitrary, in a kind of visualisation as subjective as a dream. This virtual play has no external referents allowing for an agreement on its existence to be reached. According to Alter the critical discourse should stick to literary referents – the plot –, as the theatrical referent would necessarily become literary when formulated in writing. Therefore, the only way of discussing a dramatic text would be to assume a literary condition, avoiding the uncertain virtuality and sticking to fiction borders, which avoid excessive subjective wanderings.

Against this one may argue that, in the first place, the assumption that stage directions are to be inexorably prisoners of a "literary fiction" is debatable. It is true that, generally, stage directions exist only as literature and that the literary form is the condition of their existence. On the other hand, this does not imply that this literary form is the exclusive expression of a story to which the operators should revert whenever they attempt to guarantee a consistent interpretation of the presented referents. Besides the fiction, to which they undeniably serve, and, many times, have to submit to, stage directions also refer to another dimension. This other non-literary aspect is connected to the physicality and the three-dimensional body of the stage. As an imaginary anticipation of a future concrete scene, stage directions are somewhat independent from the fiction, that is, the story to be told. Therefore, it is misleading to reduce stage directions to the condition of a merely fictional support, and to ignore their other dimension: the one of a narrative related to the stage, which, at first, does not seem to come to terms with the plot. Actually, in extreme cases such as in Beckett's dramaturgy – where even fictional development is threatened – neither dialogues nor stage directions work towards a story. Therefore, when performing *Waiting for Godot*, there is no need to define a story that will combine dialogues and stage directions under a steady referent. As there is no certainty whether a story exists or whether the existing story is an uncertain one, what can be done is to disregard the fictional indicators. The story aid, adopted by a reader trying to make sense out of it, would be unnecessary for those worried exclusively about the material aspects of the performance – such as co-ordinating entries and exits from the stage, or considering the expected number of characters and the number of available actors. In this case, for this hypothetical and not very sophisticated director, the only unessential thing would be the subject of dialogues and of the story that Beckett might have been trying to tell. This is an example that indicates, in a very simple way, the meaning of an independent sphere, dealing with the physicality of the scene. It also suggests an argument contrary to Alter's thought. He sustains that *Waiting for Godot* is a rather theatrical play, which

has always been performed in more or less similar ways thanks to the power of fiction, that compensates for the generality of stage directions.(Alter 1987, 163-4) Actually, it seems to be just the opposite. As it will be argued, Beckett's stage directions exact great precision – they represent an essential tool for the stage articulation. Therefore, performances of *Waiting for Godot* are very much alike, not because the absence of consistent stage referents has forced directors to refer back to literary fiction, but thanks to Beckett's stage directions. The author managed to build a text which work on the stage like a precise mechanism and creates, through stage directions, some safeguards to avoid substantial changes of the stage physicality he must have had in mind. Instead of following the story to carry out the staging task, directors of *Waiting for Godot* followed stage directions, in order to reach a safe haven and in order to tell some kind of story. As a matter of fact, stage directions are a more concrete reference than any story. Their input on the literary ground is a physical and three-dimensional aspect of the scene. As a consequence, stage directions organise the performance on the imaginary level, as well as safeguarding the consistence of the play as a work of fiction. The central point here is to introduce stage directions in this theoretical debate, both as indicative of certain stage physicality and as a reflection of a specific poetics.

Beckett's Stage Directions

The fruitfulness of analysing dramatic texts by the use of stage directions is confirmed by the dramaturgy of Samuel Beckett. Actually, stage directions reflect, much more than the dialogues involved, the theatrical project of this author and his specific procedures towards stage physicality. If it is true that Beckett, somehow, has a distinct theatricality, his stage poetics is revealed by his stage directions. They are the mirror of the writer's evolution from a dramatist to director, as well as the integration of both functions in his work as an author with a personal stage language. Since *Eleutheria* his first play, to *Catastrophe*, one of the last ones, Beckett's dramaturgy constantly uncovers the action mechanism of drama. Characters are revealed as part of a machinery and the finality of their actions should there be one, is to make this revelation real. It is as if his plays, and their subsequent performances, worked like an inverted clock, which instead of showing the hours on the face would show the small cogs at the back. The hypothesis here is that in this inversion – which creates an identity and allows us to talk of a Beckettian style or a new paradigm of theatricality – stage directions play a fundamental role. They do not only set up and operate the mechanism stated by this inversion, but also guarantee and perpetuate the same inversion. In fact, stage directions in Beckett will be as important for the interpretation the spectator is to make of the performance – as long as they are actually carried out – as to the interpretation the reader is to make of the play as a dramatic literary piece, on the pages of a book. Beckett establishes a physical occupation of the stage, and the operator of those instructions has, at any rate, to consider at least if the fictional consistence of the play is not to be completely lost. There is such

a control of the stage indications of changes in the real scenes that disobeying them would entail modifying or omitting the speeches of the characters. When compared to the role that stage directions have on the literary level – where they are unarguably needed for fictional articulation – we realise that they are indispensable for the stage formalisation of this fiction. When, for example, the direction of the movements of characters on stage is defined by the stage direction, this implies a foreseen design by the author, sliding back to a concrete situation, to a physical and significant presence of characters proceeding either one way or the other. While for most authors such an indication – the direction towards which characters move – is truly secondary, in Beckett it is vital. Admittedly, there is an infinite variety of ways of executing it; but should this not be carried out, it would not only mean a betrayal of, but also a complete alteration of the course of the dramatic action: "Estragon– Allons-y (Ils ne bougent pas)". (Beckett 1952, 134)

One of the characteristics of this scene projected by Beckett is, precisely, to have an essentially dramatic function related to the detailed prescription for movements of characters. In spite of the endless possibilities for the execution of the stage directions on each performance, they will always be as crucial to the fulfilment of his dramaturgy as dialogue speeches. The initial stage direction of *Waiting for Godot* says only: "Route à la campagne, avec arbre. Soir". These indications are open enough to have allowed all the variety of interpretations present in hundreds of versions made of the original text. The most defined element, suggesting in a more concrete way a physical occupation of space, is undoubtedly that of the tree. However, searching among the pictures of several of the executed performances, we have noticed that the tree has assumed quite different formats in each performance. If the referent is the tree from Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* stage directions, the significant must then be a prisoner of the performance limitations. The meaning, on the other hand, will be the final sum, apprehended by the audience at one specific performance. In contrast to this intrinsic referential non-determination of the set stage directions, Beckett develops detailed specifications of the movements of the characters on the physical space of the stage. Earlier, on the initial stage direction, when describing Estragon's attitude towards the boot he cannot take off, a detailed and non-replaceable sequence of actions becomes evident. The movements of, specially, Estragon and Vladimir are actions that, despite varying enormously from performance to performance and depending on the actors who carry them out, have a minimum outline and are fundamental to the materialisation of the action curve proposed by the writer.

> Un Cri terrible retentit, tout proche. Estragon lâche la carotte. Ils se figent, puis se précipitent vers la coulisse. Estragon s'árrête à mi-chemin, retourne sur ses pas, ramasse la carotte, la fourre dans sa poche, s'elance vers Vladimir qui l'attend, s'arrêtte à nouveau, retourne sur ses pas, ramasse sa chaussure, puis se chausse, puis court rejoindre Vladimir. Enlacés, la tête dans les épaules, se détournant de la menace, ils attendent. (Ibid. 28)

Just before the famous monologue of Lucky, Beckett enumerates four distinct situations, where the other characters, present on the scene, – Estragon, Vladimir and Pozzo – take a series of attitudes to set in motion forming a trajectory of moods. As in the plot of a mimodrama, they leave a large amount of definitions to be made by the actors and/or directors who perform them. But this undeniable elasticity of indications does not mean that the eventual generators of the physicality of this drama are freed from unrelentingly having to follow the chain of action. Should this not be the case, these generators would face the risk of not performing Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. Stage directions become quite as crucial to the plot's course as the spoken text. An alteration of the subsequent speech of Lucky wouldn't affect the plot as much as a change in the physical actions of the three listeners, indicated in four different moments, would.

> (I) Attention soutenue d'Estragon ET Vladimir. Accablement et dégout de Pozzo. (2) Premiers murmures d/Estragon et Vladimir. Souffrances accrues de Pozzo. (3) Estragon et Vladimir se calment reprennent l'écoute. Pozzo s'agite de plus en plus, fait entendre des gémissements. (4) Exclamations de Vladimir et Estragon. Pozzo se lève d/un bond, tire sur la corde. Tous crient. Lucky tire sur la corde, trébuche, hurle, tous se jettent sur Lucky qui se débat, hurle son texte. (Ibid. 59-61)

The climax of this sequence is indicated, just after Pozzo makes a last attempt to interrupt Lucky with the utterance "his hat!" in the stage directions "Vladimir seizes Lucky's hat. Silence of Lucky. He falls. Silence. Panting of the Victors." In the middle of a desert of references it is natural that the physical actions performed by Vladimir and Estragon should become vital to the continuity of the drama, so that it can go on being unfolded. From *Waiting for Godot* onwards the ambiguity and non-determination of plots only grew, while physical actions and the stage directions outlining them became more and more well defined. A good example of this development is the play written soon after *Happy Days*, in the end of 1962, called *Play.*

The work reveals already in its title – suggesting a substantially concrete theatre – but mostly by its treatment of light, the beginning of a new phase of Beckett's experimentation on stage space. In *Play* Beckett renders the light effects into a contrasting element – as important or even more so than speeches. Characters, heads coming out of ballot boxes, in a variation of the suppression theme presented in *Happy Days,* are crucially dependent for their very existence on a spot light focus that is at least as much important as their physical presence and speeches. It is the light that both authorises them to speak and suppresses their speech. Along the play, eight blackouts create five-minute breaks that divide the performance into independent parts or mechanisms. The coordination of the entire set of appearances and disappearances is operated through stage directions. Those, in *Play*, definitely become the axis of dramaturgy for the potential director. Beckett makes himself very clear in all instructions he gives at several stage direction levels. The initial stage direction presents basic information on set, lights and

how the initial and simultaneous speeches of the three ballot box– characters (w1, w2, and w3) are introduced. The stage direction inserted in speeches determines the directions of the spotlights and, in that way, defines the syntax of the verbal discourse. Finally, there are independent notes bringing additional clarifications. Three of them, referring to the ballot boxes, lights and initial choir, refer back to the initial stage direction. The fourth extra explanation refers to the solicited repetition at the end of the text.

> The repeat may be an exact replica of first statement or it may present an element of variation. In other words, the light may operate the second time exactly as it did the first (exact replica) or it may try a different method (variation). The London production (and in a lesser degree the Paris production) opted for the variation with the following deviations from first statement... (Beckett 1986, 320)

There follows a detailed enumeration of modifications made during the London production, where the highlights were the specification of light intensity at eight different moments. This explanatory note of *Play* reveals the emergence of Beckett as a director who writes after the production, analysing the chosen alternative and incorporating this contribution to the original text. At the same time, we can still find a certain hesitation of the dramatist in relation to revisions other directors might make. This leads him to indicate the repetitions half way through the apparition of the last choir, as detailed on this note. Beckett might have imagined that there was a large possibility of variations. This made him consider even the reference to the London production, the first one, as only one possibility among several others. On the other hand, the stage direction gives him an almost complete control over both pace and progression. Thus, there is not a large number of possible variations in relation to light, neither are there any to determine when lights should be directed on speech and when they shouldn't. Moreover, the understanding of what was being said by the heads in the ballot boxes did not matter any longer. To the discontent of actors and producers, Beckett insisted on actors speaking fast enough for speeches to become incomprehensible, articulating only sound rhythm.

A further example worth mentioning is *Catastrophe*. Included among the plays of Beckett"s final phase, it appears to conclude a cycle started by *Eleuthéria.*[1] Besides the name, which derives from the Greek, *Catastrophe* was also, just like *Eleuthéria*, written in French. In addition, the themes of both plays are explicit theatrical creations. There are visible differences as well, and these reveal changes brought on by thirty-five years of experience of theatrical practice. At this point, Beckett was fully aware, when writing a scene, of the need to determine the movement of each actor, as well as the actor's speech, so that the performance could be effected as he expected it to be. In this sense, while the stage directions in *Eleuthéria* indicate some sort of flexibility, in *Catastrophe* they are almost unyielding, revealing themselves as indispensable, not only in terms of understanding the plot, but also for the realisation of the performance. Already

in the very first stage direction, an inevitable link comes up. Stage direction had become by then a definite mark of Beckett 's dramaturgy.

> Rehearsal. Final touches to the last scene. Bare stage. A and L have just set the lighting. D has just arrived. D in an armchair downstairs audience left. Fur coat. Fur toque to match. Age and physique unimportant. A standing beside him. White overall. Bare head. Pencil behind one ear. Age and physique unimportant. P midstage standing on a black block 18 inches high. Black wide-brimmed hat. Black dressing-gown to ankles. Barefoot. Head bowed. Hand in pockets. Age and physique unimportant. D and A contemplate P. Long pause. (Beckett 1986, 457)

The director, who makes the last arrangements, is a character that is way off the *Eleuthéria* characters. The latter, even when they were involved in a theatrical process (a prompter, a member of the audience), were engulfed under the fiction of the sad destiny of Victor Krap, the youngster who renounces action. The *Catastrophe* director character is cold-blooded, manipulative and sculpts a scene, a *tableau*. He stands at a distance from the fictional dimension and from anything beyond the stage physicality wherein he was built. There is no anguish – his assistant excepted – about performing a scene where the character does nothing and does not show his face. The P character is a child of Victor Krap who, instead of being led to action, finds himself submitted to the torture of stillness and inaction. He is designed as an element of the director's set wanting to express something – "Here is our catastrophe"– although, as a character he is quite plain. He does not even represent a theatre mechanism, as the *Eleuthéria* characters did. He only serves as a support for the scenic discourse of the director. Just as in Beckett's first play, where he somehow managed to get even with the dramaturgy tradition, in *Catastrophe* he is getting even with the tradition of modern direction as a dominating voice in the theatre. He also evens up to his own fifteen year long director condition. Stage directions went through a process of auto-sophistication as a control and operational instrument, since he began to write with the performance – and with no intermediaries – in mind. As the example of Beckett shows, by way of stage direction one can not only read the author's distanced comment on the plot, but, also, these directions become defining elements of the plot.

> "[Pause. Distant storm of applause. P raises his head, fixes the audience. The applause falters dies. Long pause, Fade out of light on face]" (Ibid. 461)

Catastrophe also comments, ironically, on the inglorious condition that stage direction faces in the theatre. On seven occasions the play insists upon the same stage direction – "she takes out pad, takes pencil, notes" – always coming after the assistant speech – "I make a note". When speaking of this specific director, the one who writes down in the director's notebook is the assistant. As a synthesis of secretary and plotter, she submits to the tyranny of the director, who dictates stage specifications so she can

transform them into stage directions. Another stage direction – "A at a lost, Irritably." – is repeated four times during the play every time that, after an orientation from D about what should be altered in P, A fretfully addresses P. If considered as pause indications, and thus as something which have already appeared several times in his first plays, these recurrent instructions for actual performance once again confirm Beckett's view of stage direction. To the same extent as the written dialogues, they have, for him, a structural importance upon the dramatic mode he builds.

Conclusion

As a conclusion to our observations about stage directions in Beckett's dramaturgy, it is worth emphasising his transformation process, from dramatist to director. Beckett's dramaturgy suggests a rare rupture of the realistic dramatic representation paradigm, not only when he confronts the dramatic tradition that preceded him but also in terms of contemporary theatre trends that arise after him. According to Aristotle, the art of the dramatic poet relies upon a specific *tekne* which differs from the art of the stage designer or the art that the "mask maker" relies on. (Halliwell 39) Beckett brings forth, in his creative practice as a dramatic author, an inversion in terms of the *tekne* which is usually credited to the dramatist, that is, the fashioning of a plot. The author approximates his *tekne to* the one identified with the attributions of the mask maker: taking care of the visual aspects of the drama, among which the performance, its "least important" element according to Aristotle, is to be found. Beckett already writes from a new point of view, the mask maker's, yet still uses words, which are the traditional instruments of a dramatist. Symbolists trends at the beginning of the century, which are represented, for instance, in Gordon Craig's work, put forward a view of the theatre as an autonomous art, with its own laws for the construction of its physicality. In order to accomplish that the word was cast out. As opposed to these trends, Beckett reaches this very dimension, alternatively, either through the word in the most obvious way – creating the scene through speeches, always accompanied by precise indications of the actors movements and the pace – or in a broader and more visual level of observation – only and exclusively by means of the stage directions, where there are no longer any speeches. In both cases his theatre is no longer close to the logos dimension, but act on the audience only as physis: through visuality and other senses which are far from the rational understanding level. Unlike Brecht, who considers himself as an anti-Aristotelian – though he reproduces exactly the Aristotelian idea that theatre is effective only when rationally understood – Beckett follows his own path as a director. He relies on stage directions to produce a theatre where its realisation goes beyond the rational level of comprehension, presenting itself as a special poem or as a grammar of the physical elements on stage. If, in the same measure as in his literature, the central theme of Beckett's theatre can be seen as the doubt about whether or not it is possible to represent reality, the way his theatre is organised on the stage discards logical reasoning, as well as the assumptions of a rationality, intrinsic to the classic concept of drama. Also, Beckett's

theatre shows itself as a rough fabric – sculptural and pictorial – when it expresses itself through movement, total paralysis, or even silence, giving to each of these elements a three-dimensional shape. These attributes of the last Beckett, now explicitly a director and a complete theatre man – a creator who, like his illustrious predecessors, does not distinguish between the functions of writing texts on papers and the ones of playing scenes on stage – placed him surprisingly near to creators who, at a first view, would not be seen as standing close to him, like Robert Wilson for instance. The orientation of Wilson's work places theatre quite far away from the fable axis, radically inverting the Aristotelian perspective. Even when he uses dramatic literature, Wilson does that in a random and non-hierarchical way. Beckett is mainly supported by dramatic literature, but the drama conceived by him is built in the physical dimension of the stage, in a quite similar way to Wilson's performances. The main difference refers to the codes used on stage dimensions. In Wilson's case, a mask maker above all, the codes are blueprints and drawings, ground plans and drafts, which visually anticipate a foreseen scene, as yet to be realised. In Beckett, mainly the Beckett of the latter years, this occurs through the detailed and precise description of movements and actions – based on stage direction verbal indications – which also describe an imaginary scene.

The writing, on contemporary theatre has increasingly been carried out by the mask maker, who takes over the place of the dramatic poet as a writer of stage directions. He operates both the writing of scenes (stage performances) and the literary writing (precedent, simultaneous or posterior to performances). It does not matter if the authors of these contemporary works are dramatists or directors. The point is that the model set to the dramatic poet by Aristotle, although still working for fiction in cinema, television or conventional theatre, no longer satisfies some creators, who search for a plastic and pictorial eloquence. As far as these new dramatists are concerned, directions appear as an intermediate shape between two models: the drama that is no longer satisfying for the kind of theatre one would wish to produce, and the new writing mode for the theatre yet to appear.

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Beckett in the States: Notes on the Reception (1950s-1960s)

Maria Sílvia Betti

Abstract: *This article is divided in two parts: the first one briefly introduces and discusses reviews of the premiere of Beckett's Waiting for Godot in the United States in 1956, focusing on articles by Walter Kerr, Brooks Atkinson and Kenneth Rexroth for The New Republic, The New York Times and The Nation, respectively. The second one mentions the 1960 New York double bill of Beckett's Krapp's Last Tape and Edward Albee's The Zoo Story at the Provincetown Playhouse and the 1962 off off Broadway Cherry Lane Theater series of performances organized by Barr and Wilder as two crucially important events for the inception of Beckett's work as a point of reference for a whole generation of young dramatists in the U.S.*

Waiting for Godot was first produced in the United States in Miami, in 1955. The American director Alan Schneider had been hired to direct the premiere, and traveled to Paris to meet Beckett, and discuss preproduction questions.

Beckett answered Schneider's queries laconically, but Schneider was to dedicate most of his career to Beckett's theater henceforth. For the premiere, the cast was formed by experienced popular clowns, Bert Lahr and Tom Ewell. In spite of this, and in spite of Schneider's fidelity to the playwright, the production was not commercially successful, and Beckett assumed the responsibility for the fiasco.[1]

Besides *Waiting for Godot*, Schneider premiered other plays by Beckett in the United States later. He and Beckett exchanged five hundred letters over a period of twenty years (1955-1984), which came to an end only with Schneider's death, run down while crossing a street to mail a letter to the playwright.[2]

In 1956 the play opened in New York. Writing for the "New Republic", Eric Bentley, editor and former professor of literature, observed that, besides the critic Walter Kerr's "intellectual anti-intellectualism", two other less objectionable attitudes defined themselves in newspaper reviews of the production of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* in the United States: the ones of "non intellectual pro-intellectualism", and of "non-intellectual anti-intellectualism". In Bentley's opinion, the production benefited as much from the former as it suffered from the latter. (Federman iii)

The response of American critics and of the U.S. press to the first productions of Beckett's plays is extremely representative of America's reaction not only to the Irish playwright's works but also to the radical changes observed in theater in the second half of the XX century.

What Bentley classified as "intellectual anti-intellectualism" in Walter Kerr's positions about "Waiting for Godot" can be illustrated through Kerr's opinion about criticism in general. Writing for the "New York Tribune" on the occasion the play opened, he expressed the idea that criticism required *"constant communion with the man of non-distinction"*, whereas *"insight of genius"* was unnecessary. (Ibid. 104) While concerned with the obfuscation of American experience of Beckett's play, Kerr also observed that the problem presented in the author's work was the one of *"nausea as a playwright's conscious attitude to life"*. (loc. cit.)

Kerr's matter-of-fact view of theater as the realm of amusement clearly indicated that he believed a deeper understanding of the play was expected to be remote and quite unlikely from the part of American audiences in general:

> Though it is permissible to be nauseated by existence, and even to say so, it seems doubtful whether one should expect to be paid for saying so, at any rate by a crowd of people in search of an amusing evening. (loc. cit.)

Kerr did not think of theater as prone to philosophical reflection, but rather to the search of entertainment on a commercially based initiative. He also believed the tendency he branded as "American optimism" was strong enough to make "American nausea" a little more remote or "underground". (op. cit.) The implied notion of a typically American disposition, which is clearly an ideological stereotype, served as background to these considerations on the play. This in itself serves as an illustration of what Bentley termed as the critic's *"intellectual anti-intellectualism"*. Kerr's point is based on a parallel between this presumed American nature and the implicit idea of what could be called European nihilism or skepticism.:

> American optimism drives American nausea a little more deeply underground: that is the difference between America and Europe. (op. cit. 105)

Considering humor as "*victory over nausea"*, as in Nietzsche's definition, Kerr added that it would be hard *"to stage the victory"* without suggesting *"the identity and character of the foe"*. (loc. cit.) This specific observation is directly re

lated with Kerr's resistance in fully accepting what he called the *"undramatic"* structure of the play: In this respect, his article is definitely a document of the prevalence of drama as the supreme theater form from the point of view of critics in general:

> Like many modern plays, *Waiting for Godot* is undramatic but highly theatrical. Essential to drama, surely, is not merely situation but situation in movement,

> even in beautifully shaped movement. A curve is the most natural symbol for a dramatic action, while, as Aristotle said, beginning, middle, and end are three of its necessary features. Deliberately anti-dramatic, Beckett's play has a shape of a non-dramatic sort; two strips of action are laid side by side like railway tracks. (loc. cit.)

It is Kerr's final assessment of the play, however, that gives the clearest evidence of his resistance against whatever could possibly break away or diverge from the standards of drama:

> Beckett's finest achievement is to have made the chief relationships, which are many, so concrete that abstract interpretations are wholly relegated to the theater lobby. (loc. cit.)

Eleven years later, in 1967, Kerr revised his own "New Republic" review, and rephrased his previous reading of the play:

> My 'New Republic' review of eleven years ago records my first impressions of 'Godot.' 'No doubt, ' I wrote, 'there are meanings that will disengage themselves in time, as one lives with'such a work. And, in fact, with time I ceased to believe that the play was 'undramatic' and only 'theatrical, and I set down my later belief-that 'Godot' is truly dramatic-in my book *The Life of the Drama* (New York: Atheneum, 1964, pp. 99-101 and 348-351). […….] My early reading of Beckett missed out an essential element both dramatic and moral. I might even blame the error, in part, on Beckett himself, in that his English title does not translate the much more apt French one: 'En attendant Godot, 'which means 'while waiting for Godot.' The subject is not that of pure waiting. It is: what happens with certain human beings while waiting. (op. cit. 9)

There is actually no reconsideration of his previous analysis, as the excerpt above illustrates: Kerr shows no change of his prior opinion on the "undramatic" nature of the play. On the contrary: he expresses a diehard insistence on what he claimed to be the dramatic nature disguised by Beckett's supposedly faulty translation of the original French title into English. What really mattered in the play, for Kerr, was not the waiting, but the sequence of facts that took place while the characters waited.

The critic's attachment to the form of drama is not the result of Kerr's merely individual obsession, but rather an example of the strongly institutionalized use American critics made of the dramatic form as an alleged pattern for artistic excellence in playwrighting.

Another important name that expressed his views on Beckett's "Waiting for Godot" was "The New York Times" powerful Brooks Atkinson. Feared and respected for the resonance of his opinions, Atkinson authored a review, published on April 20, 1956, that could be categorized as belonging to the tendency of "non-intellectual anti-

intellectualism", in Eric Bentley's terms. Even expressing a generally positive reception of the play, Atkinson's tone was remarkably evasive:

> *"Don't expect this column to explain Samuel Beckett's* Waiting for Godot*, which was acted at the John Golden last evening. It is a mystery wrapped in an enigma.* But you can expect witness to the strange power this drama has to convey the impression of some melancholy truths about the hopeless destiny of the human race."[3]

The fact that Atkinson calls Beckett's play a "drama" corroborates the point above about the institutionalizing of the dramatic form. Atkinson's vague terms referring to the "hopeless destiny of the human race" draw on stereotype. His tone even suggests a certain exasperation, expressed in his formulaic identification of the literary sources:

> Since *Waiting for Godot* has no simple meaning, one seizes on Mr. Beckett's experience of two worlds to account for his style and point of view. The point of view suggests Sartre – bleak, dark, disgusted. The style suggests Joyce—pungent and fabulous. Put the two together and you have some notion of Mr. Beckett's acrid cartoon of the story of mankind. (loc. cit.)

Atkinson's basic idea is that theater audiences are drawn not by the search for amusement, but by the search for a meaning. In his attempt to produce clarification, he precipitates the interpretation through the use of a rather hasty summary of the play:

> Literally, the play consists of four raffish characters, an innocent boy who twice arrives with a message from Godot, a naked tree, a mound or two of earth and a sky. Two of the characters are waiting for Godot, who never arrives. Two of them consist of a flamboyant lord of the earth and a broken slave whimpering and staggering at the end of a rope. (loc. cit.)

As Kerr, Atkinson also regarded drama as the supreme form in theater, and meaning as the chief element for the discussion. In more than one part of the review he credited the interest and effectiveness of the production to the work of actors and director, which served, in his opinion, as a form of compensation for the fact the play was *"puzzling"* and *"uneventful"*:

> Although the drama is puzzling, the director and the actors play it as though they understand every line of it.
> [……]
> Although *Waiting for Godot* is an uneventful, maundering, loquacious drama, Mr. Lahr is an actor in the pantomime tradition who has a thousand ways to move and a hundred ways to grimace in order to make the story interesting and theatrical, and touching, too. His long experience as a bawling mountebank has

> equipped Mr. Lahr to represent eloquently the tragic comedy of one of the lost souls of the earth. (loc. cit.)

Brooks Atkinson's confidence in the power exercised in his own critical militancy can be detected in the closing of the review, where he paternalistically pronounces himself summarizing his point of view on Beckett's play:

> Although *Waiting for Godot* is a "puzzlement," as the King of Siam would express it, Mr. Beckett is no charlatan. He has strong feelings about the degradation of mankind, and he has given vent to them copiously. "Waiting for Godot" is all feeling. Perhaps that is why it is puzzling and convincing at the same time. Theatre goers can rail at it, but they cannot ignore it. For Mr. Beckett is a valid writer. (loc. cit.)

Drastically different are the tone and spirit of the review published by the American poet, translator and critical essayist Kenneth Rexroth in "The Nation" in 1957. Two central aspects singled out Rexroth from the majority of other critics at that moment: the first one is the fact that he had already watched the Roger Blin's original production at the Théatre Babylone in Paris several years before; and the second is that, corroborating the opinion credited to the American playwright Tennessee Williams, Rexroth believed *Waiting for Godot* was the greatest play since Pirandello's "Six characters in search of an author".

Regarded as the chief figure of the San Francisco literary Renaissance, Rexroth expressed a critical view of the European canon in literature, and was one of the few to point out Beckett's significance for the indictment of the commercially-oriented civilization under capitalism:

> Beckett is so significant, or so great, because he has said the final word to date in the long indictment of industrial and commercial civilization which began with Blake, Sade, Hölderlin, Baudelaire, and has continued to our day with Lawrence, Céline, Miller, and whose most forthright recent voices have been Artaud and Genet.[4]

Another important aspect that distinguished Rexroth from other critics was his awareness of historical processes in general, and more specifically of the role of culture in the capitalist era:

> Now this is not only the mainstream of what the squares call Western European culture – by which they mean the culture of the capitalist era – it is really all the stream there is. Anything else, however gaudy in its day, has proved to be beneath the contempt of history. This is a singular phenomenon. There has been no other civilization in history whose culture-bearers never had a good word to say for it. Sam Beckett – an Irishman who has lived in France and written in French

(his books are translated for publication in English) most of his adult life – raises the issue of what is wrong with us with particular violence because his indictment is not only the most thoroughgoing but also the sanest. (loc. cit.)

For Rexroth one of the most remarkable things about the reception of Beckett in America was the large amount of favorable notice he had received., not only in big urban enters, but in smaller ones as well.

As concerns the play, Rexroth is quite straightforward:

Waiting for Godot, produced in New York in 1956, is that rare play, the distillation of dramatic essence which we have been talking about for the whole twentieth century, and about which we have done, alas, so little. Its peers are the Japanese Noh drama and the American burlesque comedy team. It is not just a play of situation – a situation which, in the Japanese Noh drama, reveals its own essence like a crystal. It just is a situation. The crystal isn't there. Two tramps, two utterly dispossessed, alienated, and disaffiliated beings, are waiting for somebody who is never going to come and who might be God. Not because they have any faith in his coming, although one does, a little, but because waiting requires less effort than anything else. They are not seeking meaning. The meaning is in the waiting. (loc. cit.)

Rexroth's high sounding enthusiasm with the play culminates at the end, when he insists on the idea that "*all critics who object to Beckett reduce themselves eventually to this level, the level of Zhdanov*, *Variety, and the quarterly reappearing lead editorial in Time's book section."* (loc. cit.)

In 1960 a double bill at the Provincetown Playhouse, in New York, of Samuel Beckett's *"Krapp's Last Tape"* and Edward Albee's *"The Zoo Story"* attracted the interest to the former playwright and the established the latter as an important new voice in American drama.

Giving his views on the event, Albee wrote an article for "The New York Times" entitled *"Which theater is the absurd one?"* observing that the playwrights of the Theatre of the Absurd had definitely altered the American playwrights' response to the theatre:

"[In the 50s we were influenced by]... the production in New York City of the plays of the European avant garde – Beckett, Genet, Ionesco and (perhaps not exactly avant garde but important and almost unknown) Pirandello and Brecht. An entire generation of young American playwrights saw worlds of creative possibility open to them... [in the] theaters and cafes of off-Broadway and off-off-Broadway in New York City."[5]

In 1962 two New York producers, Barr and Wilder, organized a series of performances in a small theater of the Greenwich Village, also in New York, at the Cherry Lane Theater. The series included seminal works by Beckett, Ionesco, Genet, Arrabal, Kenneth Koch, Jack Richardson and Edward Albee.

Beckett's *Endgame*, presented in the Provincetown Playhouse in New York in the same year, prepared the path for younger theater men who were eager to express experiences and conditions that the former styles and practices were unlikely to represent.

Many years later, in an interview, Albee said that all playwrights of his generation were noticeably influenced by Beckett. "We are all Beckett's children", he said. (Bruce 2003) The so-called Absurdist influence, as well as Martin Esslin's book "Theater of the Absurd", contributed to stimulate young prospective playwrights in the use of non realistic and sometimes surrealistic techniques.

In the off off Broadway circuit, in the early 60's, small alternative spaces and their corresponding groups – Caffe Cino, Judson Poets' Theater, La Mama and Theatre Genesis – were all impregnated with a certain beckettian atmosphere.

In an interview published in 2003, Edward Albee said that he wouldn't be willing to live in a city where there wasn't a production of Samuel Beckett running. (op. cit. 131) In fact, Albee's fascination with Beckett's work is impressive, as Bruce Mann observes:

> Albee's love of Samuel Beckett shows in innumerable ways. At times, his main character sounds like Winnie, the garrulous woman buried in a mound in Beckett's *Happy Days. Krapp's Last Tape* can also be detected; both plays use the situation of a lonely, older figure sifting through memories. As she asks whether her son will come today, Albee's elderly mother reminds us of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. (op. cit. 6)

Beckett is widely acknowledged as having been a key influence on American dramatists of the 1960s and 1970s. In the off off Broadway productions of the 1960s, each genre had its own progenitor, and Beckett's theater was a point of reference. Edward Albee's *"The American Dream"*, for example, evokes the garrulous fluency of the main character of Beckett's *"Happy Days"*, Winnie.

Beckett's influence can also be felt among the experimentalists who emerged in the sixties and whose works premiered off off Broadway. Most of their works show elements that remind us of Beckett (as well as of Genet, Ionesco and Artaud) both in terms of the playwrighting techniques and of the performing and directing details as well.

The 1960 New York double bill of Beckett's "Krapp's Last Tape" and Edward Albee's "The Zoo Story" at the Provincetown Playhouse and the 1962 off off Broadway Cherry Lane Theater series of performances organized by Barr and Wilder were ocrucially important for the inception of Becekett's work as a point of reference for the generations of young dramatists of the 1960's and 1970's in the United States.

Notes

1 See *The Correspondence of Samuel Beckett and Alan Schneider*.Edited by Maurice Harmon. Cambridge: Mass: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999.

2 See Brustein, Robert. “I can’t go on, Alan. I’ll go on”. N.Y. times, January 31, 1999. in http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=980DEED91E30F932A05752C0A96F958260&sec=&pagewanted=print. Accessed on May 01, 2006.

3 See http://www.nytimes.com/books/97/08/03/reviews/beckett-godot.html?_r=1&oref=slogin accessed on May 11, 2006

4 Rexroth, Kenneth. Samuel Beckett and the Importance… . http://www.bopsecrets.org/rexroth/essays/beckett.htm Accessed on May 01, 2005.

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Reception and Translations of Beckett's Bilingual Work

Ana Helena Souza

Abstract: *This essay deals with the characteristics of repetition in Beckett's works and how it constitutes an issue no translator of these works can ignore. It is pointed out that the kind of repetition employed by the author has a direct bearing on his decision to become the translator of most of his writings, thus creating a bilingual work. Both the features of his bilinguilism and the reception these bilingual works received in the French and Anglo-American world are commented here. By way of these comments, we argue that the beckettian translator should always consider the English and the French texts, as both integrate an oeuvre in which a sharp distinction between "original" and "translation" no longer holds.*

Repetition and Change: The Making of an Oeuvre

In the criticism of Beckett's works, the orchestration to which the author subjected his works gave rise to two basic ways of dealing with his literature: one that underlines the unity; the other, the diversity of the texts. These two distinct, and yet complementary, approaches are exemplified by Hugh Kenner in his two books totally dedicated to Beckett's oeuvre. In the first, *Samuel Beckett: A Critical Study*, Kenner said he tried to emphasize the coherence and unity of the writings. Therefore, he produced a study that enhanced the similarities found both in the prose and the theater works. Of course Kenner continued to refer to this orchestration of the oeuvre later, but in his second book about the author, *A Reader's Guide to Samuel Beckett*, the critic intended to emphasize the peculiarity of each individual work in order to call attention to the *variety* of Beckett's literature. This new approach opened other reading possibilities since the great majority of critics tended to do away with the differences in favor of the many similarities found in the works, narrowing the focus of their analyses.

Nevertheless, the objective Beckett relentlessly pursues is the one of inserting changes and variations in his works, employing his own peculiar mode of repetition as a way of not repeating himself, as a way of moving always one step further away from the previous work in his "*work in regress*". That is, even though themes, names, characters, phrases, expressions, comments on the literary composition itself reappear

in several texts, there is always something inherent to the composition of each individual work that differentiates it from the previous ones, no matter how much the bonds among them be reinforced. The mentioned aspects of differentiation can be exemplified by a more extreme physical deterioration, a growing doubt concerning the validity of the literary creations themselves, and even doubts about the presence of a reliable voice, as happens in the post-war trilogy and in *How It Is* as well. Another major change can be seen in the introduction of a prose discourse which rectifies itself so densely and continuously that it allows the author in *The Unnamable* (1953) to produce a text whose main feature is the anxious urgency of the narrative voice in search of its identity, especially in the final pages of the book. Other changes can still be noticed in the theater as, for instance, an original way of dealing with stage resources, aspect that becomes evident in all his oeuvre from *Waiting for Godot* to plays like *Not I* (1972) and *What Where* (1983), not to mention *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958), in which the dialogue of the protagonist with his younger selves is created through the simple use of a tape recorder and some tapes.

According to H. Porter Abbott, it is in the fear of repetition and in the search for constant innovation that reside Samuel Beckett's most markedly modernist characteristic. The introduction of elements of precariousness and poverty in his works becomes more and more intense, manifesting itself either in the reduction of the characters's physical abilities until they reach almost total immobility, or in the scantiness of events, or even in the economy of the language. The reutilization of elements present in previous works – one of the most commented features of the beckettian oeuvre – leads to a kind of repetition, defined by the critic in the following way:

> [...] by repeating names, images, and motifs from one work to another – sufficiently developed to be recognizable, insufficiently developed to connect – Beckett was constantly reinventing his entire oeuvre. [...] There is the constant sense of a continuation, together with the absence of any clear repetition. Additions to the oeuvre are as unexpected and disorienting as they are, in retrospect, somehow fitting. (1996. 20-1)

How then is it possible to reconcile this kind of "repetition"[1] with the innovation present from one work to the next? It is worth analyzing a concept, developed throughout Porter Abbott's book, in which the typical beckettian characteristic of reutilizing motifs, characters, and their peculiar features, phrases, and rhythms is referred to by the suggestive expression "recollection by invention" (Abbott 1996. 28)[2]. When he defines this concept, elaborated to characterize Beckett's oeuvre, Porter Abbott founds it on the preoccupation with "opposition" and "resistence", dominant in Modernism. Both these aspects were translated into the artist's refusal to see his or her work widely accepted and reduced to formulas or schemes, either by the critics or by the public. Moreover, there was the artist's fear of repetition, the fear of not being able to innovate anymore. It is in this sense that Porter Abbott sees the process of "recollection by invention" as "Beckett's most significant

refinement of modernist oppositional practice". This "recollection by invention" consists of "a technique of deliberate metamorphosis, a kind of remembering by misremembering in successive works of elements from those that went before." (1996. 27-30). Such a procedure establishes the already mentioned continuity and similarity among the texts. The similarities, however, never surface in an unmistakably clear and unequivocal way, but do appear in fact as incomplete, altered, and contaminated by other elements. The systematic use of repetition in Beckett impresses one as the most effective way of not repeating oneself. Add to these repetitions the writer's self-translations, and one is able to draw a finer picture of what can be called a bilingual oeuvre.

In the first book of what would become his first trilogy, Samuel Beckett makes Molloy, the narrator, say in the French original, finished in 1947: "Cette fois-ci, puis encore une je pense, puis c'en sera fini je pense, de ce monde-là aussi. C'est le sens de l'avant-dernier." (Beckett 1982. 8). In the English translation published in 1955 and carried out by the writer himself in collaboration with the South-African poet Patrick Bowles (Cohn 1962. 272-3), one finds an addition: "This time, then once more I think, *then perhaps a last time*, then I think it'll be over, with that world too. Premonition of the last but one but one." (Beckett 1991. 8, my italics) The inclusion of "then perhaps a last time" leaves no doubt as to the fact that Beckett decided to revise his own writing when he translated *Molloy* into English. As the three novels had already been completed since 1951, "then once more I think" refers certainly to *Malone Dies* (1948) and "then perhaps a last time" to *The Unnamable*, thus indicating that *The Unnamable* (1948) was not part of Beckett's plans by the time of the writing of *Molloy* (1947) in French.

This addition at the beginning of the English *Molloy* was noticed and commented upon in several ways by a number of Beckett's critics. Ruby Cohn, one of the first, pinpoints the change in order to show how carefully Beckett translated his work and to prove that if he did not do all the translation work himself, he certainly revised and altered it (Cohn 1962. 272-3). A revision of this magnitude also indicates the awareness of an intimate articulation among his books had been gaining strength and clarity since the writing of this sequence of three novels. This intimate articulation surfaces through the revival of characters from the previous novels, including the protagonists of M*urphy* (1938) and *Watt* (1944), at the opening of *The Unnamable*. So that from this last novel of the postwar trilogy on such an articulation among the works will become an essencial characteristic, to be refined with the incorporation of Beckett's self-translation practice into his creative process.

The Problem of Reception

Here it is worth asking the following questions: What is the difference between a translation carried out by the writer of the text himself and one carried out by a third party? More specifically, what is the difference between a translation by Samuel Beckett himself and the original text? According to Brian Fitch, the distinction is most obviously

realized in terms of the reception of the work. Readers tend to consider a translation done by the writer himself as closer to the original, more authorial and, consequently, more authorized (Fitch 1988. 19). In Beckett's case, even some of his critics tended to overlook differences between the two texts: they studied and quoted either the English or the French text, depending on the language they were writing in. That is to say that one or the other text was, and sometimes still is, treated as the "original" and, in some cases, there is not even the slightest mention to its pair in the other language (Fitch 1988. 190; Perloff 1987. 44). It is relevant to point out, however, that among the first and best critics of these works there has always been a concern to deal with both the French and English texts, even when translation matters were not exclusively discussed.[3]

Brian Fitch established a valuable distinction between two different critical approaches in relation to Samuel Beckett's works. In one of them, "the critic restricts his interpretative commentary to aspects of the fictive heterocosm and the unfolding of the plot-line"; in this case, according to Fitch, it does not make much of a difference which text has been adopted. In the other, when the critic "turns his attention to the formal properties of the text in question and more particularly to its detailed stylistic texture", his comments can only be valid for the text studied in that particular language (Fitch 1988. 172). But such observations do not invalidate the statement that readers, editors, and critics view the translation done by the author himself as the most authorized substitute of the original; often as another original. Taking this into consideration, we do not address here only the issue of the bilingual writer, but the particular one of the author Samuel Beckett, who since the late 1940's – with the exception of *Murphy*'s translation into French, started in collaboration with Alfred Péron before World War II –, and sistematically from the 1950's on, assumes the translation of his works both from French into English and vice-versa, depending on the language used in the writing of the "original".

The use of the word "original" between quotes can be justified based on the same work by Brian Fitch. In his book he compares two pairs of texts: in the first, *Company/Compagnie*, the texts were written in English and translated into French; in the second, *Le Dépeupler/The Lost Ones*, it was the other way around. The conclusions drawn from these comparisons offer great interest for any work that deals with bilinguilism and self-translation. The most general, supported by another pair of texts – *From an Abandoned Work/D'Un Ouvrage Abandonné* and *Imagination morte imaginez/ Imagination Dead Imagine* –, relates to the fact that the English texts tend to be longer, no matter the language in which the first text was written. In Beckett's self-translations, therefore, the English texts are, in the works cited, longer than the French ones. In a work called *Syntaxe comparée du français et de l'anglais*, Jacqueline Guillemin-Flescher compares translations into English of *Madame Bovary* with the original, elaborating a study of syntactical differences between both languages. One of the conclusions she reaches is that the English language demands more explicit, precise, and concrete

determinations, as well as more detailed and cohesive descriptions than the French, something which supports Fitch's conclusions (Guillemin-Flescher; Lewis 1985. 36)[4].

Less frequently in the compared texts, there can also be generally observed that the French text may clarify doubts raised by the English texts, no matter which one appeared first, whether the English or the French. Fitch concludes without further examples or explanations that this fact is due to the relationship between the two languages rather than to the relationship between the two beckettian texts. Thus, he once more defines a general feature of the languages involved, and not exactly a characteristic of Samuel Beckett's self-translations (Fitch 1988. 122). We have observed more specifically in our translation of *How It Is* into Portuguese that the French text clarifies the English in so far as the latter is ambiguous, because of the lack of gender differentiation of adjectives and of many nouns in the English language, for instance.

It is interesting to point out that both of Brian Fitch's observations apply to the pair *Comment c'est/How It Is*: *How It Is* is longer than *Comment c'est*, and *Comment c'est* tends to clarify eventual doubts one has when reading *How It Is*. At times, however, the English text has helped us with difficulties come across in the French text. But the most helpful feature we found was the result of a greater development of the English text, unrelated to the specific character of the languages in question. As a matter of fact, the lengthening of the English text results from additions Beckett inserted by way of more repetitions than the ones already present in the French text. When it comes to equivalent passages, it is really the French text which wipes the doubts raised by its English counterpart.

When he studied the manuscripts of *Bing* (French "original") and *Ping* (English "translation"), Fitch showed that Beckett not only used the final text in French for his self-translation, but also utilized earlier drafts of the work. Based on this discovery, the scholar comes to the conclusion that nobody but Beckett himself, no "mere" translator, could have written *Ping*, since the author relied on his own manuscripts in the source language. Contrary to that is the conclusion Fitch reaches when he compares the texts and manuscripts of *Still* and *Immobile* later in the same chapter. Then he states that it is possible to imagine that the text of *Immobile* had been produced by any other translator, and not by Beckett himself. In view of this, Fitch asserts that one cannot generalize about the text used by Beckett as the "original" for his translations without a detailed analysis of both the "final" published texts and the manuscripts or earlier drafts.

The existence of the French and the English texts, both legitimated by the authorial rubric, has given rise in its turn to two basic and distinct critical receptions: an English and a French one. Marjorie Perloff calls attention to the change in tone between the them:

> From the vestibule of hell (Bataille) to the circus: the difference in emphasis between Bataille and Blanchot on the one hand, Davie and Kenner on the other, cannot of course be accounted for simply by the differences between the French and English texts. [...] To understand the difference, one would have to study the contrasting cultural formations of postwar Paris and postwar Britain/America,

> beginning with the profound malaise of the Occupation, a malaise surely inconceivable for British and especially for American critics, for whom war is always, so to speak, somewhere else. (1987. 46)

In Perloff's view, therefore, the differences in the reception of Beckett's works between the French and British or American critics are not only due to alterations met with in the French or English text, but to the modes of reception of this oeuvre, dictated by heterogeneous situations of critical reception. Besides, not only did the literary traditions to which Beckett's works in English and Beckett's works in French were related differ, but also the texts themselves made part of distinct published works: *Murphy* (1938) was practically unknown in French, *Watt*, finished in 1945, only came out in France in 1968, fifteen years after its publication in English, and neither the stories of *More Pricks than Kicks* (1934) nor the volume of poems called *Echo's Bones and Other Precipitates* (1935) was translated into French by Beckett. The inaccessibility of those texts in France contributed in a first moment for the appreciation of Beckett as the playwright of *En Attendant Godot* and the author of the trilogy of novels *Molloy*, *Malone meurt* and *L'Innommable*. The first French critics did not consider his previous career as a writer of some short stories, poems, and novels in English.

It is part of what we have come to notice that some divergent views in the reception of Samuel Beckett's English and French texts stem from generic, sometimes even idiosyncratic, comments without much basis on a theoretical ground. Such subjective characteristics of commentary seem akin to the ones which are found in analyses of different translations of the same text. These analyses, based on seemingly objective criteria, not rarely have as their ultimate justification the reader/critic's taste. A good example is the case of the comments about *En Attendant Godot/Waiting for Godot* made practically at the same time by two renowned critics of Beckett's oeuvre: the French Ludovic Janvier and the American Ruby Cohn.

Ludovic Janvier in *Pour Samuel Beckett* says that: "Sometimes the French equivalent of an expression is inferior in humor or in poetry to its English homologue." (1966. 227, my translation). In her turn, Ruby Cohn in *The Comic Gamut* states that: "Perhaps because of these deletions, perhaps because of the less colloquial tone, the English *Godot* seems bleaker than the French." (1962. 269)

The two comments, placed side by side, seem to contradict each other. And yet, reading them more carefully and taking into account their respective contexts, one can notice that the difference lies in the aspects the critics value most: in Ludovic Janvier's case, the more self-contained text of the English *Godot*, whose humor is more "delicate and calculated [compassé]", as opposed to what he qualifies as the "brevity, and concise vulgarity of the French" (1966. 227, my translation); in Ruby Cohn's, colloquialism is the valued aspect of the language of the French *Godot* – exactly with its features of brevity and vulgarity. The proximity achieved between the French text and the oral language is praised by the American critic, whose study focuses on the comic character of the oeuvre and highlights the humor present in the texts. Moreover, for Ruby Cohn,

despite Beckett's efforts "the French remains the more authentically colloquial of the two versions, and thereby the more comic." (1962. 268) This comic feature closely related to the colloquialism in the French language is not recognized, however, as a guarantee of humor by the French critic.

The divergence found in the comments by Cohn and Janvier about the play could be set to rights if one resorted to the analysis which was carried out in the excellent essay by Helen Atsbury (2002. 446-453) on the French and the English texts of the postwar trilogy. She discusses the use Beckett makes of a sentence type practiced by Céline. Astbury, following a study by Léo Spitzer about Céline's style, detects from *Molloy* to *L'Innommable* the presence of "binary-turned" sentences which consist of repeating redundantly the subject or the object through the addition of a noun or pronoun before or after the verb, as in these examples, taken from *Molloy*: "Il *l'*aura, *son rapport*" or "*Mes oiseaux*, on ne *les* avait pas tués". Then, the critic shows that only when Beckett translated *The Unnamable* into English did he manipulate the syntax of his mother tongue in a similar way, and even then he only translated this binary-turn in some of the sentences. In English, the writer compensated for both the lack of colloquialism and the hesitations transmitted by the binary-turned sentences by including, on the one hand, hesitations of the narrator as to certain words, duplicating them, as in the following example from *Malone Dies*: "Son corps était dans le grand *trou* qu'il creusait pour son mulet", translated into "His body in the *hole or pit* he had dug for his mule". On the other hand, he strove to maintain the colloquial tone through the addition of Anglo-Irish expressions, like in this example from *Molloy*: "c'est un *beu rêve* que je viens de faire là, *un excellent rêve*"; in English: "that's *a darling dream* I've been having, *a broth of a dream*".

Thus, the study of "binary-turned" sentences carried out by Helen Atsbury about the trilogy could well ground a similar comparison between the two *Godots*, since it supplies a basis for measuring the colloquialism of the lines of the play in French as well as the compensations introduced in the English version. Of course it would not be a matter of deciding on the superiority of one version over the other, but of studying them with more objective analytical tools. Anyway, it interests to register here that, besides the divergences between the beckettian French and English texts thouroughly pointed out by Brian Fitch; the different configuration of French and Anglo-American critical traditions underlined by Marjorie Perloff; there still are divergences of taste when it comes to comments on such intrinsic features of one or the other language as in the analyses of *En attendant Godot* and its English pair *Waiting for Godot* by Ruby Cohn and Ludovic Janvier.

Which Original? Which Translation?

Now we should start by discussing the answer Marjorie Perloff gave to the question that underlies every comparison of original and translated texts by Beckett: "Which version is the 'real' or the 'better' one? Obviously both and neither. The scene

of Beckett's writing exists somewhere between the two, a space where neither French nor English has autonomy." (1987. 47) Nonetheless, it is necessary to emphasize the existence of a dialogue as well as a constant mobility between the two languages in Beckett's writing. As Hugh Kenner declares, Beckett masters the "microforces of language" (1995. 189) which are related to semantic choice, syntactic elaboration, and rhythmical pattern in both languages. So, the distinctions between the versions would be limited to adopted solutions according to the specificities of each language. Of course one can still indicate a better textual performance, to one's taste, in some passages of one text or the other, but a relevant difference in the quality of the versions has never been so far consistently shown by any of the critics specialized in this issue.

What can be observed in Beckett's case, therefore, is not related to the better quality of one text over the other. The beckettian self-translation is responsible for a displacement of the status of the original, it corrupts and usurps this status; but, at the same time, his translations continue to depend on the "originals" and so they are intrinsically linked. This link is established in both directions: the original also comes to depend on the translation since both texts can be compared and thus clarify each other. The loss of autonomy of the texts does not imply that there is a writing "somewhere between the two", as Perloff puts it, but a writing that concretely exists *in both languages*, questioning the ascendancy of the creative act over the re-creative, the "original" over the "translation".

It is in this sense that the analogy Lori Chamberlain establishes between original and translation in Beckett and the permutative and indistinct relationship to which the narrator and the voice quaqua are subject in *How It Is* deserves to be mentioned:

> By pretending to be only a faithful scribe, merely repeating what he has heard, the narrator denies authority for the narrative, placing himself in a secondary position analogous to that of the translator. Also in a repetition of Beckett's oscillation between writing and translation, the work consistently confuses the distinction between saying and hearing, between the voice and the scribe, between teller and told. The basis of this confusion rests finally on linguistic grounds over what words or signs really mean – a confusion doubled in translation. (1987. 19)

Translation in Beckett – especially when he employs unpublished manuscripts – reveals the frailty of the original, the possibility of its own transformation, its state of incompleteness. The "intra-intertextuality"of Beckett's oeuvre, to quote Brian Fitch's term for the characteristic of repetition and doubling in the texts (1988. 23), raises rather complex questions about the composition of his own literature. Among them, his procedures of self-translation stand out. Given this inherent trait of most of Beckett's works, the issue which his translator must tackle is the need to resort to the "other" text, no matter the language she/he is translating from, whether French or English. Only by establishing a privileged contact with both texts can the translator of these works foster improved solutions to her/his version or, at least, clarify doubts.

The problem of textual status in Beckett's literature is still challenging: does the fact that the author translated his works himself authorize us to study them as if they were "originals" and even translate them? The obvious answer seems to be that the fact he took charge of translating the works enhanced the importance of the task and, eventually, led the author to make the translation interfere in the process of creation and vice-versa. This latter is the case of *Company/Compagnie*, whose process of translation into French made the author return to the English "original" and change it (Connor 1988. 89).

It can be said that by writing in French first, Beckett should have always had the English language in his authorial horizon, for he had already written several works in it. Therefore, both languages came to integrate his authorial horizon. We are far from giving any priority to the mother tongue, trying to avoid the prejudice embedded in privileging what comes *first*, in the sense of origin, for this would result in privileging the author as the most authorized translator, etc. The point here is to recognize the presence of two languages and two processes – of creation and translation – as languages and processes integrated into the writer's work.

André Lefevere discusses the presence in the West of four instances of authority for the acceptance of a translation as relevant to the literary target system, according to the importance of 1) the person or institution that orders the translation; 2) the text to be translated; 3) the writer of the original; 4) the culture that receives the translation (1990. 14-28). In Beckett's case, the three first instances converge on the writer, especially from the 1950's on, when he assumed the translations of his texts himself [5], and the success of the play *Waiting for Godot* granted his texts immediate publication in both languages so that the translation task was born with the text itself, so to sepak. As for the last instance, it is filled in by the relevance of the literary tradition of both languages. Furthermore, there are implications that reach far beyond the issue of authorial authority into the conception of an oeuvre in which the writing of each new text recovers and transfigures elements of previous ones, in an operation that bears great affinities with that of translation.

Beckett's characteristic of repetition, an aspect closely related to self-translation, is given different denominations. Commentators talk about "oeuvre gigone" (Janvier 1966. 66), "clothed repetition" (Connor 1988. 1-14), "intra-intertextuality" (Fitch 1988. 23), "recollection by invention" (Abbott 1996. 27-32). They unanimously affirm, however, Beckett's self-translation as a fundamental part of the composition of his oeuvre, thus placing "originals" and "translations" on an analogous level when they come to consider this peculiar body of works.

This beckettian practice can be illuminated by Jacques Derrida's view of the translator's role and the transformations experienced by the original. According to the philosopher, the myth of Babel "exhibits an incomplete form, an impossibility of finishing, of totalizing, of saturating, of completing something of the order of edification, of architectural construction, of system and architectonics." (1985. 209, my translation).

This view bears similarities with Beckett's. Translation – in this case the beckettian self-translation – points to the unfinished, the imperfect, the destruction of the myth of the all-mighty original.

This does not imply that rigour is eliminated. On the contrary, rigour in the writing of each text is a constant in Beckett. What is dealt with here when one deals with Beckett's oeuvre is the imperative of "ill-saying" which, according to the French philosopher Alain Badiou, is the true free and artistic saying. If rigour is not suppressed, not even in the least is the failure on which Beckett founds his artistic language to be forgotten. Such failure and fault are based on the premise that saying is "ill-saying", and it is precisely "the controlled regulation of ill-saying that takes the prescriptive autonomy of saying to its summit." (Badiou 2002. 131, my translation). It is worth it to dwell on the philopher's explanation. He touches upon one of the most commented points of Beckett's criticism, shedding light on the essencial, but often little understood characteristic of the author's art. When Beckett declares his works tend to incompleteness, poverty, and failure, not only does he point to themes and reduction of means of expression to the most basic ones in his work, but he also indicates that his search for failure is a continuous search for a way of saying things which are not subordinated to what is actually said. Saying something which matches perfectly its meaning would efface the saying itself, which is exactly the artistic part of the expressive process. The so often quoted search for failure in Beckett is a search for a free artistic saying, extremely rigourous in its attempts.

The readiness to start his translations – in the case of the mature work, from the trilogy on – and all the care thrown into the composition of these versions also indicate the inclusion of the translation procedure in the whole of an oeuvre that is intent on escaping interpretative schemes and the stiffness of a work taken to be finished, complete, untouchable. Also crucial is the role Samuel Beckett's reflection about failure, reduction or subtraction of literary resources has played in his oeuvre. This operation of reduction equally comprises the topics he addresses, the characters and landscapes he makes up, and the inclusion of assertions and denials, pushed into the extreme condition of being inclusive rather than exclusive as it happens at the end of *How It Is*. On the other hand, and Beckett was well aware of that, the search for the minimal could end up giving rise to an oeuvre that unfolds itself. Its branches include the self-translations as well as Beckett's work as stage director of his own plays.

Talking specifically about *How It Is*, the issues of the one and the other, of narrating and being narrated, of the torturer and the victim, of rest and movement, of hearing and saying, as well as the undeniable existence of imperatives – explicit duties that have to be fulfilled at all levels, from the scribes to the narrator who crawls in the mud –, lead to a simulation of a double narrative voice. In the end, however, the narrator has to give in and assume the voice "quaqua" – a voice he claims to be dictating the tale he tells – as his own. Duplication in Beckett's texts, as in *How It Is* the duplication of the narrator's voice in the voice "quaqua", never quite assumes its independence. On the

other hand, the duplicated texts lead a life of their own, maintaining an ambiguous relationship of complementarity and autonomy with the texts from which they stemmed. When one realizes the depth of this relationship, the terms "original" and "translation" cannot be applied naively anymore, nor can the beckettian translator ignore the extent of their new meaning.

Notes

1 The word has been written between quotes because, as it has been already exhaustively demonstrated by Steven Connor (*Repetition, Theory and Text*), based on the works of Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze (especially on *Différence et Répétition*), the repetitions in Beckett always contain a difference.

2 It is important to mention that Porter Abbott's work establishes a dialogue with work by Steven Connor mentioned above.

3 This is the case of Ludovic Janvier ("Combinaison et liberté", in: *Pour Samuel Beckett.* 224-30) and Ruby Cohn ("Samuel Beckett, self-translator", in: *The Comic Gamut.* 260-282). More specifically, though in short essays, there are important contribuitions such as Hugh Kenner's "Beckett Translating Beckett" (in: *Historical Fictions*. 184-202), John Fletcher's "Écrivain bilingue" (in: *Cahier de l'Herne: Samuel Beckett*. 201-212), and Erika Ostrovsky's "Le Silence de Babel" (in: *Cahier de l'Herne: Samuel Beckett*. 190-200). From the 1987 collection *Beckett Translating/Translating Beckett*, the two most relevant essays for our purposes are Raymond Federman's "The Writer as Self-Translator" (7-16) which in fact lays the ground for Brian Fitch's book, as Fitch himself acknowledged (*Beckett and Babel*. 15, n. 11), and Marjorie Perloff's "'Une Voix pas la mienne': French/English Beckett and the French/English Reader" (36-48). It must be noted that Brian Fitch's and Steven Connor's books were published in the same year, 1988. The former is totally dedicated to the question of self-translation and bilinguilism, while the latter brings a very interesting chapter about the topic ("Repetition and Self-Translation: *Mercier and Camier*, *First Love*, *The Lost Ones*", chapter 5. 88-114).

4 This characteristic of the English language could by itself account for the lengthening of the beckettian text. Nevertheless, we would only be able to affirm it with certainty after a minute comparative linguistic analysis of both texts.

5 *Molloy* (1951) was translated into English in collaboration with Patrick Bowles, and was published in 1955; the novellas *L'Expulsé* and *La Fin* (1955) were translated into English in collaboration with Richard Seaver, and were published together with the *Texts for Nothing* in 1967; *Watt* (1953) was translated into French in collaboration with Ludovic and Agnes Janvier, being published in this language only in 1968. The radio plays *All That Fall* (1957) and *Embers* (1959) were translated into French by Robert Pinget, the latter in collaboration with the author, and they came out in the same year as the English publication did. A small text, written while *Comment c'est* was being composed, and published as *L'Image* in 1959 was translated by Edith Fournier into English and published in 1995; by the same French translator is the version of one of Beckett's last prose texts, *Worstward Ho* (1983); in French, *Cap au pire*.

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"En cada rol me siento bien"

Entrevista con Antoni Libera, uno de los principales intérpretes de Samuel Beckett *

Juan José Delaney

"Mi embajador en el Este europeo», así definió Samuel Beckett a Antoni Libera (Varsovia, 1949), escritor, director y traductor al polaco de la obra dramática del irlandés que en 1969 obtuvo el Premio Nobel de Literatura.

En 1989 presentó *La última cinta de Ifrapp (Krapp' s* : *Last Tape,* 1958) con David Warrilow en el papel protagónico; fue Ia última pieza en la que participó el autor de *Esperando a Godot,* y la versión fue aclamada en Londres, Milán y París. Entre otras varias, en 1991 Libera dirigió *Fin de partida (Endgame,* 1956) para el Beckett Festival (Dublin), con Barry McGovern como Clov y Alan Stanford como Hamm. Por lo demás, también las tablas y la televisión polacas conocieron no pocas puestas dramáticas de Libera que lo consagraron como especialista en la obra de Beckett (*Not I,* Varsovia 1981; *Eh Joe,* TV de Varsovia 1988 y *Catástrofe,* TV de Cracovia, 1991, entre otras).

Libera se ha vinculado también con el mundo de la ópera en condición de traductor de libretos (*Muerte en Venecia,* por Benjamin Britten) y también como libretista para el prestigioso compositor Krzysztof Penderecki.

Conocedor y estudioso de la obra de su compatriota Witold Gombrowicz, sobre cuyos textos hizo su tesis, valora su poder irónico, su solitaria lucha contra la falsa realidad creada por el comunismo, la profundidad de sus diarios y expresa, por otra parte, el deseo de conocer Argentina, país en el que eI autor de *La virginidad* vivió 23 anos. Acaso esa eventual visita origine, también, un siempre enriquecedor reencuentro con Beckett.

En 1990, Antoni Libera estrenó en el Royal Court Theatre, de Londres, su diálogo platónico "Promesas del Este" ("Eastern Promises").

EI interés por las muchas veces insondable obra beckettiana originó una curiosa relación con el no menos insondable escritor, memoria de la que Antoni Libera da cuenta en tramos de la entrevista que sigue, la que tuvo lugar en la Universidad de Iowa (EEUU), en el marco deI Intemational Writing Program (1993).

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– Dramaturgo, director, autor... ¿Cuál de estas actividades lo identifica acabadamente?

– Es una pregunta difícil de contestar porque en cada rol me siento bien, según Ias circunstancias. Por ejemplo, no me gusta dirigir teatro en mi propio país, debido a que tengo problemas con los actores polacos, formados en la escuela de Stanislavsky. Es una tradición que detesto. Lo que busco es conmover al espectador, entristecerlo, atemorizarlo y hacerlo reír, nada más. Mi técnica de dirección es formal, por eso prefiero dirigir en el extranjero. Paradójicamente mis mejores experiencias las tuve en la Escuela de Drama de mi patria, ya que con los estudiantes sí es posible trabajar. Como experto en Beckett traduje sus piezas al polaco. Fue una experiencia extraordinaria estar muy cerca de una obra tan grande. También traduje a otros escritores. El del traductor es un oficio, pero traducir a Beckett fue doloroso, me llevó años pulir las versiones. Traducir, se sabe, es recrear. En cuanto a la escritura, si bien produje cuentos y piezas breves, honestamente, aún no me satisfacen.

– Háblenos de su experiencia con el compositor Krzysztof Penderecki.

– Tuve una educación musical, y siempre me interesó la ópera. Una vez me pidieron que tradujera del inglés el libreto de *Muerte en Venecia,* sobre la novela de Thomas Mann, con música deI inglés Benjamin Britten. Era mi primera experiencia y traducir una ópera resulta extremadamente dificultoso, ya que cada sílaba corresponde a una nota musical y deben considerarse acentos y signos de puntuación. Se parece a la poesía en cuanto a los límites. Mi traducción fue muy bien recibida por los críticos musicales. Penderecki estaba comisionado entonces para escribir una ópera para un texto alemán. Él me pidió que tradujera la opera al polaco. Fue nuestra primera experiencia. Después le propuse escribir una nueva para la cual yo fuera el libretista original, y que esa ópera fuera de tema judío a la manera de ciertas historias de Isaac Bashevis Singer, la historia de un mundo perdido, un mundo de preguerra. El título de la obra será *The Inn* (La posada) y la acción tiene lugar a principios de la Primera Guerra Mundial. ÉI espera tener concluida su parte para estrenar en 1996.

– ¿Qué opina de la afirmación según la cual la música es más eficaz para la comunicación que el lenguaje?

– La comparto a medias. Amo la música y ella es más importante para mí que la literatura. Le voy a decir algo: yo le hice la misma pregunta a Samuel Beckett y su respuesta fue que la música está más allá de todo.

– ÉI tocaba el piano, gustaba de las operetas del binomio Gilbert & Sullivan, y más de una vez reflexionó sobre el lenguaje, como en *Not I* (1973)... A propósito, ¿cuál es la esencia de esta pieza en la que una boca habla durante quince minutos?

– Por de pronto las palabras *Yo no,* provienen del autor y no de la protagonista. Veo a *Not I* como una pieza acerca de la necesidad de purgación, un texto sobre la razón de ser

del discurso hablado y sobre lo infinito de ese proceso. La mujer personifica a la humanidad toda que, a través del lenguaje – la única genuina invención humana, busca redimirse. Beckett se sirve de signos y símbolos de la mitología cristiana. En *Not I* el signo específico es la noche que corre entre el día de la Crucifixión y el de la Resurrección, representativo de un tiempo sin Dios.

– ¿Está de acuerdo con la idea de que para comprender debidamente a Beckett hay que ser irlandés?
– En un sentido, sí. Estando en París, asistí a varias producciones de Beckett, algunas de las cuales fueron originariamente escritas en francés. Eran puestas objetivamente buenas, pero pesadas, extensas, carentes, casi, de humor. En Dublín fue completamente distinto. Allí vi cómo *Endgame,* una de las piezas más oscuras de Beckett, se convertía en una verdadera «comedia negra». Los irlandeses me ayudaron a comprender más profundamente la pieza.

– ¿Cómo fue su relación con Beckett?
– En 1957, cuando yo tenía 8 años, se representó *Esperando a Godot* (1952) por primera vez en Varsovia. Fue un éxito tremendo. Godot apareció como una generalización no solamente de lo social sino también del espíritu polaco. Fue interpretada como una parábola metafísica de la condición humana y también como representativa de cierta familia de la humanidad, la de los malditos, la de los fracasados, la de los que son engañados, la de los que siempre esperan algo... Como los polacos y los irlandeses.

– ¿Cuándo se encontró con el hombre?
– Mientras traducía *Footfalls* (1975) al polaco se me presentó una duda que no pude resolver. Le escribí a Beckett quien me contestó enseguida con una tarjeta a la que adjunto mi propia carta. Dos años después viajé a París y desde allí le escribí diciéndole que quería conocerlo personalmente, que no tenía cuestiones, ni preguntas que plantearle. Me contestó brevemente que me esperaba un miércoles en el Café Français de cierto hotel del Bv. St. Jacques. Todo era muy preciso pero no indicaba la hora. Finalmente solicité la intervención de su editor quien aclaró la situación y finalmente pude encontrarme con él. En esa oportunidad le expliqué cuánto ansiaba dirigir alguna de sus obras fuera de Polonia, concretamente *Krapp's Last Tape* en inglés. EI respondió: «Hágalo con Warrilow». Fue una experiencia muy importante para mí, que la crítica especializada recibió muy bien.

– ¿Expresan los silencios de Beckett la imposibilidad del lenguaje por aprehender la realidad?
– Si realmente él hubiera descreído de las posibilidades del lenguaje, no hubiera escrito. Sentía la necesidad de seguir, pese a todo.

– Víctima de esa fuerza poderosa de la que habló Schopenhauer...

– Podemos hacer un paralelo con Schopenhauer: la idea principal de que todo su sistema es la voluntad, esencia del ser. Para Beckett la esencia del ser es el discurso, la palabra.

– En síntesis: ¿cuál es el mensaje de Beckett?

– La de él fue una tentativa por entender la situación del hombre de post-guerra. Creo que Beckett trata de comprender al ser humano sin Dios.

Fiction

The danse macabre*: the fiction of J.P. Donleavy and Henry Miller*

Peter James Harris

Abstract: *The work of two writers, J.P. Donleavy and Henry Miller is compared. It is argued that the anarchic behaviour of the characters in the fiction of both writers is in defiance of the void they perceive to be at the centre of things, an exuberance in the face of death, a* danse macabre.

> It may be that we are doomed, that there is no hope for us, *any of us*, but if that is so then let us set up a last agonizing, bloodcurdling howl, a screech of defiance, a war whoop! Away with lamentation! Away with elegies and dirges! Away with biographies and histories, and libraries and museums! Let the dead eat the dead. Let us living ones dance about the rim of the crater, a last expiring dance. But a dance!
>
> H. Müller *Tropic of Cancer*, 258

J.P. Donleavy (b. New York, 1926) has written thirteen novels and novellas, in addition to short stories, plays and non-fiction. His most recent novel is *Wrong Information is Being Given Out at Princeton* (1998) and yet, with the author celebrating his eightieth birthday in 2006, attention continues to be primarily focused upon his first novel, *The Ginger Man* (Paris 1955). His own Internet site rather encourages this emphasis, including the results of two surveys that highlight the novel: Modern Library's "Top 100 novels of the 20th century", in which *The Ginger Man* is listed at 99th position, and a survey compiled from Irish booksellers' records gathered since 1930, in which the novel is ranked at Number 7 in the "Top 100 Books in Ireland"[1]. Given that Donleavy's fame continues to rest principally on his first novel his eightieth birthday provides us with a useful opportunity to revisit his early writing.

F.R. Karl places Donleavy amongst the "Angry Young Men" of the 1950s:

> From Amis's famous Jim Dixon to Donleavy's less well-known Sebastian Dangerfield (*The Ginger Man*, 1958), the heroes of these novelists are angry at hypocrisy, sham, and class restrictions; they do not, however, seek to put the

> world right but adapt themselves to those aspects of existence they can tolerate. (Karl 8)

Gerald Weales echoes this categorisation, while arguing that it is not wholly accurate:

> The introduction of Amis and Osborne into a discussion of Donleavy is misleading as well as helpful. It does indicate the likenesses among them, the way in which Donleavy is part of a literary pattern – an English rather than an American one. (Weale 151)

Although Donleavy is indeed part of a pattern, I shall argue that it is in fact an American one, that Donleavy's early fiction is much more closely allied to that of Henry Miller than to that of Kingsley Amis, that, as Kingsley Widmer believes, "... *The Ginger Man* belongs to the *Tropic of Cancer* tradition of wild nihilistic humour." (Widmer 157). Nihilism is central to Donleavy's vision; the humour and the wildness of the fiction result from the awareness of the characters that their very existence is but a transitory fleck in the great void, the desolation, the silence. To take up Henry Miller's metaphor, they are dancing on the "rim of the crater", and, if the dance slackens just slightly, the enormity of their isolation and sadness will beset them with agonising intensity.

The Ginger Man is a novel that is bubbling over with vitality. It has great affinities with *Tropic of Cancer* (listed at 50th position in the Modern Library survey), and one of the most significant is that, like Henry Miller's novel, it symbolises the predicament of man confronting the void in its casting of the central character as an exiled American living in Europe. Henry Miller writes:

> It seems as if my own proper existence had come to an end somewhere, just where exactly I can't make out. I'm not an American any more, nor a New Yorker, and even less a European, or a Parisian. I haven't any allegiance, any responsibilities, any hatreds, any worries, any prejudices, any passion. I'm neither for nor against. I'm a neutral. (Miller, *TC* 157.)

This is precisely the position of Dangerfield in Dublin, except that he is too much of an agent ever to be considered strictly neutral. Kingsley Widmer describes the position of the exiled American in Europe thus:

> … the American separates himself and asserts a positive nihilism, a mocking individuality, and a joyous isolation in refusing to play the traditional "civilised" game. (Widmer 67)

Dangerfield has no acknowledged affiliations and he is thus in a position to see the desolation and the absurdity of both America and Ireland; it is almost a metaphysical

position. He is the 'gingerbread man' of the nursery rhyme who can never be still, who exists in a state of constant flight; he is perpetually vulnerable since his freedom will more easily be trammelled as soon as he stops to rest (it is from this characteristic that the picaresque nature of the novel necessarily arises). Dangerfield is also an angry man; the Clown in *Twelfth Night* (1599) is well-known for his retort "… ginger shall be hot i' the mouth" (II.iii.119), which aptly describes Dangerfield's behaviour whenever he feels that his freedom is at risk or when he senses that circumstances are conspiring against him. The restlessness and the violence are fundamental elements of his psyche.

The character in the novel that feels the brunt of these elements is, of course, Dangerfield's wife, Marion. She is a well brought-up English girl who represents the opposite end of the pole at whose tip Sebastian cavorts. He says of her:

> She's always airing the house. Opening up the windows at every little fart. Tells me she never farts. At least mine come out with a bang. (Donleavy, *GM* 30)

Her inhibitions, which she tries to extend in order to repress Sebastian, are anathema to his anarchic rebelliousness:

> … I come down martyred and mussed, feeble and fussed, heart and soul covered in cement. (Donleavy, *GM* 49)

and he reacts against her and the restrictions of his marriage with violence. Like a caged animal he turns on his keeper and anybody else whom he associates with his plight; he beats up his wife, and attempts to suffocate his screaming baby daughter, Felicity. He also steals his daughter's milk money to spend on alcohol – she develops rickets through her malnutrition. But, for all his anarchy, Dangerfield is not completely amoral; he has enough of a moral sense to be afflicted by guilt as he takes the money:

> A very red face. Guilt. Grinding the teeth. Soul trying to get out of the mouth, swallowing it back into the body. Shut out the sobs. (Donleavy, *GM* 68)

It is the combination of this sporadic moral sense and his frequent awareness of the desolation that his exuberance maintains in uneasy abeyance that ultimately prevents him from being the "beast" that many of the novel's characters see in him.

Sebastian's exuberance is infectious and communicates itself to the reader in such a way as to render *The Ginger Man* a more joyous and vital book than any of the subsequent novels. Sebastian lives for "the odd moments of joy", but it is not this that differentiates him from the later heroes; it is rather the energy with which he seeks and embraces the "odd moments" – he is the most srestless of all Donleavy's heroes.

The exuberance, the constant movement, the mercurial elusiveness of Sebastian are most effectively conveyed in the novel's style, which is defined by Ihab Hassan in these terms:

> Much of the book is written in the stream of consciousness method, abrupt transitions from past memories to current scenes, disconnected or fragmentary sentences and dangling present participles intended to convey with some immediacy the states of Dangerfield' s mind, his acute isolation. The point of view shifts, within the same paragraph, from the first to the third person, as if Dangerfield could find no way to acknowledge the objective existence of other human beings, as if reality were entirely subjective, to be rendered entirely in elliptic reflections or fleeting sensations, and all action were illusory, to be rendered in perfunctory fashion by a third person. (Hassan 1961. 199)

As well as reflecting the elusiveness and restlessness of Sebastian's existence, the style changes to reflect the moments of stillness. The fragments come together to shape sentences where subject and object maintain a more conventional and static relationship. For Sebastian it is the moment of orgasm that provides such stillness:

> Chris's willowy fingers dug into his thighs and hers closed over his ears and he stopped hearing the soup sound of her mouth and felt the brief pain of her teeth nipping the drawn foreskin and the throb of his groin pumping the teeming fluid into her throat, stopping her gentle voice and dripping from her chords that sang the music of her lonely heart. Her hair lay athwart in clean strands on his body and for the next minute he was the sanest man on earth, bled of his seed, rid of his mind. (Donleavy, *GM* 96)

It is the cruel irony of his predicament that this silence and stillness should both fill the crater around whose crumbling perimeter he is perpetually fleeing and, at the same time, provide the aim which he holds constantly in view:

> All I want now is peace. Just peace. Don't want to be watched and trailed. (Donleavy, *GM* 263)

These moments of stillness represent a kind of death – the only absolute that Sebastian acknowledges:

> The world's silent. Crops have stopped growing. Now they grow again. (Donleavy, *GM* 58)

This is an essential ambivalence; what Sebastian values most is life and yet he longs for the peacefulness of death. At his most joyous he is closest to the desolation and loneliness that underpin his existence, when he his poor he yearns not to have to worry about money. The conclusion of the novel underlines the hopelessness of his position. Percy Clocklan in his newfound wealth provides him with friendship and a seemingly limitless source of money, and he has found for the first time, in Mary, a

woman who can match his own vitality. However, the sudden materialisation of this idyll only serves to plunge him into despair. He walks on Christmas morning around London, "the city suffering from emptiness," his mind occupied in an apocalyptic vision of wild horses running on a country road:

> And I said they are running out to death which is with some soul and their eyes are mad and teeth out. (Donleavy, *GM* 347)

This is the inevitable despair of the man who strives through action to realise the stuff of his fantasies. For Sebastian Dangerfield, "the lovely young girl with long golden hair" will always turn round to reveal the face of "an old toothless hag" (Donleavy, *GM* 343).

After his first novel, J.P. Donleavy became increasingly interested in exploring the predicament of the passive man, he who is acted upon rather than acting himself. The predicament, however, is shown ultimately to be the same; *The Ginger Man* and *The Onion Eaters* (1973) are seen as opposite sides of the same coin, a coin whose sides embrace nothing. In between these novels are three others, of which the central one, the novella, *The Saddest Summer of Samuel S* (1966), is the most important. It is a beautifully written work, tightly and economically controlled, displaying a poetic acuteness of perception in the carefully selected images around which it is formed, and is perhaps one of the least flawed of all Donleavy's novels. Although it is undeniably marked by ambiguity this is not an adverse criticism since a certain element of ambiguity is central to all Donleavy's fiction.

It is helpful to compare the novel with John Barth's *The End of the Road* (1958). In that novel the hero, Jacob Horner, is under treatment with a psychiatrist of rather dubious merit for his 'cosmopsis', a cosmic view of things accompanied by total immobility as the sufferer confronts the void. Barth's novel is a kind of existential joke based on the premise that a man exists and is defined by the choices that he makes – a man must act. In an existential world complete stasis is impossible since it is tantamount to death, a loss of essence proportionate to the amount of time a man spends not choosing, not acting. Although the situation of Samuel S is not identical to that of Jacob Horner, it has similarities. He is certainly poles apart from the Nietzschian Anti-Christ, the Dionysus, that Dangerfield represents. Samuel S is unable to dance at the edge of the crater because he is too overwhelmed by the ineffable sadness and loneliness of his position; like Jacob Horner, he is immobilised by his condition. He is, likewise, treated by a psychiatrist of questionable efficacy, a man who, supposedly dedicated to the creation of a balanced society, invests all his money in "contraception and munitions".

Where Dangerfield is incessantly active, Samuel S represents the passive partners upon whom Dangerfield acts. Samuel S is the first character in Donleavy to refuse the offer of a woman's body; he envisages happiness residing only in the security and warmth of a wife and family, rather than in the transience of a casual lay. In fact, he wishes to return to the womb, where he would be comfortingly enclosed and not "standing alone

in the middle of a great big zero" (Donleavy, *SSSS* 39). In his self-pity there are times when he feels that:

> … one had to give oneself a big bear hug of sympathy. When no one else will ever wrap arms around you like a mother. (Donleavy, *SSSS* 82).

In *The Saddest Summer of Samuel S* Donleavy is closely rescrutinising the anarchic passion by which Dangerfield guides his life and, at the same time, examining the alternatives to that way of life. His conclusions, if he draws any at all, are no less pessimistic. According to W.D. Sherman:

> He finds that the decision to live life passionately and to affirm isolation as a lifestyle is the only possible choice a man can make if he is to remain totally free from manipulation. But he also finds that to live this kind of life leads a man to the brink of unbearable loneliness and despair. Samuel S is the most "human" of all Donleavy's heroes. He is the only one who even considers the possibility of accommodation to society as an alternative to a fully anarchic life. But ultimately, |Samuel S rejects that possibility. (Sherman 216).

The direction in which Samuel S finally moves, at the end of the novel, is as ambiguous as Dangerfield's position at the end of *The Ginger Man*. As in the earlier novel, the conclusion is an apocalyptic and pessimistic vision. Samuel S is alone in Vienna's summer streets:

> On the street all bravery dying in the chill of the summer rain landing on the heart … Shoulders folded like wings and clutching his face with hands as he lay against the corner of a doorway. Dream untold … And … he was crushed up against the train's wheels. And then he was dying and you think that you don't want your friends to know you died screaming in pain but that you were brave, kept your mouth shut and said nothing at all.
>
> Like
> A summer fly
> Waltzes out
> And wobbles
> In the winter. (Donleavy, *SSSS* 121)

The ambiguity is intentional; does Samuel S commit suicide or, like Sebastian, merely sink into a depressed death-dream? It is hard to believe that a character who had wanted to "end up just being alive, the only thing that matters at all" (Donleavy, *SSSS*, 66), could ever commit suicide, but the ambiguity reminds us of the core of Donleavy's vision, the sense of life's ephemerality, its closeness to the void of death and stillness.

If Samuel S is a passive character then Clementine Claw Cleaver of the Three Glands, the hero of *The Onion Eaters* (1971), is yet more so. Donleavy's early fiction depicted a series of characters less and less equipped to confront the void, whose posture is increasingly that of instruments rather than agents. Before examining Clementine himself, it will be helpful to look at some of the associations of the title. The eponymous onion eaters are three mad scientists who descend on Clementine on his very first night at Charnel Castle and proceed to "sponge, steal, cheat (him) and nearly burn the place down," (Donleavy, *OE* 253). Not only do they eat raw onions as their staple diet and pollute the castle with their foul breath, but there is a sense in which they also eat Clementine himself, in that they destroy the materialistic essence of the idyllic existence with which he is so suddenly presented at the beginning of the novel. One is reminded of the scene in Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* (1867) in which, divested of his worldly success, Peer is reduced to crawling about the undergrowth looking for wild onions to eat. In a symbolic passage he takes a wild onion and peels away its layers, each layer representing a past stage in his life, in the development of his Self:

> What an incredible number of layers!
> Don't we get to the heart of it soon?
> (He pulls the whole onion to pieces.)
> No, I'm damned if we do. Right down to
> the centre there's nothing but layers –
> smaller and smaller …
> Nature is witty! (Ibsen 191)

Clementine also feels himself to be the butt of a huge joke on the part of Nature – where 'Nature' represents all those circumstances that control his position. In this highly symbolist novel Clementine is shown to be part of an order of things that is ultimately absurd. As Percival says just before the final ball:

> … I'd say before the night's over we'll see bottoms up and tops down. Like absurdities are the stuff sir, of great philosophies so too is mixed company the manure for flowering pleasures. (Donleavy, *OE* 275)

Another of the symbolic associations of the onion is, of course, with tears. Gruff Enobarbus in *Antony and Cleopatra* (1606) ascribes his lapses into emotion to the onion – "And I, an ass, am onion-ey'd …" (IV.iii.35); and tears, for Clementine, as for other Donleavy heroes, are an inevitable response to the desolation of existence:

> Some strange sadness took me and I felt tears running down my face. World so lonely. (Donleavy, *OE* 96)

Although Clementine's course through life is passive, as opposed to Sebastian's active one, both characters respond primarily to their awareness of the death and desolation that lie within life's kernel. Clementine adopts his passivity having observed the consequences of his father's Dangerfield-like violence. It is implied that his father was the cause of his mother's early death, which was the moment that he realised most acutely his own insignificance and isolation:

> I stood at the door and watched her pull a white cover over my mother's face. And when the nurse came out she said to me who are you little boy. I said I'm not anyone.
>
> Nor
> Anyone else
> Either
> Who
> Made
> All that
> Sorrow. (Donleavy, *OE* 56)

As a result of this traumatic experience Clementine is unable to adapt to the harsh reality of the business world into which he is thrust and comes himself within a fraction of death at the end of a long "nervous decline." He is still recovering from this decline when he moves into Charnel Castle at the beginning of the novel.

The Onion Eaters is a far gloomier work than *The Ginger Man*, and almost unremittingly nihilistic. Life in Charnel Castle has the atmosphere of a Gothic fantasy; Clementine's arrival is depicted in terms of the Hammer Films Dracula cliché, where the innocent traveller arrives at the remote and awe-inspiring castle. The castle then begins to fill with a motley crew of eccentrics, freaks and lunatics, whose names might have been drawn from a Jacobean satire like Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (1613). Like Dangerfield's "girl with long golden hair," Clementine's fantasy also assumes nightmare proportions. In his passivity he is the totally helpless victim of the guests who inflict themselves upon him – he is unable to exert the authority to oblige any of them to leave.

Drained of all vitality, Clementine lacks the energy necessary to savour the quality of the moment with the same joyous spontaneity as Sebastian Dangerfield, and his responses come only after some reflection – "Take a little leap I think in the air," (Donleavy, *OE* 73), and he even finds that "sexual ecstasy has no chance in this country with the rain," (Donleavy, *OE* 134). Lacking red corpuscles as he is Clementine is the first of Donleavy's characters to contemplate suicide; unable to dance on the edge of the crater he feels that he might as well throw himself into it. Even so, his plan deferentially prioritises the convenience of others:

> Must not be too early in the voyage to depress everyone for the rest of the trip. (Donleavy, *OE* 252)

Towards the end of the novel he begins to think increasingly about his father's attitude to life, and almost comes to adopt Dangerfield's attitude that the shaken fist represents the only real alternative to death-confronting despair. It seems as though he might accept this alternative after the nihilistic and fantastic ball at the end of the novel, in which an army of insurrection and a hunt, complete with horses and hounds, ride through the darkened castle after all the candles have gone out. The ball is not quite an apocalyptic vision, since the final scene shows Clementine continuing his life the following day in very much the same state of desolation that has assailed him throughout the novel:

> … the novel ends where it began, with Clementine bewildered by a world he cannot change, escape or adapt to. (LeClair 173)

As a novel *The Onion Eaters* is flawed in a number of ways, but it also has certain features that make it one of Donleavy's most intriguing novels. The first of these might be described as its metaphysical significance. One of the most fascinating episodes in the book occurs when Clementine goes to the city, loses all his money, and sets out to walk back to the castle with Bloodmourn. The land in which the castle is situated (probably but not necessarily Ireland) "holds the world's record for loneliness" (Donleavy, *OE* 100) and is described as being "lonely sad and black" (Donleavy, *OE* 111). Through this bleakness we now see the two destitute figures moving haltingly through the half-light:

> Bloodmourn with hands quietly folded across his stomach. Moving along the byway. Tiny lightening steps. Clementine lagging behind. Breaking into a trot, Catching up. Walking briefly at the heels of Bloodmourn. Till he slowly pulled away again. A nervous hurrying figure in the distance. (Donleavy, *OE* 234)

It is an image almost Beckettian in its desolation and absurdity. One is reminded, for instance, of *All That Fall* (1957), with Mr. and Mrs. Rooney walking or, rather, dragging themselves back from the station in the wind and the rain, along the "hellish road." In Mrs. Rooney's words:

> All is still. No living soul in sight … We are alone. There is no one to ask. (Beckett 29)

Hugely different though they are, Beckett and Donleavy share a sense of man's vulnerability, of his being isolated in and perpetually threatened by an all-enveloping void, within which all his attempts to make sense of his predicament are patently absurd.

The second feature of *The Onion Eaters* that is of particular interest here could also be described as a Beckettian quality: both Donleavy and Beckett perceive the void as being best characterised by silence. We have seen how close Clementine is to surrendering himself to the void, and it is important to note in this connection that he speaks less than Donleavy's other central characters. One of the guests at the ball gratefully mentions the fact that Clementine is the first person he has met "who has just stood there listening" (Donleavy, *OE* 278). On his desolate journey Clementine expresses his feeling that the wilderness through which they are travelling is haunted. Bloodmourn replies:

> That is because there are not enough humans to fill the silence. (Donleavy, *OE* 235)

Donleavy's vision in *The Onion Eaters* is profoundly pessimistic; the silent void is overwhelming, and neither the man who dances, like Sebastian, nor he who does not, like Clementine, will ever be able to conquer it as they teeter absurdly on the edge of its crater.

Samuel Beckett serves as a bridge between J.P. Donleavy and Henry Miller. In *The Literature of Silence*, Ihab Hassan argues that, for all their differences, Beckett and Miller share a view of the awful silence at the centre of a desolate universe. In a survey of the post-war American novel Hassan also focuses on what he sees as their shared sense of anguish in relation to the human condition:

> I should like to suggest that the idea of modern outrage – and by outrage I really mean a radical threat to man's nature – is best viewed as a dangerous part of our experience, manifest in literature and outside of it … Whatever we may think of Henry Miller, we can agree that he holds no patent on anguish in contemporary letters. Samuel Beckett, who stands at the other pole from Miller in contemporary literature, shares with him the feeling of human violation, a violation silent and deep. In any case we come closer to the meaning of outrage, as it makes itself available to the literary imagination, when we ponder Lionel Trilling's notion that modern literature puts the very being of man on dark trial. Outrage is indeed the final threat to being, the enforced dissolution of the human form; it is *both* the threat and the response to it. (Hassan 1970. 197)

Hassan's main argument in *The Literature of Silence* is that Miller and Beckett reflect inverse worlds, but at the centre of both of them there lies silence. With this in mind I want to look now at *Tropic of Cancer* (1934) and *Sexus* (1949) in order to outline the most significant points of contact between the writing of Miller and that of Donleavy.

As I pointed out above, both *Tropic of Cancer* and *The Ginger Man* take as their central character an American living in exile in Europe. Both works are written from the point of view of the central character and, in both cases, this viewpoint is almost totally self-centred. In the case of Sebastian Dangerfield this point of view does to a

certain extent recognise the significance of other individuals, an awareness that manifests itself in the form of sporadic guilt feelings. However, with Henry Miller, the selfishness is total. Indeed, it is magnified to the point of colossal indifference. While in Paris he takes a job as proof-reader on an American newspaper, which brings him into daily contact with the world's calamities; his callous indifference takes on cosmic proportions:

> They have a wonderful effect on me, these catastrophes which I proofread. Imagine a state of perfect immunity, a charmed existence, a life of absolute security in the midst of poison bacilli. Nothing touches me, neither earthquakes nor explosions nor riots nor famine nor collisions nor wars nor revolutions. I am inoculated against every disease, every calamity, every sorrow and misery. It's the culmination of a life of fortitude. (Miller, *TC* 151)

In "Inside the Whale" (1940), George Orwell was to attack Miller for his passive indifference:

> The passive attitude will come back, and it will be more consciously passive than before. Progress and reaction have both turned out to be swindles. Seemingly there is nothing left but quietism – robbing reality of its terrors by simply submitting to it. Get inside the whale (for you *are*, of course). Give yourself over to the world-process, stop fighting against it or pretending that you control it; simply accept it, endure it, record it. That seems to be the formula that any sensitive novelist is now likely to adopt. (Orwell 526)

Orwell goes on to describe Miller as "a completely negative, unconstructive, amoral writer, a mere Jonah, a passive accepter of evil, a sort of Whitman among the corpses." (Orwell 527)

However, it is important to differentiate between the depressed passivity of Clementine and Samuel S and the joyous discarding of responsibility of Henry Miller. The Henry Miller of *Tropic of Cancer* is passive in the sense that Sebastian Dangerfield would be passive if he lacked any moral sensibility at all. They share the same bubbling, anarchic *joie de vivre*, the same joyous appreciation of the quality of the moment:

> The wine is splashing between my legs, the sun is splashing through the bay window, and inside my veins there is a bubble and splash of a thousand crazy things that commence to gush out of me now pell-mell. (Miller, *TC* 22)

Henry Miller's vitality is closely associated with language: his joy and the anarchic flow of his words are the means by which he keeps the horror of the void at a sufficient distance for him to maintain his passivity:

> You are the sieve through which my anarchy strains, resolves itself into words. Behind the word is chaos. Each word a stripe, a bar, but there are not and never will be enough bars to make the mesh. (Miller, *TC* 18)

Herein lies the fundamental difference between Miller and Dangerfield; they are both aware of the futility of any attempt to keep the silent void at bay, but Miller refuses to allow himself to be worried by this knowledge. W.A. Gordon makes the point well:

> … even when He is describing his own personal experiences and feelings, (he) remains detached and relatively free of his environment. He is what Miller has always said of himself even as a child, at once a part of and totally independent of the life around him. He is gregarious and totally alone. He is Dostoievski's "underground man" who is filled with violence, but he lacks the self-doubts and tortured inner struggle that mark Dostoievski's heroes. (Gordon 85)

This is not to say that he does not feel misery and despair, but Miller's despair arises from specific causes that affect him personally, for instance the desolation in which Mona's departure from Paris leaves him. The prime cause of the Donleavy hero's despair is usually closely related to the sense he has of his loneliness in the void, but the artist in Miller treasures this same sense, and goes so far as to seek it out – but not in the sentimental, self-pitying way in which Balthazar B, for example, indulges himself in the poignancy of loneliness. Miller *chooses* loneliness and rejoices in it:

> It is not difficult to be alone if you are poor and a failure. An artist is always alone – if he *is* an artist. No what the artist needs is *loneliness*. (Miller, *TC* 72)

Ten years after the publication of *Tropic of Cancer* the British critic Cyril Connolly (1903-74) was to echo Miller's sentiments in *The Unquiet Grave* (1944, rev. 1951) when he wrote that the art that is forged from loneliness:

> … possesses the integrity and bleak exhilaration that are to be gained from the absence of an audience and from communion with the primal sources of unconscious life. (Connolly 79)

This is an important point; what ultimately differentiates Miller's worldview from that of a Donleavy hero is that he is an artist, and he sees everything that impinges upon his situation in relation to that fact. As an artist he chooses loneliness and he experiences its "bleak exhilaration", whereas Dangerfield, who runs away from loneliness, experiences only its desolation. Miller's world is "a world without hope, but no despair" (Miller, *TC* 156). As an artist he can confront the void and accept that nothing, apart from art, is of crucial significance in his life:

> I made up my mind that I would hold on to nothing, that I would expect nothing, that henceforth I would live as an animal, a beast of prey, a rover, a plunderer. (Miller, *TC* 104)

Having adopted this attitude to life, Miller can come to terms with death. For him it is not the ambivalent source of terror/ultimate peace envisaged by the Donleavy hero. For Miller the proximity of death to life represents the ultimate source of comedy:

> Behind my words are all those grinning, leering, skulking skulls, some dead and grinning a long time, some grinning as if they had lockjaw, some grinning with the grimace of a grin, the foretaste and aftermath of what is always going on. Clearer than all I see my own grinning skull, see the skeleton dancing in the wind, serpents issuing from the rotted tongue and the bloated pages of ecstasy slimed with excrement. And I join my slime, my excrement, my madness, my ecstasy to the great circuit which flows through the subterranean vaults of the flesh. (Miller, *TC* 255)

When Miller confronts death, in whatever form, he laughs satanically, takes on new life, and kicks his heels in the air with the most innocent joy:

> … my mind reverts to a book that I was reading only the other day. 'The town was a shambles; corpses, mangled by butchers and stripped by plunderers, lay thick in the streets; wolves sneaked from the suburbs to eat them; the black death and other plagues crept in to keep them company, and the English came marching on; the while the *danse macabre* whirled about the tombs in all the cemeteries …' Paris during the days of Charles the Silly! A lovely book! Refreshing, appetizing. I'm still enchanted by it. (Miller, *TC* 48)

Sexus, though written after *Tropic of Cancer*, takes for its subject matter the period of Miller's life before his self-imposed exile, when he was still living in New York. Death still does not represent a terror for Miller, so much so that Ihab Hassan calls it "an American comedy of dead or dying souls" (Hassan 1969. 90). One of the most hilarious passages in the book occurs after Mona has telephoned Miller at his office to inform him of her father's death. Juan Rico, a new employee, convinced that Miller must be sad, accompanies him to a skating rink, and together they roller-skate around and around – Miller himself putting up the most absurd exhilarating performance, describing his emotions thus:

> The thought that never in her life would Mona suspect what I was doing this minute gave me a demonic joy. (Miller, *S* 385)

Although the comic omnipresence of death remains a central concern of Miller's work, it is important to note the change that has occurred in the tone of the vision in the

eleven years separating the two books (the same gap, incidentally, as separates Donleavy's *The Ginger Man* from *The Saddest Summer of Samuel S*). As with Donleavy, there has been a mellowing of the tonal quality of the writing: the anger and the apocalypticism have been largely muted. Miller seems to have become more reconciled to the world, and this reconciliation has been accompanied by a vagueness, a loss of direction. *Sexus* lacks the passion of the earlier book, but this is not to say that it lacks vitality. The book is written as a gesture against the deadness and sterility of mediocrity. In a crucial passage, whose opening salvo is reminiscent of Dangerfield, Miller states his credo:

> *Can you let off a loud fart*? Listen, once I had ordinary brains, ordinary dreams, ordinary desires. I nearly went nuts. I loathe the ordinary. Makes me constipated. *Death* is ordinary – it's what happens to everybody. I refuse to die. I've made up my mind that I'm going to live forever. (Miller, *S* 426)

In this passage lies the essential difference between the visions of Henry Miller and J.P. Donleavy, for Miller's trajectory is increasingly optimistic, just as Donleavy's becomes darker and gloomier.

Both Henry Miller and J.P. Donleavy are novelists of outrage in Ihab Hassan's sense of the term, meaning novelists who write in response to their perception of the existence of a fundamental threat to the very being of man. Despite the significant similarities between the work of the two writers their writing followed divergent paths. In their first novels they shared a remarkably similar anarchic exuberance of spirit, but Donleavy's roguish wit became stilted. The comedy of *The Saddest Summer of Samuel S* and *The Onion Eaters* is laboured – a dark, black humour that serves only to emphasise the desolation that underlies it. The difference between the two authors can best be illustrated by a quotation from *Sexus*, where Henry Miller has set himself up as an analyst and offers this advice for the benefit of all potential patients:

> Lie down, then, on the soft couch which the analyst provides, and try to think up something different … rise up on your own two legs and sing with your own God-given voice. To confess, to whine, to complain, to commiserate, always demands a toll. To sing it doesn't cost you a penny … *But*, you quibble, how can I sing when the whole world is crumbling, when all about me is bathed in blood and tears? Do you realise that the martyrs sang when they were being burned at the stake? … They sang because they were full of faith … Between the planes and spheres of existence, terrestrial and superterrestrial, there are ladders and lattices. The one who mounts sings. He is made drunk and exalted by unfolding vistas. He ascends sure-footedly, thinking not of what lies below, should he slip and lose his grasp, but of what lies ahead. *Everything lies ahead* … To move forward clinging to the past is like dragging a ball and chain. The prisoner is not the one who has committed a crime, but the one who clings to his

> crime and lives it over and over. We are all guilty of crime, the great crime of not living life to the full. (Henry Miller, *S* 311-13)

Henry Miller could be speaking directly to any of Donleavy's post-Dangerfield heroes. The life-affirming vitality of this passage contrasts directly with *The Saddest Summer of Samuel S*, in which the eponymous hero occupies his weekly sessions of psychoanalysis bewailing his own predicament and, at the end of the novella, has a vision of his own death or possibly even suicide. In their terror of death Donleavy's heroes fall back increasingly onto their memories of the past, and are correspondingly less able to tolerate life in the present. For Henry Miller, however, death holds no terrors; he is able to contemplate it unflinchingly and laugh heartily at the joke it represents and, for most of the time, laughing and singing in his *danse macabre*, he enjoys life hugely.

Notes

1 http://www.jpdonleavycompendium.org/irish_top_100.html

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Paris as 'Other': George Moore, Kate Chopin and French literary escape routes[1]

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Abstract: *Even by as late as the 1890s, France – and especially Paris – represented what was other for Victorian society. This paper claims that Parisian pictures, as drawn by George Moore (notably in* Celibates *and* Esther Waters*) and Kate Chopin (in "Lilacs"), constitute gentle challenges to simplistic judgment and fundamentalist prejudice. Their portrayals are word pictures without the expected accompaniment of an obvious edifying lesson; they are neither overt nor threatening while, with dispassionate balance, they advance an insidiously persuasive case for reinterpretation of Victorian moral certainties. This essay further suggests that the Irishness of both writers may be a key factor in their artistic and modernist approaches.*

Defined sociologically, otherness is the distancing from a cultural norm of what is peripheral, marginal and incidental; it is the distancing of illicit danger from safe legitimacy; otherness is something dangerous and threatening. Additionally, it becomes an entity whose very separateness inspires curiosity, invites enquiring knowledge. The other is to be veiled – and unveiled. So much of that Jordanova definition (Jordanova 109-10) is instantly applicable to Paris and France as viewed by the English-speaking world of the late-Victorian or fin-de-siècle period: the country and its capital are thankfully distant, dangerous (whether temptingly or repulsively so), but yet arouse interest. Paris and France were portrayed thus, as politically, sociologically, morally, literarily and militarily 'other'. The recurring depictions of that otherness displayed black-and-white, Manichean polarities, chauvinistic judgement and fundamentalist prejudice. There were many reasons for such stances but a recent defence journal analysis of the military position in the nineteenth century provides a pithy summing up that is equally applicable to the world of literature at the time: its verdict was that Britain needed its neighbour in order to define itself.[2] That meant that the politico-military establishment could persuade itself three times in the course of the nineteenth century that France would invade, an attitude that defied objective logic, and particularly so in the wake of the 1870 French defeat by Prussia. Similarly, and with equal lack of good evidence, the image of invading French mores – via yellow-covered novels and their

sphere of influence – spawned a succession of alerts amongst those who were devoted to the cause of maintaining societal control through repelling French dirt, immorality and revolutionary tendencies. Those yellow books were "an instant signifier of immorality" (Flint 138. 287). The resultant prohibitions on what might be published are well-known; they caused angst and frustration to creative writers, from Trollope to Hardy, from George Moore to George Gissing. However, censorship and repression also generated resistance tactics. This essay will focus on some of the literary routes taken by George Moore (1852-1933) and Katherine O'Flaherty, better known as Kate Chopin (1851-1904), as they undermined the facile assumptions of Paris as dangerous other, and so broadened fiction's horizons. Texts that furnish interesting examples of their techniques include Chopin's story "Lilacs" (1894), Moore's novel *Esther Waters* (1894), and his stories "Mildred Lawson" and "Agnes Lahens" in *Celibates* (1895).

As far as is known, Moore and Chopin were not acquainted. Yet, while the degrees of their French and Irish experiences and heritage are not identical, they share many common features and there are remarkable congruities in their interests, reading, concerns, writings, and their subversion of contemporary taboos. George Moore, landlord, born in Ireland, and with distinguished Irish forebears, spent much time in the cultural whirl of Parisian literary and artistic circles in the 1870s. The influences of that period continued to permeate his literary output, both during his years in Dublin and later in London. Katherine O'Flaherty, who became Kate Chopin after her marriage, physically visited Paris only once in her life, on her honeymoon in 1870. However, her immersion in French language and literature, augmented by her Irish and Creole blood, furnished her with alternative models for life and literature. According to William Trevor, the writer's ability to perceive and render difference is aided by distance (Trevor, interview); distanced and sensitised to disparity by their genes, their history, and their exposure to linguistic diversity, Moore and Chopin were perfectly placed to discern and depict constraint, and to intimate the possibilities of greater freedom.

In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the 'otherness' of novels and literature emanating from, or influenced by, France was frequently an extremely hot topic in Britain. It was not clinically or scientifically defined but rather described polemically in the most lurid terms. Since parliamentary language is the phrase usually employed to indicate a degree of moderation and decorum, it is ironic that restraint was totally lacking in the phraseology used at the time in London's parliament (and outside it) to portray the fearsome qualities of the invading forces of French literature: bestial novels, noxious and licentious literature, immoral books, corrupting, impure, odious, obscene, filthy and indecent, garbage, depraved and lascivious, prurient detail, novels only fit for swine, death to a nation, the moral fibre of the Empire eaten out, Rome in the time of the Caesars, the great goddess Lubricity.[3] The excesses of those descriptions serve more than to gratify any sense of intellectual or moral superiority that we may feel today; they do more than provide the mild amusement we can derive from the type of fanatical and outrageous condemnation quoted by Bernard Shaw in *The Quintessence*

of Ibsenism. They constitute a benchmark and a yardstick against which the very different literary strategies of two contemporary writers may be measured and analysed. The word 'strategy' is used advisedly: in the cases of George Moore, a pioneering campaigner for literary freedom in the English novel, and of Kate Chopin, an artistic and courageous practitioner, the approaches are literarily skilful – and very definitely tactical. The Moore and Chopin responses belong neither to the Victorian school of the moralising novel, nor to the New Woman didacticism of the 1890s, nor yet again to direct journalistic confrontation mode; their reactions are more subtle and measured. In their prose, Paris and France take on greater complexity and authenticity, partly through an evanescence in depictions, and partly from the plurality of pictures, both qualities that are persuasively subversive of any simplistic or negative representation.

Just two contrasting images pertain to Paris and France in George Moore's bestselling novel of 1894, *Esther Waters.* One concerns the elopement of William, a footman, with Miss Peggy, a minor heiress. In William's account "We first went to Boulogne, that's in France; but everyone speaks English there ...Then we went on to Paris. The race-meetings is very 'andy – I will say that for Paris – half an hour's drive and there you are". Paris is "all the place for fashion and the shops is good". However Miss Peggy "got tired of it too, and we went to Italy" (209). In those few lines, France might be seen as an appropriate destination for the illicit lovers, yet it was one where William could consort with both Anglophone and English people. Paris is not presented as an exotic location but merely in terms of convenience to racecourses – the implicit comparison is with the relatively longer and more awkward journeys from London to Epsom, Ascot or York. It is also seen in terms of fashion and shops –very attractive to the ordinary citizen in the early years of the department stores – and they are, to all intents and purposes, morally neutral. Paris appears even more 'normal' when contrasted with William and Peggy's next destination, Italy. In William's words "A beast of a place – nothing but sour wine and all the cookery done in oil, and nothing to do but seeing picture-galleries" (210). In the context of the entire story, this episode is so brief that the vision of Paris is reduced to a mere aside, a city of no importance, defined in terms of proximity to racecourses and the absence of sour wine, a capital that doesn't either thrill or intimidate a mere footman. Far from posing a threat, or being a terrifying other, Paris is clearly manageable.

In *Esther Waters*, the second glimpse of a potential sphere of French influence occurs in the portrait of Miss Rice, a lady novelist who employs Esther as a servant, pays her above the going rate and treats her as a friend. Miss Rice's friends are "principally middle-aged ladies" (186). Most significantly, she herself is described as "one of those secluded maiden ladies so common in England, whose experience of life is limited to a tea-party, and whose further knowledge of life is derived from the yellow-backed French novels which fill their bookcases" (204). The yellow-backed French novels have obviously not made them depraved, nor have they in any way corrupted them, despite their protected environment. The presence of such books on their bookshelves can be

taken as indicative of their relative impotence in that regard; in turn, ownership of such volumes by Miss Rice and her like can actually bestow a certain middle-class respectability on the books. French novels are never again mentioned in this text. For the reader, their existence is peripheral to the central story and to any subplots. The reference is almost tangential, there is no allusion to any related controversy; however, Moore makes sure, not just to insinuate it, but to establish the innocence of such literature by safe, bourgeois association.

Paris is where Mildred Lawson in *Celibates* (1895) wants to go to study art and "be free". She had "once been fond of drawing ... she would do anything sooner than settle down with Alfred" (5). Prior to departure, this discontented and privileged young woman views Paris as the artists' Mecca and dreams of studying there and making excursions to paint landscapes. On arrival, the view from behind the lace curtains is less than exciting: "the street is dingy enough" and "I don't think much of Paris" (54). A few hours later, her opinion changes: "So happy was she in the sense of real emancipation from the bondage of home – so delighted was she in the spectacle of the great boulevard, now radiant with spring sunlight" (60). In rapid succession, we glimpse cafés, fancy cravats, aproned waiters, green absinthe, little shop girls in tight black dresses, and an arcade of shops (61). Mildred enjoys the good cuisine of a humble French café although it is hinted that her inclination might be to choose more formal and luxurious dining that is also available. Thus far, Paris has innocent attractions; yet daring artistic liberty is available, the freedom to reject working in the ladies' studio and to choose the men's studio where the artists' models are undraped (54). When a letter arrives, encouraging Mildred to join other painters at Barbizon near Fontainebleau, it dangles the combination of artistic opportunities, romantic possibilities and economic living in a beautiful setting (128). It is apparent to the reader that Paris and France provide desirable choice – not compulsion. Juxtaposed against the lifestyle available to Mildred in Sutton, Surrey – tennis parties with the neighbours, housekeeping for brother or husband (148) – the dice would appear heavily loaded in favour of France.

If it hadn't been for one particular English lady, Mildred might never have got to Paris. Initially, she lives there with that Mrs Fargus who is a *rara avis* for the period – an honours graduate from Oxford, and enthusiast for the philosophy of Frenchman Auguste Comte. Although she has all the externals of the dreaded bluestocking and a whiff of New Woman, Mrs Fargus is still eminently sensible, very caring and generous and obviously not diverted from what Victorian England might have considered an ethical lifestyle by any inescapable, malevolent Parisian forces, or by a French philosopher. Yet again, Moore reinforces the lesson: it is not a matter of England good, Paris bad; real life can never be that simplistic. Mildred is presented as a plausible personification of Victorian hypocritical inconsistencies – but she is also portrayed somewhat sympathetically, as a victim of the tight Victorian grip on young women of her milieu and lack of education. When she is caught, one by one, in the legendary Parisian traps (of sex, religion, money), one could infer that blame might be due more

to the masculinist and patriarchal culture of English society rather than to any predatory seductive forces of the immoral French.

Such an intimation is further underpinned by the allusion to Mildred's conversion to Roman Catholicism while in France. She explains her subsequent lack of religious practice and her *à la carte* attitude to beliefs by saying she is a "Newmanite" (202,204). This is a neat reversal of the blame game; it is Moore's quick reminder to readers about John Henry Newman whose departure to Roman Catholicism had split the Anglican communion, and additionally about the many upper class and intellectual British who, without any French influence, had turned from the Church of England to Rome. It was not necessary after all to cross the Channel to be swayed into changing religious affiliation.

In George Moore's 1886 novel *A Drama in Muslin*, Lord Dungory's compliments to women are in the French language, and the text describes the phrases as "the stock-in-trade of the old roué" (27). That suspect overtone is also attached to the conversations in French between Olive Lahens and her lover Lord Chadwick in the story "Agnes Lahens" in *Celibates.* As Olive's daughter, the naive Agnes, says to Lord Chadwick, "you used to speak French to mother. I never could understand why" (390). But the English peer and his mistress have chosen to associate that language with their illicit love, to use French to preserve secrecy and to enhance their private enjoyment. In favouring that linguistic choice – the language of diplomacy and the badge of a degree of education and privilege – French is appropriated by them for themselves, rather than making it 'other'. In the same tale, Lilian Dare (the name is not without significance) plans a *rendezvous* in Paris with Mr St. Clare. Once more, without any labouring of the point, it is made clear that their plan is hatched in Grosvenor Street and that any immorality is transferred from London to Paris, rather than the reverse. More than that, the French language is not to be the sole preserve of those whom the text portrays as debauched or *déclassé* – what Agnes did not comprehend previously, she would now understand as she has learned French at school. Thus, French is now also the language of the pure-minded, idealistic and innocent young girl: that social accomplishment, not to speak of Agnes's mix of innocence and purity, was surely espoused by Victorian society as a cultural norm, not rejected as other.

Although Katherine O'Flaherty, later to be Kate Chopin, was born in St Louis and spent much of her life between that city and New Orleans, the ethos of her environment and that of American society embodied all of what would be called Victorian strictures. Book publishing and circulation and content were controlled in much the same way as was done in England. Like George Moore, Chopin's literary influences were French and they included Daudet, Flaubert, Zola, and Maupassant. She translated stories by Maupassant and she read both 'yellow books' and *The Yellow Book.* Like Moore, she knew Edgar Degas. Like Moore, she too had her problems with censorious publishers and reviewers (Seyersted 52-9, 173-181). The Paris that the reader encounters in "Lilacs" is the home of Madame Adrienne Farival who, at the first perfume of lilac blossom[4] every year for the previous four years, has abandoned the city, without leaving word of her whereabouts, to return for a two-week stay to the convent in rural France

where she had once been a pupil. Her Parisian apartment with housekeeper and maid, her luxuries, her singing career, and her many adoring male admirers make up a life-style that stands in marked contrast to the simplicity of the convent rooms and to the orderly timetable of its affairs. The flavour of her Parisian existence is conveyed by her clothes, "a charming negligé", her pose "reclining negligently in the depths of a luxurious armchair" (222), her refreshment "a bottle of Château Yquem and a biscuit and my box of cigarettes" (225),the room "bright" and "in its accustomed state of picturesque disorder. Musical scores were scattered upon the open piano. Thrown carelessly over the backs of chairs were puzzling and astonishing-looking garments" (222). Sophie, the housekeeper, tells of the lovelorn M. Henri one year, and M. Paul the next year, who are prostrate with grief at Adrienne's unexplained absences. The picture is one that suggests, rather than mirrors, the wanton Paris conjured up and decried by moralists of the Victorian period. However, it simultaneously conveys a sophistication that is seductively elegant and very far from the standards intimated by the celebrated Mrs Beeton in decrying what she deemed a general French habit – that of gargling at table.[5]

From this exotic world, Adrienne brings rich gifts to the convent: a necklace of gems for the statue of the virgin, a silver and ebony crucifix, a richly embroidered altar cloth. She arrives in plain dress, with a simple black trunk, is put up in a bare white room, goes to mass each morning and sings in the choir on Sundays. Her attachment to the convent and its farm is patent: she even notices changes in the vegetable patch, views the extended poultry yard, and chats with the elderly gardener who reminisces about Adrienne's schoolgirl pranks. The nuns are welcoming and "It was to Adrienne indescribably sweet to rest there in soft low converse with this gentle-faced nun, watching the approach of evening" (221). "How infinitely calm, peaceful, penetrating was the charm of the verdant, undulating country spreading out on all sides of her!" (226). For Adrienne, this is the "haven of peace, where her soul was wont to come and refresh itself" (228). The contrast between Paris and province, metropolis and arcadia, could not be clearer. But just as Arcadia is merely an imagined rural paradise, an unsuspected, unparadisiacal reality surfaces in the place she has chosen for her spiritual and physical retreat. Adrienne notices the signs; yet, in the warmth of the reception accorded her by the ordinary nuns, she fails to read them. What does she see? a new picture of the Sacré-Cœur, a fresh coat of paint for the statue of St Joseph, but neglect of the Blessed Virgin's statue, and no sign of St Catherine's picture. Is it patriarchy in the ascendant and a banishing of the feminine? The Mother Superior was "dignity in person: large, uncompromising, unbending" and would not "so much as step outside the door of her private apartments to welcome this old pupil" (217). On Adrienne's next visit, she is not permitted to enter, her gifts to the convent are returned to her at the door together with a letter from the Mother Superior banishing her forever from the convent. The reasons are not disclosed in the text, there is no authorial comment. Adrienne weeps "with the abandonment of a little child" and her tears outside the door are matched by those of Sister Agathe within (228).

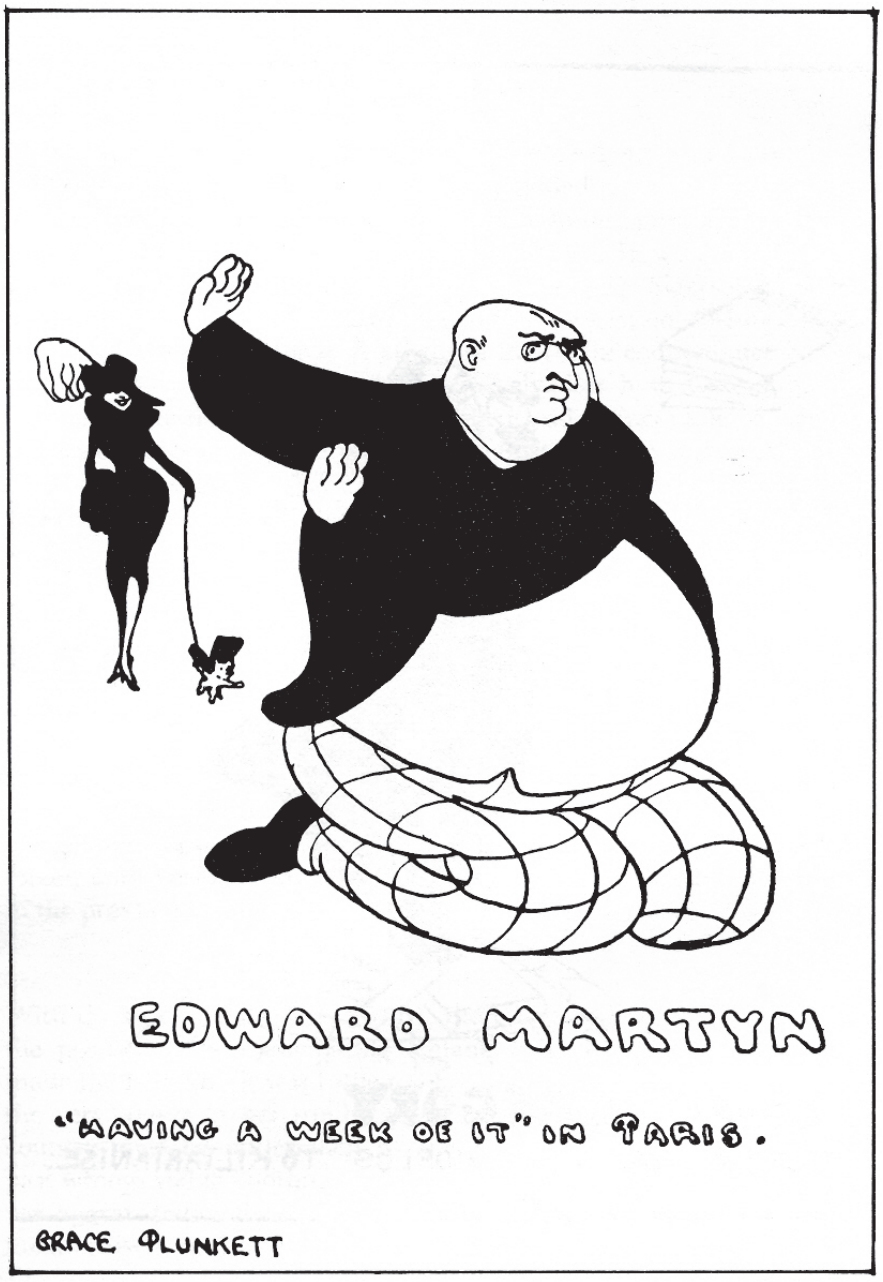
For readers, juxtaposition of Adrienne's Paris and her spiritual retreat must inevitably generate some re-evaluation of the assumed location of virtue, a reconsideration of the needs of the total person, an assessment of the proper relationship between charity and the rule of law – and maybe, in the light of the harsh regime in a supposed pastoral paradise, a greater degree of reluctance to see Paris as 'other'. Hothouse roses are the blooms of Adrienne's Parisian apartment, lilacs are the flowers of the countryside –and this story ends as Adrienne's lilac blossoms are swept away from the convent portico. That symbolic gesture is indicative of a cold, barren and colourless time in Arcadia.

The inclusion of reference to religion, and particularly to Roman Catholicism, is worthy of note since both Chopin and Moore had family background and education in that church. In "Mildred Lawson" and in "Lilacs" lurk the shadows of issues connected with ultramontanism, especially its controlling and constraining nature in comparison with images of the Celtic or the Gallican churches prior to the first Vatican Council of 1868.[6] The conflict between ultramontane structure and national church revolved around a more rigid control from Rome or a greater freedom locally, and this was increasingly so following the declaration of papal infallibility (opposed by Newman) at the Council. Thus, additional juxtaposition of inflexibility and self-determination is interleaved into the Moore and Chopin stories. As patriarchal domination is seen to impoverish and to be impoverished, its authority is effectively challenged and its verdicts on the 'other' made suspect.[7]

In painting and generating pictures of Paris, George Moore and Kate Chopin provide sketches of a city that is 'other' in various senses, some of which are blameless and attractive. With signals that confound the disapproving certainty of the censorious, Paris is depicted as a place to which one might legitimately escape for a brighter, fuller, warmer existence without being dragooned into iniquity. Chopin and Moore subvert the picture of Paris as predatory and evil, and, to an extent, they reverse the location of any putative problem by indicating that potential wrongdoing arises both nearer home and in pastoral settings. In more than one sense, these authors proffer escape in literary terms also, because in choosing to float the suggestion of Parisian excellence and reality past the reader, both authors have lifted the literary debate to a higher plane and have made their riposte in truly literary terms. They have not engaged in journalistic polemic or its inflammatory language. To employ Vance Packard's mid-twentieth century terminology, they use hidden persuaders. In more lofty Aristotelian terms, their rhetoric is persuasive because their truth is made apparent rather than argued.

Since portrayals of Thomas O'Flaherty and George Henry Moore (fathers of the two authors) evince considerable similarity (Seyersted 14-16; Frazier 2-4, 7-12, 95, 115), one might venture to attribute some degree of the shared visions of George Moore and Kate Chopin to their Irishness. Certainly, awareness of colonial reality and discrimination, together with familiarity with different and mixed races, and exposure to varied cultural experiences, were key ingredients[8] in making Moore and Chopin aware

of the wide spectrum of humankind, and in rendering them keenly responsive to the need for broader horizons than restrictive society might envisage and decree in the late-nineteenth century. That heritage infiltrates their compositions and contributes to their potential classification as modernist – not just in the formal elements of lack of omniscient narrators, or in the absence of 'closed' endings but in their definite rejection of the binary certainties that were a key element of the novelistic tradition that had preceded them, one that generally defined Paris as 'other'.



Notes

1 An earlier version of this paper was given at the conference of the British Association for Victorian Studies (George Moore panel) in Cheltenham in September 2005.

2 http://www.royalsoced.org.uk/events/conf2004/entente_cordiale.pdf. "The Entente Cordiale: War and Empire" by Prof Hew Strachan, Oxford. First published in *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute* and *Defense Nationale* in April 2004. Peter Keating suggests in *The Haunted Study*. (London: Secker & Warburg, 1989) that France rather than French fiction caused problems for "moral protesters" (129).

3 Characteristic examples from Parliamentary debates in May 1888.

4 This triggering of memory by sensory stimulus antedates Proust's madeleines by over a decade.

5 Mrs Beeton's *Book of Household Management*, 1859-1861.

6 Intimated also in Moore's *The Lake* (1905).

7 In "Lilacs", the 'demotions' of St Catherine and the Virgin are consonant with the patriarchal tone of the ultramontane while the 'elevation' of the Sacré Cœur typifies its devotional program; in "Mildred Lawson", similar rigidity is located in the Anglican Communion (246).

8 For the relationship with "*littérature mineure*", see my "His Father's Son: the political inheritance" in *George Moore: Artistic Visions and Literary Worlds* (Cambridge Scholars Press, forthcoming).

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Drama

Faith Healer

Robert Tracy

What is Hell? Hell is oneself,
Hell is alone, the other figures in it
Merely projections.
T. S. Eliot, *The Cocktail Party*

Abstract: *This essay discusses the balance between theatricality and anti-theatricality in* Faith Healer*, by Brian Friel, and argues that the play draws inspiration from drama as ritual and from medieval and mystery plays.*

Faith Healer is at once a profoundly theatrical and a deliberately anti-theatrical play. It is theatrical because it is essentially and self-consciously about theatrical action, performance. At the same time, Friel thwarts our expectations as theater-goers by never showing us any of the dramatic events that shaped the lives of Frank, Grace, and Teddy, his three characters.

Frank, the Faith Healer, requires a theatre and an audience for his acts of healing. Teddy is his manager, a man of the theater, who hires a church or a chapel or a parish hall for each evening's performance. Grace, Frank's wife, sets up a table near the door and collects money before or after the performance. Teddy is responsible for lighting and for playing a recording of Fred Astaire singing Jerome Kern's "The Way You Look Tonight" at the beginning of each performance as a way of relaxing the audience, letting them know that the performance is beginning, and perhaps as an ironic commentary on the lame, the halt, and the blind who comprise the audience. When Friel's play begins, fifteen chairs are arranged in three rows at stage right, suggesting that the real audience assembled in a theatre for Friel's play might be joined by an audience of Welsh or Scottish villagers hoping – or fearing – to experience a miracle. In *Living Quarters* Friel drew on Euripides's *Hippolytus* to give his play resonance. In *Faith Healer* he goes even further back, to the origins of European theatre in rituals of sacrifice and in medieval miracle and mystery plays.

Friel defies the advice usually given to aspiring playwrights: don't tell us what happened, *show* us what happened. This play's action is entirely verbal. *Faith Healer*

consists of four long monologues, by Frank, Grace, Teddy, then Frank again, each containing a general account of the trio's way of life on the road as they carried their act from village to village, but each describing certain crucial events in mutually contradictory ways.

There is little stage movement. Frank paces about while speaking; Grace sits at a table and smokes; Teddy drinks some beer, plays his Astaire recording for us, tells us anecdotes about performing dog acts he has managed, and about Miss Mulatto's inexplicable rapport with her pigeons. Teddy's stories are the only attempt at entertainment in the conventional sense. Friel is willing to risk boring his audience by defying the Aristotelian definition of drama as "men acting" and giving us only talk. He even omits dialogue.

Anthony Roche has rightly compared *Faith Healer* to Beckett's *Play* (Roche 114-15). There too three immobile actors deliver monologues. They are controlled by a spotlight: an actor *must* speak when the light is on him or her, cannot speak otherwise. The actors are confined in large jars, with only their heads visible. They can neither act nor move, only speak. Between them they piece together a story of a triangle of man, wife, and mistress which seems to be their mutual story, though they cannot hear or see each other. Nor can we be sure that the story we piece together is their shared story. Adultery is hardly rare, and the story a common one. The man and the two women may have participated in three separate triangles, their apparent proximity an accident of Hell's topography or penal system. They communicate only with us. All three are dead, and presumably in Hell. Beckett's Hell is a place where the dead must speak but cannot be heard. And it is eternal: when the seven minute play has been performed, the actors come to a stage direction: "*Repeat play*" (Beckett 157). The play must go on, in an infinite number of repetitions, though Beckett's text mercifully releases us after only a few lines have been repeated for the third time. He has given us a glimpse of Hell as boring, repetitious, and unending. Like the repeated rehearsals of Commandant Frank Butler's last day on earth in *Living Quarters*, Beckett's characters are trapped in an endless recapitulation of their past, aware of what went wrong but unable to change anything. Friel's characters are also in Hell. Frank speaks from beyond the grave, Grace dies after her monologue, Teddy lives on only in the impotence of memory and regret.

Despite its lack of action and dialogue, *Faith Healer* reaches an almost unbearable degree of intensity as the three narrators recount what they saw and felt as they traveled through what Frank calls the "dying" (Friel 1984, 332) villages of Wales and Scotland. Friel has crafted both the theatricality and the anti-theatricality of his play to force us toward the overwhelming question, the reality of Frank's power to heal, which is itself dependent on his faith, his conviction that he can do so. A play succeeds when the actors believe they can become the characters they are portraying, and can persuade the audience to share that belief. Frank always knows when he is to succeed or fail, that is, when he is to feel the power or confidence that will cure those who come, at once hopeful and skeptical, to seek his aid. Though he conducts his healing sessions in buildings that exist for Christian rituals, he never refers to any god, Christian or otherwise.

He refers to himself as a "mountebank" and limits his activities to Great Britain's Celtic fringe, "because Teddy and Gracie were English and they believed, God help them, that the Celtic temperament was more receptive to us" (loc. cit) – a crass recapitulation of Yeats's belief that the Irish of the western seaboard retained visionary powers and an access to the supernatural that had been lost by the better-educated and the sophisticated.

Nevertheless, Frank believes that he really can and does cure some of the people who come to his performances. Behind the worn Astaire record and the shabby chapels there is his faith in the reality of his curative power. Friel's delicate balance of theatricality and anti-theatricality masks a powerful reality, Frank's belief that he is at times possessed by some power of healing, and can feel its presence or absence. It is a dangerous thing to have because it separates him from ordinary people and the possibilities of a normal life. It involves a kind of empathy, so that he feels the pain of those who come to him, as Christ is said to have felt the sins and the pain of all those He came to save. Frank Hardy is the prophet, the artist, the outcast, who must suffer and die because he sees and feels more than anyone can bear to see and feel. Friel himself has described *Faith Healer* as a "study of the artist's life and death struggle" (Friel 1999, 144). Frank's cures are, like theatre, like art, an illusion that is about truth.

"Faith healer – faith healing," Frank intones:

> A craft without an apprenticeship, a ministry without responsibility, a vocation without a ministry. How did I get involved? As a young man I chanced to flirt with it and it possessed me. No, no, no, no, no – that's rhetoric.
> No; let's say I did it ... because I could do it. That's accurate enough. And occasionally it worked – oh, yes, occasionally it *did* work. Oh, yes. And when it did, when I stood before a man and placed my hands on him and watched him become whole in my presence, those were nights of exaltation, of consummation – no, not that I was doing good, giving relief, spreading joy – good God, no, nothing at all to do with that; but because the questions that undermined my life then became meaningless and because I knew that for those few hours I had become whole in myself, and perfect in myself, and in a manner of speaking, an aristocrat, if the term doesn't offend you (Friel 1984, 333).[1]

At such moments Frank cures himself.

Set against these moments of exaltation, of wholeness and self-curing are the doubts and fears that every true artist knows:

> Was it all chance? – or skill? – or illusion? – or delusion?
> Precisely what power did I possess? Could I summon it? When and how? Was I its servant? Did it reside in my ability to invest someone with faith in me or did I evoke in him a healing faith in himself? Could my healing be effected without faith? But faith in what? – in me? – in the possibility? – faith in faith? And is the power diminishing? You're beginning to masquerade,

> aren't you? You're becoming a husk, aren't you? And so it went on and on and on. Silly, wasn't it? Considering that nine times out of ten nothing at all happened. But they persisted right to the end, those nagging, tormenting, maddening questions that rotted my life.
> When I refused to confront them, they ambushed me.And when they threatened to submerge me, I silenced them with whiskey (*SP* 333-4).

But, Frank adds, "I always knew when *nothing* was going to happen" (italics mine), when he was to undergo a numinous vastation, the awful experience of absence.

Frank's uncertainties about his power, which we share, are underlined by the uncertainties about almost everything he tells us about himself and his two companions. His poster calls him "The Fantastic Francis Hardy," a fantasy and a producer of fantasies. "It wasn't that he was simply a liar," Grace tells us. "[...] it was some compulsion he had to adjust, to refashion, to re-create everything around him. Even the people who came to him [...] they were real enough, but not real as persons, real as fictions, his fictions, extensions of himself that came into being only because of him." Grace is describing a novelist or a playwright. To heal is to remake, to alter a story is to remake, and both processes aim to improve. "It seemed to me that he kept remaking people according to some private standard of excellence of his own," Grace says. "[...] It was always an excellence, a perfection, that was the cause of his restlessness and the focus of it" (*SP* 345-6).

The kind of factual truth that Tom Hoffnung craves in *Aristocrats* is hard to come by in *Faith Healer*, but the fluidity of apparent fact is not like Casimir's annexation of family legends and national celebrities. The main events of *Faith Healer* occur off stage, so we cannot evaluate them for ourselves, only listen to each character's account. We are also given variorum information about backgrounds and identities. Frank tells us that Grace was his mistress, and came from Yorkshire (*SP* 335), but she says she is his wife of seven years and, like Brien Friel, comes from Knockdoyle, just outside Omagh in County Tyrone (*SP* 347); Teddy confirms her Irish identity. Frank describes his father as a police sergeant at Kilmeedy, County Limerick (*SP* 333); Grace says he was a factory storeman in Limerick, but "Frank made him a stonemason and a gardener and a bus-driver and a guard and a musician," as readily as he gives her name as "Dodsmith or Elliot or O"Connell or McPherson" or McClure (*SP* 345-6). Their separate accounts of the main events in the story the three characters share reveal more serious discrepancies. At Llanbethian in Wales, Frank cured ten people in a single night; at Kinlochbervie in Scotland Grace gave birth to a stillborn child and buried it in a field; at Ballybeg in Ireland Frank failed to cure a paralytic and was beaten to death by the man's friends.

Frank carries a clipping from the *West Glamorgan Chronicle* describing his Llanbethian cure of ten people " 'of a variety of complaints ranging from blindness to polio,' "but he threw the clipping away that night in Ballybeg, and he throws it away again during his second monologue (*SP* 371). As with the ten lepers Christ cured, an analogy he hints at,

only one comes back to thank him: "an old farmer who was lame." Grace never mentions this spectacular group cure, though she does speak of "the old farmer outside Cardiff" who rewarded Frank generously "for curing his limp," and the four luxurious nights they then spent at a Cardiff hotel (*SP* 371, 343). Teddy remembers the curing of ten people, the lame farmer's generous reward, Frank and Grace exultantly dancing through the empty church, and their four days at the hotel (*SP* 359-60).

Kinlochbervie is a starker and more wrenching event. "Kinlochbervie's where the baby's buried, two miles south of the village, in a field on the left-hand side of the road as you go north," Grace tells us "*Quietly, almost dreamily*," when we see her alone and trying to maintain her sanity after Frank's death. They had taken some time out and relaxed there for a week (Frank; *SP* 337, 370); they happened to be there (Grace; *SP* 344); they were stranded there when their caravan's axle broke and they had a long wait before it could be towed to a place where it might be repaired, because the only man with a tractor was at sea on a trawler (Teddy; *SP* 362-3). Frank and Teddy remember how lovely the village seemed, and how they could see across to the Isle of Lewis (*SP* 337, 362), but Grace says it rained and nothing could be seen (*SP* 344). It was there that Frank received news that his mother had died in Dublin, and hurried home alone to her funeral after a twenty years absence, where he wept with his father (*SP* 337-8, 370). Grace, however, says he learned of his *father's* death while they were in Wales, but "when he came back he spoke of the death as if it had been his mother's [...] his mother had been dead for years when I first met him" *(SP* 346).

Frank assures us that Grace was barren (*SP* 372), but Grace and Teddy both describe her giving birth to a dead child in their caravan outside Kinlochbervie. Grace's account is curiously detached, but Frank is present at her labor, and when they bury the little corpse he makes a cross, paints it white, and inscribes it "*Infant Child of Francis and Grace Hardy*." "He never talked about it afterwards," she adds; "never once mentioned it again; and because he didn't, neither did I. So that was it" *(SP* 344-5). Teddy gives us a more circumstantial account, of Grace shrieking and bloody during her labor, stretched on the floor of the van, of her unnatural calm – "she was so fantastic," Frank's totemic word – as she holds the corpse. Teddy tells us *he* made the cross to mark the grave. Frank had removed himself from the scene as soon as Grace went into labor. "To walk away deliberately when your wife's going to have your baby in the middle of bloody nowhere," exclaims Teddy, recalling the event;

> I mean to say, to do that deliberately, that's some kind of bloody-mindedness, isn't it? And make no mistake, dear heart: it was deliberate, it was bloody-minded.
> 'Cause as soon as she starts having the pains, I go looking for him, and there he is heading up the hill, and I call after him, and I know he hears me, but he doesn't answer me. Oh, Christ, there really was a killer instinct deep down in that man! (*SP* 363).

When Frank returns, after the burial, he is cheerful, talkative, uncharacteristically eager to discuss plans for where they should go next, so much so that he almost persuades Teddy that he does not know what has happened:

> But then suddenly in the midst of all this great burst of interest I see him glancing into the van with the corner of the eye – not that there was anything to see; I had it all washed out by then – but it was the way he done it and the way he kept on talking at the same time that I *knew* that *he* knew; and not only that he knew but that he knew it all right down to the last detail. And even though the old chatter never faltered for a minute [...] somehow I got the feeling, I *knew* that he *had* to keep talking because he had suffered all that she had suffered and that now he was ... about to collapse. [...] And many a time since then I get a picture of him going up that hill [...] walking fast with his head down and pretending he doesn't hear me calling him. And I've thought maybe – course it was bloody-minded of him! I'm not denying that! – but maybe being the kind of man he was, you know, with that strange gift he had, I've thought maybe – well, maybe he had to have his own way of facing things... (*SP* 364-5).

The circumstances of Frank's murder at Ballybeg are also discrepant, apart from the fact of the murder itself. Back in Ireland for the first time in twelve years, Frank and Grace feel that they have come home, but it is an ominous sense of homecoming. In a Donegal pub – corrected to "lounge bar" – they encounter four wedding guests continuing to celebrate after the bride and groom have departed. Frank says the four men initiated a conversation (*SP* 339), but Grace recalls that Frank took the initiative (*SP* 352); Teddy remembers Frank and Grace as warmly welcomed and at the center of a group that opened to include them (*SP* 367). Grace sang "Ilkley Moor" (Frank; 339), as befitted a Yorkshire lass, or Thomas Moore's "Believe me, if all those endearing young charms" (Teddy; *SP* 367). Donal, one of the wedding guests, had a bent finger; he challenged Frank to cure it, and he did (*SP* 339). But Grace tells us Frank offered to straighten that finger and did so, then "turned immediately to me and gave me an icy, exultant, theatrical smile and said, 'That's the curtain-raiser'" (*SP* 352). She knew then that he was going to attempt to cure the paralyzed McGarvey, who was already present (Grace) or had to be fetched from some distance away (Frank; *SP* 340, 372, 374).

When the wedding guests urge him to cure the absent/present McGarvey, Frank *sees* him "in my mind," and

> saw his strained face and his mauve hands and his burning eyes, crouched in his wheelchair and sick with bitterness. Saw him and knew him before Teddy in his English innocence asked why he wasn't there; before Ned told us of the fall from the scaffolding and the paralysis. Saw him and recognized our meeting: an open place, a walled yard, trees, orange skies, warm wind. And knew, knew with cold certainty that nothing was going to happen. Nothing at all (*SP* 340).

Frank knows that the cure will fail. He is even warned by the barman that the wedding guests are

> 'savage bloody men. And there's nothing you can do for McGarvey – nothing nobody can do for McGarvey. You know that.' 'I know that,' I said. 'But if you do nothing for him, Mister, they'll kill you. I know them. They'll kill you.' 'I know that, too,' I said (*SP* 374).

Nevertheless, Frank chooses the fate he has already foreseen. At dawn he goes out to meet McGarvey and the wedding guests, knowing the cure will fail and that they will destroy him. He does so, Friel implies, because the stakes are higher in Ireland, because the supernatural is taken more seriously, as Yeats discovered when an audience protested because "an evil peasant" trampled on a cross in *The Countess Cathleen*. "In using what I considered to be traditional symbols," Yeats wrote, "I forgot that in Ireland they are not symbols but realities" (Yeats 279).

When he confronts McGarvey, Frank can no longer live with his power, but he cannot live without it either. For him it is powerfully real, and at once a gift and a burden. Many saints, especially those subject to mystical experiences, have found their sanctity an ordeal. The stigmata, for example, is a sign of divine approbation, but it is also extremely painful. Frank's power is a manifestation of the arbitrariness of grace – and yes, the pun is intended. It is Friel's, not mine. Liar and drunkard that he is, Frank is nevertheless possessed at times by some force that he feels but cannot understand, or completely control.

The power brings with it a devastating empathy. When Frank enters a hall or chapel he feels the pain of those who await him. More acutely, he feels their impossible hope for healing and their craving to be disappointed. Those who seek him out are like McGarvey, incurable, or so they think. They have come to him to be freed from hope, and at the same time with an awful fear that they will be cured, that the laws of nature will be set aside:

> They were a despairing people. That they came to me, a mountebank, was a measure of their despair [...]And they hated me – oh, yes, yes, yes, they hated me. Because by coming to me they exposed, publicly acknowledged, their desperation. And even though they told themselves they were here because of the remote possibility of a cure, they knew in their hearts they had come not to be cured but for confirmation that they were incurable; not in hope but for the elimination of hope; for the removal of that final, impossible chance – that's why they came – to seal their anguish, for the content of a finality.
> And they knew that I knew. And so they defied me to endow them with hopelessness. But I couldn't do even that for them [...] Because occasionally, just occasionally, the miracle would happen. And then – panic – panic – panic! [...] The sudden flooding of dreadful, hopeless hope! (*SP* 337).

Those moments of wholeness that Frank experiences after he has performed a cure are achieved by the arousal of false hope, the agonies of hope denied, by what Frank perceives as his victimization of those who seek him out. It is for this that he must atone with his own life behind the lounge bar in Ballybeg.

For this, and for trafficking in magic, in the miraculous. Frank does not understand his power, nor how and why he has it, but he comes to understand how dangerous it is. Teddy, who manages artists, describes them as ambitious, possessed of "sensational" talent, and profoundly ignorant about their gift: "what it is they have, how they do it, how it works, what that sensational talent is, what it all means – believe me, they don't know and they don't care" (*SP* 355). But Frank cares.

Frank's performance in churches and chapels, and his dark overcoat and suit, make him vaguely priestlike. He prepares himself for a performance with that Friel calls "incantation": a chanted litany of Welsh and Scottish place-names that looks back to the Old Irish *dinnshenchas*, the lore of place names which makes each one an encapsulated myth, and forward forward to the preoccupation with place names in *Translations* and the love scene between Maire and Yolland in that play, in which they tell over to one another the local place names. Frank recites these names, Grace tells us, "releasing them from his mouth in that special voice he used only then, as if he were blessing them or consecrating himself (*SP* 343-4). "Aberarder, Aberayron," Frank intones, as the play begins:

> Llangranog, Llangurig,
> Abergorlech, Abergynolwyn,
> Llandefeilog, Llanerchymedd,
> Aberhosan, Aberporth... (*SP* 331-2).

This chanting of place names recurs from time to time in Frank's and Grace's monologues to suggest the foreignness, the otherness of the places where Frank performs, but also as an exotic incantatory language, an abracadabra.

When Grace begins to speak, she has had a breakdown, and is being treated by a conventional doctor who lacks Frank's dangerous power. She bravely tries to believe the doctor is helping her, that she is getting better. But she too chants that place name incantation, adding what is for her the most powerful and evocative name of all: "Aberarder, Kinlochbervie,/Aberayron, Kinlochbervie,/ Invergordon, Kinlochbervie..." She ends her monologue with a cry for a miracle:

> how I want that door to open – how I want that man to come across that floor and put his white hands on my face and still this tumult inside me – O my God I'm one of his fictions too, but I need him to sustain me in that existence – O my God I don't know if I can go on without his sustenance (*SP* 353).

It is the only conventional prayer in the play, and it is unanswered. We learn from Teddy that Grace committed suicide exactly a year after Frank's murder.

Like Frank himself, Grace is a victim of Frank's gift. Her role was to reassure him, to proclaim to him her belief in his power, even as he probed her "affirmations for the hair crack, tuned for the least hint of excess or uncertainty, but all the same, all the same drawing sustenance from me – oh, yes, I'm sure of that – finding some kind of

sustenance in me – I'm absolutely sure of that, because finally he drained me, finally I was exhausted" (*SP* 342). Frank values her because she is a rationalist, trained as a solicitor. If he can convince her of his power, he can perhaps fully believe in it himself. In Frank's account, she is a skeptic and a scoffer.

Grace has left behind her training as a solicitor and her comfortable past as a judge's daughter. When she visits her father she is a more rebellious version of Judith in *Aristocrats*, her father, alone in his big house outside Omagh, a less senile version of Judge O'Donnell, the house a Ballybeg Hall in better repair. Something in her responds to Frank despite his cruelty and drunkenness. Trained in logic and order, she leaves order for the squalor of life on the road with Frank and Teddy, sleeping in the caravan or in abandoned cottages. She too seems to be expiating something – her father's rigor, her mother's madness – almost as a kind of coda to *Aristocrats*.

> Frank's gift is her rival, the thing that comes between them. She recalls him "before a performance" in such complete mastery that everything is harmonized for him, in such mastery that anything is possible [...] looking past you out of his completion, out of that private power, out of that certainty that was accessible only to him. God, how I resented that privacy! (*SP* 343).

At such times she feels, not just exclusion but

> an erasion – this erasion was absolute: he obliterated me.
> Me who tended him, humoured him, nursed him, nursed him, sustained him – who debauched myself for him [...] And when I remember him like that in the backof the van, God how I hate him again (*SP* 344).'

Grace comes to admit her hostility to Frank's gift of healing "I never understood it, never," she tells us: "this gift, this craft, this talent, this art, this magic – whatever it was he possessed, that defined him, that was, I suppose, essentially him. And because it was his essence and because it eluded me I suppose I *was* wary of it" (*SP* 349). It is unnerving to be close to the supernatural, the uncanny, the divine. In the legend of Semele a woman Zeus loves demands to see him in his divine guise, and is blasted into nothingness because her human nature cannot contemplate his divinity. In "Leda and the Swan" Yeats speculates on the nature of sexual congress between divine and human. Mounted by Apollo, did Leda "put on his knowledge with his power?" Grace is destroyed

because she came too close to the mystery, and Frank made her the focus of his fear that he might lose his power: "he insisted on dragging me into feud between himself and his talent" (*SP* 350).

Near the end, Frank "seemed to have lost touch with his gift," and may have believed that Ireland "might somehow recharge him, maybe even restore him" (*SP* 351). That last night in Ballybeg, Grace knew he was "going to measure himself against the cripple in the wheelchair" and begged him not to try, but by this time he was alone with his gift, or its terrible withdrawal: "he looked at me, no, not at me, not at me, past me, beyond me, out of those damn benign eyes of his; and I wasn't there for him..." (*SP* 352-3).

Frank meets his death at the hands of the wedding guests, four young men who have stayed on in the pub, perhaps drinking in the wedding's aftermath to assuage their own frustrations in an Ireland still skittish about marriage. They seem deceptively welcoming to Frank and his companions, a version of one of those *Bord Failte* posters showing the warm welcome awaiting the tourist in "Ireland of the Welcomes." They also initiate the presence of a sinister and violent pagan element in Friel's Irish landscapes, continued by the references to the unseen Donnelly twins in *Translations*, an apparent human sacrifice in *Wonderful Tennessee*, and primitive fire ceremonies in the Donegal hills in *Dancing at Lughnasa*. Friel's Ballybeg is a place where the past is always present, in memory or in these oblique references to the survival of ancient rituals.

In his last moments, Frank defies augury and steps forward to test a power he no longer feels and to meet his doom. "Ripeness is all," and he is ready for what must come. In doing so he himself passes into what Anthony Roche calls a "perpetual present" (Roche 114), maintained whenever *Faith Healer* is performed and Frank, Grace, and Teddy relive their times together. Friel reworks the repeated performances of Frank Butler's last day of life that is the device of *Living Quarters*. In *Living Quarters* Frank Butler's family endlessly play over in their minds that last day. Each of them re-enacts what he or she did during the events leading up to Butler's suicide, hoping *this* time that what happened will be changed. Yeats used a similar device in *Purgatory*, when the Old Man watches his parents re-enact his conception and tries to end his mother's ambiguous purgatory by killing his own son so that the consequences of her marriage with an inferior will end without further racial and social degeneration – only to find that the re-enactment will continue. Frank Hardy, story teller, mythmaker, has escaped from life into the permanence of art. Can we call it a kind of resurrection?

Note

1 All further references to Friel's *Selected Plays* will be included in the text as *SP*.

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History and Culture

The Irish in the Caribbean[1]

James E. Doan

Abstract: *This paper is a historical account of the Irish immigration and colonization in the 1600s. It also analyses how the Irish turned from white slaves into an Irish entrepreneurial class in the 18th century.*

Although legend has it that Christopher Columbus stopped in Galway on a journey to the North Atlantic ca. 1490, there is no evidence that any Irishmen accompanied him on his four journeys to the Caribbean between 1492 and 1504. However, 500 years later, traces of subsequent Irish trade, piracy, and immigration (both voluntary and involuntary) permeate the region. How did this Irish presence come about? For example, the island of Montserrat in the Leeward Islands of the eastern Caribbean was covered by rain forests providing shelter and sustenance to the Arawak Indians when Columbus arrived there in 1493, though they were gradually decimated by disease and slavery. In 1632, British and Irish colonists began to arrive from the neighboring island of St. Kitts, probably accompanied by a few African slaves. Today, the population is more than 90% black, with its parent stock mainly of West African origin but, when asked about his nationality, a Montserratian is likely to say, "Mon, I'm Irish!" The spirit of the early Irish settlers pervades all aspects of island life, and it is known as the Emerald Isle of the Caribbean. Many of the place names are Irish, as are some 30% of the surnames of the black residents, e.g., Sweeney, Riley, O'Brien and Kelly. (Fallon 1993, 18) The traditional musical instruments on the island are the fife and drum; one of the folk dances, called "heel and toe," bears a strong similarity to the jig; the national dish, "Goatwater," may derive from the Irish stew; and island residents celebrate St. Patrick's Day with exuberance.(Fallon 1991, 13)

During the 1600s Irish Catholics began appearing in every mainland American colony, particularly Virginia and Maryland. Names such as "New Ireland" and "New Munster" designated tracts of land set aside for Irish settlers and their servants. However, the most visible settlement of Irish Catholics in the 17th century was in the West Indies, largely because Irish-born governors of the Caribbean islands encouraged their fellow countrymen to emigrate, and because the predominant southern Irish trade routes brought Catholics to colonies dominated by plantation agriculture. (Miller 139, 144) The British and Irish settled on St. Kitts in 1623, Barbados in 1627, Nevis in 1628, Antigua and Montserrat in 1632. The most important of these settlements was Barbados (Collier

212) and by 1666 the white population of the island was about 1/5 Irish. On Montserrat the ratio was reversed and there were six Irish to every English colonist (Pulsipher 42) By 1678, the Irish comprised about 1/3 of the free inhabitants of the Leeward Islands (Miller 139).

Regarding settlement in the western Caribbean, in 1629 Charles I of England claimed the Bahamas, deeding them, along with Carolina, to Sir Robert Heath, who never established his intended colony. The first permanent colony in the Bahamas was established on the island of Eleuthera in 1648, when religious and political strife between Anglican Royalists and Puritan Republicans was tearing apart the English colonies. In 1647 William Sayle, a Puritan who had served two terms as governor of Bermuda, sought funds in London to establish another colony, to be located on "Eleutheria and the Bahama Islands," with "Eleutheria" from the Greek "eleuthros" ("freedom"). Sayle specified freedom in his colony to mean that there would be republicanism, a single legislature and religious toleration, but not the abolition of rights of property or privilege (Bregenzer 21).

An investment of £1000 made one an "Eleutherian Adventurer." Few of these adventurers actually emigrated to the Bahamas. They were shareholders in a commercial venture and probably never recouped their investment. Sayle's scheme raised enough money to finance the voyage of 70 colonists, mostly from Bermuda. Among the settlers were Currys and possibly Kellys with Irish origins, and their descendants continue to live in Eleuthera and the Abaco island group. (Riley 1983) According to Lefroy's *Memorials of Bermuda, 1515-1685,* the ship's captain, named Butler (also of Irish stock?), created dissent within the group:

> He could not endure any ordinances or worship, etc., and when they arrived at one of the Eleutherian Islands (possibly Spanish Wells), and were intended there to settle, he made such a faction as enforced... Sayle to remove to another island (Eleuthera itself), and being near the harbour the ship struck and was cast away.[2]

One life and all the provisions were lost. The survivors took refuge in a cave, still called "Preacher's Cave," on the north side of the island, where early 17th-century artifacts have recently been discovered. Sayle took the remaining ship and eight men to Virginia to seek aid, where the Church provided them with a ship full of supplies to take back to Eleuthera. In April 1650 more supplies were received from two Puritan churches in Boston. The Bostonians stayed a month on the island when they delivered the supplies, becoming the first tourists to the island. Sayle and company treated them well, repaying the relief expedition with ten tons of Braziletto dyewood for the return voyage. This was to be sold to pay the costs of the expedition and any remaining funds were to be donated to the new college in Boston (Harvard). Remaining funds amounted to £124, the third largest sum donated at that point to Harvard, and were spent on a new building. (Bregenzer. 22; "A Tale of Two Cities" 41)

Immigration and Colonization

At first most of the British and Irish immigrants to the West Indies came over voluntarily, drawn by the hope of acquiring their own land. However, from the early 1600s, the English and Irish Protestant leaders viewed the colonies as suitable dumping grounds for rebellious "papists." (Miller 143) During the 1640s and 1650s, many were kidnapped, particularly those living near the coast, and "Barbadosed" took on the same meaning that "Shanghaied" has today. One estimate states that 6400 white slaves were rounded up in Ireland and Scotland during a four-year period and sent to the West Indies (Arciniegas 1993). After 1650, with the end of the British Civil War, thousands of Irish and Scottish captives from Cromwell's expeditions to those countries were forcibly brought to Virginia and the West Indies as slaves or indentured servants (Rogozinski 1992, 71, 85; Miller 143-44). After 1654 British attention turned westwards to the Greater Antilles as part of Cromwell's "Western Design" to capture the entire Caribbean, including Hispaniola and Cuba, from Spain. However, the conquest of Jamaica in 1655 was the only part of the plan to be realized. Under Cromwell, and then under Charles II after 1660, the colonization of Jamaica by British and Irish immigrants became a major priority for Great Britain.

In the early days, working conditions were brutal, and some owners cruelly punished shirkers. Religious differences between Irish Catholic servants and Anglican masters increased the abuse. An account of Barbados from 1667 described the Irish indentured servants there as "poor men, that are just permitted to live,... derided by the Negroes, and branded with the Epithite of white slaves." During their terms of service they worked "in the parching sun without shirt, shoe or stocking" "domineered over and used like dogs," as the governor of Barbados admitted in 1695, and when they were freed they generally fell into a hand-to-mouth existence which consigned them to the very bottom of West Indian society (Miller 144-45).

After 1660, fewer indentured servants came to Barbados or the Leewards, although some continued to go to Jamaica throughout the 18th century. Indentured labor was unable to sustain a pattern of colonial life, and transported convict laborers were also found to be unsatisfactory. Most English and Irish settlers eventually found life in the mainland American colonies to be preferable. In the second half of the 17th century, the West Indies became increasingly devoted to sugar-cane cultivation and, on most islands, African slaves did most of the hard field work, forming the majority of the population. In fact, during this period more than half the slaves transported from Africa went to the Caribbean. Based on their experiences, many native Irish associated emigration to the New World swith banishment and slavery. Writing in 1660, the agent Robert Southwell lamented his inability to entice Catholic servants from Munster to South Carolina: "I could not obteyne any for the thing at present seems new & forraigne to them, &... they have been so terrified with the ill practice of them to the Carib Ileands, where they were sould as slaves, that as yet they will hardly give credence to any other usage..." (Miller 44).

Alarmed by this trend, after 1670 both mainland and island governments enacted legislation to encourage white immigration. They required planters to bring in indentured servants and sometimes subsidized their cost. Most also passed laws requiring better treatment of white servants. Masters had to give servants a minimum amount of food and clothing, and they needed a magistrate's permission to flog them (Rogozinksi 71). However, discontented servants regularly burned cane fields on Barbados and planned an armed uprising in 1649. In 1666 the Irish servants and freemen on St. Kitts celebrated the declaration of war between England and France by rising up against the English planters and aiding the French in taking control of the island, evicting 800 English planters (Rolston, *ibid*.). The following year the Irish on Montserrat also helped the French take the island from the English. In 1689, when word reached the Caribbean of William of Orange's accession to the throne, the Irish against revolted on St. Kitts and plundered English estates in support of King James (Rogozinski 71). At the same time Antigua and Montserrat were on the verge of mutiny. The Barbados Irishman who received twelve lashes for swearing at dinner that "if there was so much English Blood in the tray as there was Meat, he would eat it," expressed a tribal hatred born during the Elizabethan and Cromwellian conquests, which he may have regarded as responsible for his present "exile." (Miller 147).

As in later Irish immigration to America, there was often a gender imbalance among the Irish emigrants. According to one ship's captain writing in 1636 "lustye and strong boddied" women were "reddear... than men" to leave Munster for the Caribbean. (Dunn 57; Miller, 140) Later on, the heavily male character of the cargoes of Irish led to consternation among the government leaders, who sought to stabilize Barbadian and Leeward Island society by creating a balance between the sexes. In September 1655, Henry Cromwell wrote to Secretary of State John Thurlow:

> Concerning the younge women, although we must use force in taking them up, yet it beinge so much for their own goode, and likely to be of soe great advantage to the publique, it is not the least doubted, that you may have such number of them as you shall thinke fitt to make use uppon this account (*apud* Burg 80).

Soon realizing that the colonization plan would need to include more Irish males as well, the young Cromwell recommended sending some 1,500 to 2,000 boys of 12 to 14 years. The Council of State duly voted to ship 1,000 girls and the like number of boys under the age of 14 to the West Indies. However, after further efforts to implement the scheme, it was eventually dropped in favor of sending more adult males. Following the suppression of the Irish insurrection of 1656, the volume of immigrants to the West Indies became so great that the government was forced to contract for their shipment. These generally numbered between 100 and 400 Irish, with the largest shipment from Ireland during these years being 1,200 males. (Burg, 81) The majority of Irish emigrants remained single men: in 1678, for example, only 1/4 of the adult Irish in the Leeward Islands were women (Miller 140).

During the late 17th century, there were numerous reasons for Irish emigration. In the early 1670s, for instance, poor harvests and livestock disease were so widespread in Munster that, according to the Quaker missionary William Edmundson, "several Families that had lived plentifully,... their Corn being spent and Cattle dead,... shipped themselves for Servants to the West Indies, to get food... (*apud* Miller 141) Following Cromwell's land confiscations, some of the defeated Catholic gentry left for the New World, e.g., the O'More chieftain left Queen's County for South Carolina in the late 1600s, where his son and grandson, Anglicized in name and religion, became colonial governors. The largest migration of this kind were the younger sons of the Galway "tribes" – Old English gentry and merchant families such as the Blakes, Darcys and Kirwans – who established sugar plantations and counting houses in Barbados, Montserrat and other Caribbean islands, hoping to recoup their family fortunes.

Of course, many of the Irish immigrants to the West Indies were successful, especially if they arrived as freemen with capital, skills and education. In 1673 the Montserrat plantation owner Henry Blake wrote to his "loveing Brother" in Galway that he enjoyed "a good plentifull liveing," though he returned to Ireland once he made his fortune.(Dunn 130) Other affluent Irishmen in the West Indies used their financial surplus to build Catholic churches, repay family debts and help the poor at home (Miller145). Considering their initial poverty even former servants could do quite well. For example, by the late 17th century some 10 percent of Jamaica's landowners were of Irish extraction and several, such as Teague Mackmarroe, who owned eight slaves, attained the rank of "middling planter." (loc. cit.).

Recent excavations of one of the Irish-owned plantations in Montserrat have revealed much about the physical and social aspects of the colonization process. Galways plantation was established in the 1660s by David Galway, an Irishman with strong English rather than Irish sympathies. A major in the island militia, by the late 1670s he was serving on the Montserrat Council, an appointed position usually given only to prominent landowners.

David Galway's plantation lay on the SW slopes of the Soufriere Hills and consisted of some 1300 acres, stretching from the sea to the top of the mountains between Germans Ghaut and the White River. The majority of the 311 Irish who lived in 59 households on or near Galway's land in 1673 settled on the barren, windswept slopes to the south of the sugar works on small plots where they kept goats, sheep and pigs, and probably provided seasonal labor to the plantation. The 1673 map shows that the sugarcane fields were in wetter zones high above the sugar-processing facilities. According to the 1677 census, population density was quite high throughout the SW part of the island: more than 40 percent of the total island population lived there. Most were white and nearly all were Irish, and they lived on less than 10% of the total island territory – poor, dry land at that. In 1669 David Galway was placed in charge of enforcing the island laws in this SW district, laws focussing primarily on control of the Irish underclass (Pulsipher 142-43).

Apparently, the spatial organization of sugar production on Galways Mountain remained well into the 18th century, but between the 1670s and the 1720s the plantation declined as an economic enterprise. Probably the dry stony lower slopes proved difficult for human habitation. According to a 1729 census, by then the Galway family had no white servants and just 62 slaves. After 1730 new owners relocated and modernized the plantation, building an elegant Georgian great house, new sugar works, and a warehouse 1100 feet above the sea, with an extensive water management system and a slave village just below and in view of the new installation. This upgrading of facilities reflects the enormous success of sugar in the European markets, with many investors coming out to cash in on the sugar boom. Old families such as the Galways began to divest themselves of marginal, unproductive holdings, and the new owners optimistically invested in more salubrious locations and modern technologies. They also spent considerable money on aesthetic improvements as well as rational water management (Pulsipher 143).

By the mid-18th century, the descendants of the earlier Irish immigrants to Montserrat were generally in the position of being slave owners, rather than slaves or indentured servants. Thus, St. Patrick's Day may be celebrated by the present Afro-Irish inhabitants today partly as a commemoration of the March 1768 slave rebellion, held on that day because the black slaves knew the white plantation owners would be celebrating. When the word leaked out, the uprising was aborted and several slaves were hanged. Other rebellions resulted in a restriction of religious, civil and political rights on the island until 1798. In 1802, with the emancipation of slaves, civil rights were restored, though the Catholic religion was still banned. Priests said Mass in secret, some being smuggled from nearby St. Kitts (60 miles away) disguised as sugar cane workers. In 1826, the British-controlled Assembly finally granted a Roman Catholic clergyman £100 to "furnish a convenient place of worship for his flock."(Fallon 1993).

Trade and Piracy

"As early as the 1620s ships were sailing from southern Irish ports such as Cork and Kinsale, laden with provisions, textiles and Irish servants to exchange for West Indian sugar and Chesapeake tobacco." (Miller 139). Irish trade in the Caribbean was encouraged by the land confiscations of Irish Catholics during the 17th and 18th centuries. During this period, many families, denied landownership and professional careers, invested in commerce and engaged in trade with the Continent, the North American colonies and the West Indies (Miller 23). However, some of the Irish undoubtedly found piracy to be even more profitable than legitimate trade.

In the Bahamas, the arid climate and thin soil did not favor agriculture. Only a few settlers had remained on Eleuthera, eking out a miserable existence by looting (and perhaps causing) occasional shipwrecks. As Bermuda continued to grow, other expeditions ventured into the Bahamas. In 1666, one of these groups settled on New Providence Island, some 50 miles from Eleuthera. Within five years this island had

surpassed the earlier colony in population and its main settlement (Nassau) became recognized as the capital. The first census, conducted in 1671, reveals that New Providence had 913 residents (257 free males, 243 free females and 413 slaves in 127 households) while Eleuthera had only 184 residents (77 free males, 77 free females and 30 slaves) (Bregenzer 22). Since the Bahamas are strategically placed next to both the Windward Passage and the Florida Strait leading to the Gulf of Mexico, New Providence soon became the major base of operations for British and Irish pirates. The other 17th-century centers were Providence Island, off the coast of Nicaragua, which was a pirate stronghold until captured by the Spanish in 1641; the French-held island of Tortuga (Tortue) off Hispaniola; and the township of Port Royal in Jamaica, which long held the reputation of being "the wickedest town in the world." (Collier et al. 215-16). The latter was the base of the notorious Welsh-born pirate Henry Morgan (ca. 1635-88), originally an indentured servant in Barbados, who repeatedly raided Spanish settlements around the Caribbean before settling down to win respectability, a knighthood and the lieutenant-governorship of Jamaica (loc. cit.).

Particularly after the outbreak of war with France in 1689 and the destruction of Port Royal in an earthquake in 1692, British and Irish pirates based on Tortuga and Jamaica began to relocate to the Bahamas. The inhabitants welcomed the buccaneers' trade and several of the proprietary governors of Carolina, who had been granted the Bahamas by Charles II, openly helped them, selling them commissions as privateers with the right to attack enemy ships. Their numbers swelled after 1713, when they were joined by thousands of former privateers of varying national origins who had lost their livelihood with the Treaty of Utrecht, ending the War of the Spanish Succession, including the infamous Blackbeard (born Edward Teach or Drummond, probably in Bristol). As pirates they began to prey on merchant ships, including those flying the English flag. These easy pickings began to end in 1718, with the appointment of CaptainWoodes Rogers, himself a former privateer from western England, as the first royal governor of the Bahamas.

One of the most notorious Irish-born pirates of this period was actually a woman. Anne Bonney, who flourished ca. 1718-20, was the illegitimate daughter of a prosperous lawyer from Cork who took her and her mother to Carolina to avoid his wife's wrath and the town's disapproval. Her mother died soon after their arrival and Anne grew up independent and impetuous. After being thrown out of her home, she married a penniless seaman, James Bonney, and they moved to New Providence Island, hoping to make a fortune from trading with the local pirates and privateers. She had a child, whose history is unknown, and became the mistress of one of the most famous pirates operating off the American coast and in the West Indies, Capt. Rackham, known as "Calico Jack." She joined him in stealing a sloop from Providence Island and was his partner during raids on the Spanish off Cuba and Hispaniola. On board one of the ships they captured was Mary Read, another woman pirate, who allegedly became Anne's lover. In October 1720 their sloop was attacked off Jamaica by a government ship, Anne and Mary being

the last of the defenders to remain fighting on deck. At Anne's trial in Jamaica, her distinguished family and a false plea of pregnancy saved her from the death penalty and Mary, condemned to death, was also reprieved, though she later died in prison. Rackham and the rest of the crew were hanged, and the remainder of Anne's life is obscure (Uglow 69).

The Caribbean Irish in the Eighteenth Century and Beyond

The growth of a slave-based economy steadily diminished economic opportunities for freed servants in the West Indies: thus, during the 1700s most Irish Catholic emigrants journeyed to the mainland colonies. In addition to Catholics, after 1715 increasingly large number of Protestants, particularly from the north (the so-called "Scotch-Irish"), began emigrating to America.[3] Dissenters, particularly Ulster Presbyterians, were the most prevalent, but they also included Methodists and Irish Quakers. Of the latter, some 3,000 Irish Friends settled in North America, from the middle colonies to the West Indies, between 1682 and 1776. These were primarily of English origin – farmers, merchants, artisans and discharged soldiers who settled in Ireland or converted to Quakerism after the Cromwellian conquest. (Miller 151) Like the 17th-century emigrants, indentured servants arriving with skills or who managed to be indentured to artisans and builders proved to be the most successful. For example, in 1764 John Hennessy, aged 19, landed in Charleston, South Carolina, and was indentured to a carter for four years. In time he acquired his own horses and wagons, and by 1778 his property amounted to £460, including a brick house, furniture, a gold watch, and twelve silver spoons (Miller 146). The American Revolution interrupted the flow of Irish immigrants to the New World, but after peace was declared in 1783 the rate once again picked up. By curtailing the British mercantile system the Revolution had sharply disrupted the old channels of Irish-American trade. Although Munster and Leinster continued to supply provisions for the West Indies, that destination had ceased to attract prospective emigrants. Furthermore, the traffic in Irish servants also declined since British captains could no longer count on American courts to enforce contracts of indenture (Miller 169).

We also see the development of an Irish entrepreneurial class with ties to the Americas during this period, among them the Belfast merchants Waddell Cunningham and Thomas Greg, whose firm Greg, Cunningham & Co. had been reckoned one of the largest shipowners in New York by the 1760s. Among others who were successful in the Americas before returning to Belfast were Valentine Jones in Barbados and Hugh Montgomery in Virginia (Crawford 64-65). By this point Belfast merchants were heavily involved in both the linen and cotton industries. In fact, Belfast became the center of the Irish linen industry largely as a result of the American Revolutionary War. When Spain's entry into the war in June 1779 reduced imports of barilla ash for bleaching, the White Linen Hall was constructed in Belfast to exert quality control over the industry because

of experiments with different bleaching agents, such as lime. The establishment of the hall in Belfast rather than Newry also had the effect of bolstering Belfast's claim as the capital of the North (Crawford 66). At the close of the 18th century trade with the West Indies counted for about 5% of Ireland's export trade, with the strength of the Irish-West Indian connection frequently demonstrated. When planters and merchants trading with Jamaica decided to raise a regiment for service there, seven Cork firms were among the subscribers (Crawford 66). In fact, the desire for direct trade with the West Indies was one of the issues which led to the Irish free trade crisis in 1778-79. (O'Connell 131, 156) Ironically, considering that Irish had been among the slaves in the Caribbean during the 17th century, by the late 18th century wealthy Irish entrepreneurs, such as Waddell Cunningham, sought to enter the West Indian (slave) trade. Envying the merchants of Bristol and Liverpool who dominated the English slave trade, in 1786 Cunningham arranged a meeting with other Belfast merchants to draw up a prospectus for "a company of slaveship trading." Thomas McCabe, a local jeweler and member of the United Irishmen, protested, stating: "May God wither the hand and consign the name to eternal infamy of the man who will sign that document." The threat worked and Belfast never again was drawn so directly into the slave trade (Rolston, *ibid*.).

According to the Treaty of Versailles (1783), Florida and Cuba were ceded by the English to the Spanish in exchange for the Bahamas, which had been captured by a combined American and Spanish force in 1781. Many of the Loyalists from Georgia and the Carolinas, who had moved to Florida during the war, left soon after for the Bahamas along with their families and slaves to establish plantations there. Between 1784 and 1789 the population more than doubled, going from 4,055 (1,722 whites and 2,333 people of color, many of whom were free), to a population of 9,296 (3,100 whites with 5,696 slaves and 500 people of color) (Wylly 5-6). The bulk of the population settled on New Providence Island, though some attempted to establish plantations on the "out islands," such as Abaco and Andros. Among the Loyalists, several appear to have been of Scottish or Irish descent, including John O'Halloran (from Georgia), owner of nine slaves, who became postmaster and a member of the Assembly; Henry Glenton (from N.Y.), a planter and provost with six slaves and a small vessel; and John Jordan, an Irish native who had lived in N.J and N.Y. before becoming Director of Ironworks on Abaco (Wylly 18; Riley 250 n. 32, 270-73). Eventually, two factions developed and the newcomers, called Refugees, wrested control of the Assembly from the old inhabitants, whom they called "Conks," (Kelly *apud* Saunders 32) from their preference for the prevalent shellfish conch (cf. the name "Conchy Joe" for modern-day white Bahamians). Unfortunately, once again the arid climate and thin soil led to the failure of many plantations, and the settlers turned to the sea for their livelihood as had their predecessors.

Bahamian antagonism towards both new Irish settlers and to the American government at this period is revealed in the following anecdote: in 1788 a group of Irish "vagrants" were set ashore on one of the uninhabited islands, from whence they journeyed to New Providence. They found employment for some months, "but returning to their

old courses," they began to bother the inhabitants and many were prosecuted "for different felonies" by the Attorney-General. As he could find no indictment upon which any of them could be hanged, the Governor ordered them arrested, chartered a vessel and shipped them off to the American states. It happened that a baker in Nassau had an Irish apprentice, named Thomas Flynn. Unfortunately, his name was very similar to one whose name appeared in the arrest warrant, Thomas Glynn. The officer, thinking some mistake had been made and that both should be arrested, placed Thomas Flynn in jail as well, and eventually he was also deported "as a present to the Congress." (Wylly 42-43).

Regarding the continuation of Irish culture and speech in the Caribbean during the 19th and 20th centuries, there is strong evidence for survival particularly in the Leeward Islands, especially Montserrat which, as we have seen, had the highest percentage of Irish immigrants in the 17th century. For example, under 1 April 1831, Humphrey O'Sullivan (Amhlaoibh ó Súilleabháin) wrote in his diary:

> I hear that Irish is the mother tongue in Montserrat... since the time of Cromwell who transported some Irish people... Irish is spoken commonly there by both whites and blacks (Bhaldraithe 103-04).

A letter from Cork, dated 27 June 1905, written by W. F. Butler, quotes a Mr. C. Cremen, Cork Harbour Commissioners' Office, corroborating this statement:

> There is an old saying among our Cork sailors of the old sailing-vessel days, 'In Mont-serrat, where the blacks speak Irish'. He (Cremen) goes on to speak of the great trade in the old days between Cork and the West Indies, of his personal knowledge of many of the sailors,...(including) John Donovan... a native of Ring, near Clonakilty,... (who) spoke Irish very fluently. He frequently told me that in the year 1852, when mate of the brig Kaloola, he went ashore on the island of Montserrat... He said he was much surprised to hear the negroes actually talking Irish among themselves, and that he joined in the conversation... the sailor told the negro he came from Cork, and the black answered, "She sin Corcaig na g'cuan". i.e., "That is Cork of the Harbours" [based on a popular Irish song]... (Bhaldraithe n. 20, 103-04).

Irish speech appears to have continued in Montserrat into the 20th century (one of my black students at Harvard in the early 1980s said her grandfather had spoken Irish), but it seems to have now died out. However, other cultural elements survive, such as the St. Patrick's Day celebrations and the use of the shamrock as a national symbol, indicating a continuing memory of the Irish contributions to the island's culture.

Notes

1 This paper was originally read at the IASIL (International Association for the Study of Irish Literatures) meeting at the National University of Ireland, Cork, in July 1995. Since then other studies on specific aspects of Irish emigration to the Caribbean have been published, such as Donald Akenson's *If the Irish Ran the World: Montserrat, 1630-1730* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997). However, this essay still stands as an overview of the topic.

2 London, 1879, cited in "A Tale of Two Cities," *Bahamas Islander Magazine* 1 (1994): 40.

3 See my essay, "The Scotch-Irish and the Formation of a Celtic Southern Culture in the 18th and 19th Centuries," in *Scotch-Irish and Hiberno-English Language and Culture.* Ft. Lauderdale: Nova Southeastern University, Working Papers in Irish Studies, 1993. 93-3, 1-11.

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Ciaran Carson's constellations of ideas: theories on traditional culture from within

Davide Benine

Abstract: *Ever since the dawn of folklore studies, Ireland has been identified as one of the richest stores of traditional lore and music in the world. In the twentieth century, the focus shifted from folklore studies to anthropology, which provided scholars with new tools, and inaugurated a new approach to Irish traditional culture. Both the folkloric and the anthropological approaches have their shortcomings: if the study of the Irish traditional society as a tribe could lead us to forget its positioning in the history of the West, the emphasis on folklore often dilutes itself into a quest for "local colour". Moreover, the task of describing a different culture is complicated by the invasiveness of our epistemological approach; confronting traditional culture with the filters of literacy might lead us to perceive it as banal and simple.*

Ciaran Carson is a poet, a traditional musician, and the son of an accomplished storyteller. Carson approaches traditional culture as an insider: his description of traditional music and cooking are not travelogues, nor they resemble the detached structuralist approach of anthropologists. Carson does not treat Irish traditional culture as a sample, nor as a fragile item to be kept isolated: his poetic discourse is in constant dialogue with world literature, from Japanese Haiku to the philosophy of Walter Benjamin; like James Joyce, Carson makes Ireland the centre of the world by turning to the outside.

Ciaran Carson's perspective on Irish traditional culture is very articulated and could indeed be described as a theory, as long as we accept a theory that is not formulated in the language of criticism. Carson often describes traditional culture as a web of motifs, a constellation of narratives; the descriptive paradigm he adopts could also be described as a constellation, a web of ideas that, as in McLuhan's mosaic technique, are juxtaposed and accumulated, in order to avoid the snares of literacy.

Introduction

The antagonism between an official cultural pattern, often informed by the ideas of progress and internationalism, and a subordinate set of traditional oral beliefs is a constant in the history of the West. Such a contrast has taken place at different levels of society, and its actors have often changed: Roman Christianity has been opposing

barbarian paganism, modern medicine has been fighting against traditional methods of healing, and so on.

Since the end of the 17th century, the picture has been gradually mutating; an unprecedented interest in folk tales and in the lore of the past propelled the birth of folklore studies. The link between folklore studies and nationalism dates back to this period: folk culture was contrasted with humanistic learning, and the Roman roots of the latter were opposed to the German origin of the former. Folklore studies were imported in Ireland by the so-called antiquarian movement: this, being chiefly constituted by Anglo-Irish gentry, looked back at the Irish antiquities for identification, in order to legitimise its power on Ireland and to mark its difference from the English nobility. When the balance of power shifted, the Catholics saw in folklore a means of rediscovery of their Gaelic roots.

The study of Irish folklore has thus been largely instrumental to ethnical politics, but it has nonetheless shed a benevolent light on traditional Irish culture, and its contribution to the preservation of traditional material has been essential. In the twentieth century folklore studies were enriched by the contribution of structuralist anthropology; a new scientific approach to traditional material was introduced, and the use of recordings and cameras allowed a more efficient preservation of the collected material.

The relation between science and traditional culture is however a very delicate matter; officially sanctioned written culture encounters traditional oral culture on very uneven terms. Jack Goody argues that "when the written mode achieves a dominant cultural position, the result is a systematic devaluation of forms of knowledge that are not acquired through books" (Goody 1982, 201). Traditional culture is in a subordinate position even when its value is being recognised: in order to gain acceptance, it has to be legitimised by the official establishment. The process of legitimisation is not a neutral one; "oral" culture needs to be reshaped in scientific "written" terms; the risk of sacrificing the gist of traditional culture is very high. The discourse of official culture constructs our views of traditional culture: theory might silence traditional culture by speaking over it.

Eric A. Havelock ironically asks himself "Can a text speak?" (Havelock, 1986, 44), and maintains that "there always exist an insurmountable barrier to the understanding of orality" (45). The barrier Havelock is referring to is textuality itself: any work of scholarship on orality must necessarily, at least at some stages of the analysis, recur to the use of writing. Recent scholarship (see Ong 1982, Havelock 1986, McLuhan 1967, Goody 1982 and 1987) has demonstrated that writing is not a neutral medium, and that "writing develops codes in a language different from oral codes in the same language" (Ong 106). The codes of literacy and its mechanisms are deeply inscribed in the patterns of our culture. The gulf spreading between an oral and a literate code can be bridged only with the transposition of the oral code into its written counterpart, through a process that might be equated to Jakobson's "intersemiotic translation" (Jakobson 114). The similarities between translation and the process of rendition of traditional culture into writing are striking. Like translation, the written representation of oral culture is an

inescapable process on the path of mutual understanding; at the same time, any rendering of traditional culture operated by the academy suffers the limits of translation, and is likely to be affected by a number of mistakes and imprecisions.

A will to reproduce traditional Irish culture without altering its nature is at the core of Ciaran Carson's artistic production, which is rich in theoretical implications. Carson is not a critic, nor an anthropologist, and it might seem inappropriate to introduce him as a theorist of traditional culture. Yet, he has produced a substantial body of poetry and prose characterised by an extraordinary theoretical self-consciousness; he is a poet of exactitude, and he is fond of driving his poetic discourse into purely intellectual questions. We are witnessing a progressive blurring of the boundaries between artistic and scientific *genres*, stem from a post-structuralist consciousness of the presence of fiction and stylisation behind any kind of text; it is with this framework in my mind that I approach what I see as a delicate, but hopefully rewarding operation: analysing Ciaran Carson's writings on traditional Irish culture as works of theory *tout-court*. This operation looks less hazardous if we keep in mind that the post-structuralist category of 'discourse' encompasses all genres, disregarding their formal conventions.

Carson's systematic exploration of the world of traditional culture is conducted with a methodology of its own, which David Wheatley indicates as Carson's "semiotic method" (Wheatley 14). This original approach to traditional culture was developed by Ciaran Carson as a means of overcoming the expressive limits of the scientific discourse, and has gradually developed into a theory "from within": this paper will be focused on Carson's epistemology of traditional culture.

From practice to theory to poetry

Ciaran Carson's first collection of poetry, *The New Estate*, was published in 1976, and was followed by a long period of poetic silence: a second collection, *The Irish For No*, was published only in 1987. As a matter of fact, in 1975 Carson started working as Literature and Traditional Arts Officer at the Arts Council of Northern Ireland; the years of silence have been mostly devoted to the professional exploration of Irish traditional culture. Carson's job "was concerned with traditional music, song and dance" (Brandes 1990, 81); Carson was already a musician, but this full immersion in traditional culture allowed him to greatly improve his skills. He started playing the Irish flute, and devoted himself to traditional music, "to get hold of it and learn it", in what he amusingly described as a "long and thirsty pilgrimage around Ireland" (Brandes 81).

Of course, his profession required also a more detached approach to the oral material of the tradition, (loc. cit.); Carson's investigation was aided by the tools of musicology, ethnography and folk studies.

The most immediate fruit of this research was a compact book called *Traditional Irish Music* (also known as *The Pocket Guide to Traditional Music*), which resulted from a number of essays that Carson had been writing for *The Belfast Review*. According

to Carson, *The Pocket Guide* "seemed… to fill a gap in the literature – that is, to give an account of the music as it is, from the perspective of someone who is actively engaged in it" (Ormsby 7). For all its practical purpose and its commitment to actual music-making, there is a great deal of theory in this book: Carson sets traditional music in an historical framework, comparing it to baroque and ancient music; the analysis is conducted with a precise awareness of the principles of musicology and of the harmonic theory.

Even though *Traditional Irish Music* is Carson's only volume of well-formed essays, the theoretical strain survived in Carson's writing, and was eventually incorporated into his poetry; Carson himself admitted that "*The Pocket Guide* was a kind of blueprint for the shape and structure of *The Irish For No*" (Ormsby 1991, 7), which is maybe his most influential and praised volume of poetry. Given this premises, we may safely assume that Carson's experience as a researcher has contributed to the shaping of his mature artistic voice: after *The Irish For No* poetry and theory are inextricably linked in Carson's writing.

In 1996 Ciaran Carson published *Last Night's Fun*, which reviewer Patricia Monaghan has described as a "an unusual and unusually effective set of short essays" (Monaghan 1997)[1]. *Last Night's Fun* is made up of chapters that are indeed strongly reminiscent of the essay form; nonetheless, their essayistic nature is pushed to the extreme, and the weight of narrative and fictional elements is very high.

It is no chance that, after *Traditional Irish Music*, Ciaran Carson dispensed with the essay as it is traditionally intended: theory still lied at the core of Carson's writing but it needed to be expressed in a new jargon. Carson's new descriptive style would treasure the experience of traditional narrating modes accumulated during the years of ethnographic research:

> I was, at the time, toying with the possibility of writing in a mode which would *owe something to traditional oral narrative*, as exemplified by innumerable characters in pubs throughout the length and breadth of Ireland... (Carson 1989, 115)

The scene of *Last Night's Fun* is set by a memorable opening, which illustrates Carson's debt towards the *seanchaí* tradition:

> We are in Ballyweird on the outskirts of Portrush, County Antrim, and it's the morning after the night before. Or rather, it is sometime after noon, and we've just staggered back from the local Spar, laden with the makings of a fry: bacon, sausages, black pudding, white pudding, potato bread (or, as we call it, fadge) and the yellow cornmeal soda farls peculiar to the north-west region. (1)

The rhythm of traditional storytelling, characterised by alliteration, internal rhyme, and syncopated stresses, is mixed with digressions associated to a more conventional form of learning; the resulting style, in perpetual balance between personal

experience and erudite analysis, has a Proustian flavour which can be regarded as the trademark of Carson's prose.

Last Night's Fun could actually be considered a poetic reformulation of the principles expressed in *Traditional Irish Music*. Carson feels the necessity to voice the views of those actually involved in music-making, and to free the music from the museums of folklorists and the antiseptic laboratories of musicologists; *Last Night's Fun* is a picture of the music as seen in its natural environment, that is pubs, kitchens and *céilí*.

Carson's meandering exploration of everyday rites, folk etymologies and melodic structures is anything but devoid of methodology; *Last Night's Fun* can in fact be regarded as a systematic analysis, since its classifications are almost taxonomic in their coherence, and exhaustive in their scope. Besides, Carson's prose is lavishly stuffed with explicit quotations, and the book features a rich bibliography, as well as a suggested discography.

A delicate balance of theory and narrative is achieved through a collage technique, whose aim is depicting reality by a number of different perspectives. After a first reading *Last Night's Fun* might look like a messy heap of memories: scraps of everyday dialogue alternate with quotations from the classics, lines from songs and serendipitous musings on a variety of subjects. Variety is a keyword here, since Carson's works could aptly be described as a *variety of varieties*, the result of an accumulation of heterogeneous layers of discourse; Carson's reader is faced with a *mise en abîme* of multiplicity.

A passage from "Last Night's Fun", the opening chapter of the homonymous book, will illustrates the quality of Carson's discursive style:

> I have ordered a nip just to taste, when a tune drifts out from the back: they're playing 'Last Night's Fun' again. Or maybe it is we who are playing it, the night before the morning after, before we left to spend the early hours and see the dawn in Ballyweird. I think it's 1979.
> The first I heard 'Last night's Fun' (no, rather, the first time I knew it *was* 'Last Night's Fun' that I was listening to, for I must have heard it many times before without knowing its name, or knowing the tune itself, for that matter), was from a record of the accordion-player, the late Joe Cooley. Entitled simply, *Cooley*, the album was produced in 1975 by the accordion player Tony MacMahon, who adopted and adapted the Cooley's style to make his own music. (1-2)

The thread of Carson's thought moves irregularly back and forth in space and time, and memories are a vehicle for the introduction of new topics: Carson's description of Joe Cooley's album will be an occasion for digressing on the contrast between analogical and digital recording.

This perplexing route is balanced by a number of limpid statements on art, culture and the language; the clear and self-explaining nature of these passages often

adds surprise to the bewilderment of the reader. In this passage Carson focuses on the relationship between a tune and its name:

> 'Last Night's Fun', to take an example, is a name or a label for a tune: it does not describe its musical activity nor impute experience to it. It is not *about* frolics revelled in on some particular night, although the name might put you in mind of them. In other words, the tune, by any other name, would sound as sweet; or as rough, for that matter, depending on who plays it, or what shape they're in. (7)

This passage has a didactic flavour that is found in many other sections of the book, where the usual impressionistic tone gives way to a plain denotative prose style. The texture of the *Last Night's Fun* is only apparently chaotic: *Last Night's Fun* is carefully built on a number of hypothesis on the nature of traditional music. Carson's theory of traditional music will be useful as a way of intercepting Carson's thought on traditional culture as a whole.

The key element of traditional music is its fluid nature. Every musical experience is subjective, and dependant of a number of local and temporal variables:

> In any session of music, no one will hear the same thing: it will depend on context, on placement, on experience – whether or not you've heard the tune before, whether or not the person next to you knows the tune that you might only half-know. (2)

> No tune is ever complete:

> But do we ever fully know a tune, or only versions of it, temporary delineations of the possible? (2)

Carson's idea of music can be productively compared to Ferdinand De Saussure's structuralist description of the human language: every musician gives his utterance (*la parole*), but the tunes in its totality (*la langue*) is only an abstract entity; the tune is a platonic ideal, it exists only in the collective mind of the musicians' community. Every time a musician starts playing he enriches the store of traditional music with his utterance, modifying the equilibrium of the whole system.

The fluid element of the musical tradition is counterbalanced by a set of rules, a framework which constitutes the structuring principle of Irish music. Rhythm, for example, is a fixed convention, and no jig could be called such without a jig rhythm. Quoting *The New Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments*[2], Carson observes:

> Nearly all ancient oral traditions are surprising for this double feature of endless variety within a fixed framework. (Carson 1997a. 28)

Oral transmission is an essential feature of Irish music, as Carson stresses repeatedly both in *Traditional Irish Music* and *Last Night's Fun*. The fluid element of traditional music is related to its oral character: variations and melodic turns can be seen as instruments of mnemonics.

Mnemonics and theories on orally transmitted knowledge

In Carson's work, associative memory often substitutes linear consequentiality as the structuring principle of the narration. Peter McDonald stresses the unconventional quality of Carson's narrating patterns:

> The conventional rules of cause and effect which underlie narrative patterns are re-interpreted, from *The Irish For No* onwards, as contingent factors, dependent on association, chance, and the prismatic, linguistically conditioned memory of the individual; and the nature of poetic language, in which the narrative happens, is itself bounded by relations which are apparently arbitrary. One thing leads to another thing, just as one word can lead to another word, and a coincidence of event can mirror (say) the coincidence of a rhyme: but that mirroring can as easily be perceived as a distortion. (128)

In her review of *The Irish For No*, Nuala Ní Domhnaill welcomed the use of "additive rather than subordinate clauses, the repetition of the just said, the transition due to memory and association rather than to any formal linear logic" (Ní Dhomhnaill 117), recognising in it a successful imitation of oral storytelling, "the authentic voice of the good seanchaí" (116). Ní Dhomhnaill interpretation is consonant with Ong's reflections on orality:

> In a primary oral culture, to solve effectively the problem of retaining and retrieving carefully articulated thought, you have to do your thinking in mnemonic patterns, shaped for oral recurrence. Your thought must come into heavily rhythmic, balanced patterns, in repetition and antitheses, in alliteration and assonances… (Ong 34)

The arbitrary mirroring of sound and meaning, far from being a deliberate exercise in obscurity, is fully functional to Carson's representation of an orally preserved culture; the pairing of rhyme and meaning, which was at least problematic for McDonald, actualises the articulation of oral knowledge in mnemonic loci.

The theory of oral mnemonics and formulaic composition was made popular by a classical scholar, Milman Parry. According to Parry, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are the result of a process of oral composition, where a number of fragments are juxtaposed

and cumulated. It was to his son, Adam Parry, together with Albert B. Lord, to demonstrate the plausibility of Milman's theory: Adam Parry and Lord investigated the poetics of Serbian oral epic singers, discovering that some poets could produce epic narratives of considerable length without the aid of writing. The most astonishing feature of these epics is the ever-changing nature of their texture; every telling is actually a new composition, since the singer builds up a tale anew every time he tells his story, drawing on the stock of *topoi* and fragments of the tradition:

> For the oral poet the moment of composition is the performance.…
> An oral poem is not composed *for* but *in* performance …
> Our oral poet is composer. Our singer of tales is a composer of tales. (Lord 13)

An active interest for the dynamics of oral communication and oral knowledge is perceivable in Carson's meta-linguistic poems. *First Language* (1994) is a collection of poems dedicated to the interaction between Irish and English, and to the process of linguistic acquisition; in this poetic exploration Carson dissects the strata of his linguistic experience, never failing to stress the primacy of the oral code.

"Opus Operandi" is the poem where the dichotomy between written and oral codes is tackled more directly. "Opus Operandi" is characterised by an extremely convoluted narrating structure: every stanza is formed by two long verses, and tend to constitute a narrative monad; it is only through the juxtaposition of these monads that we can grasp the meaning of the poem as a whole.

In this passage Carson describes a classroom, where children are perplexed by their encounter with strange words:

> Today's lesson was the concept 'Orange'. They parsed it into segments: some were kith,
> And some were kin. They spat out the pips and learned to peel the pith. (60)

These two verses are an illustration of the process of assimilation of language: the children connect the unknown words to the feelings associated with the orange. Their dissection of the orange is metaphorical and abstract, and it is through the use of new words that the children gain access to the realm of abstract thought.

Contemporary anthropological theory traces a direct link between abstract thought and the use of the alphabet (Ong 87-88 and Goody 1987, 105); Carson seems to illustrate this point when he connects the lexicon of the "concept 'Orange'" to the alliteration of the "p" sound in the sequence "pips, peel, pith", announced by the verb "spat".

The poem is very explicit about the effect of the printing press:

> A school of clocks swarmed out from the Underwood's overturned undercarriage,

Full of alphabetical intentions, led astray by braggadocio and verbiage.

Typecast letters seethed on the carpet, trying to adopt its Turkish
Convolutions. They were baffled by the script's *auctoritas*. (61)

Braggadocio and verbiage oppose to the alphabetical intentions: Carson's dramatises the contrast between written language, which carries the weight of officialdom, and the playfulness that derives from the freedom of oral expression. "Typecast letters" cannot cope with the complex pattern of the Turkish pattern: the a-verbal and abstract representation of the world is far more sophisticated than a bunch of "typecast letters".

According to McLuhan, the invention of the printing press, and the consequent spreading of writing, empowered the sight at the expense of other senses; the sensorial balance, which granted a pervasive synaesthetic experience of reality, was lost (McLuhan 1967, 24). The most direct consequence of this process has been the detachment of man from his environment, epitomised by Descartes's representation of the world as divided into *res cogitans* and *res extensa* (246-247). The primacy of writing in the West would thus be the cause of the *desacralisation* of the world and even the ultimate cause of schizophrenia (22).

McLuhan employs all his poetic and stylistic resources to reproduce the pluri-sensorial kind of perception that is experienced by illiterate subjects. He endeavours to express his thoughts in a cumulative way, in order to make them immune to the constrictive linearity of writing; he himself declares that his *Gutenberg Galaxy* is written in a "mosaic pattern of perception and observation" (265).

Constellations of meaning

The tesserae of McLuhan mosaic are projected on a third spatial dimension, since their assembling builds up a "galaxy"; it is quite significant that Carson's prose, also structured in a mosaic pattern, often conjures stars and constellations.

The metaphor of "constellation as a cognitive model" was introduced into the cultural debate by Walter Benjamin, in his "Theses on the philosophy of History". For Benjamin, constellations are an effective model for representing the connections between events that are very remote in history: stars that are light-years away from each other are united in the same constellation (Benjamin 255). Carson applies the constellation metaphor to a different context, and with a distinct emphasis; nonetheless, constellation are still seen as a model for knowledge, and stand as a symbol of inter-connectivity. Carson's use of the constellation metaphor might indeed be directly related to Benjamin's; the German philosopher is often quoted in Carson's prose (Carson 1997b. 26, 30).

Stars are a favourite subject of Carson's poetry. *First Language* features many allusions to stars and constellations; "counting the stars" is a metaphor for the process of interpretation in respectively:

"Opus 14"
Surely the children had anticipate all of this, these frosty nights;
They counted out the gabbled alphabet of stars. (1994, 28)

Newly-appointed innumerate Chancellor of the Exchequer What-Do-You-Call-Him-Clarke
Was counting his stars in twos like the innumerable animals in Noah's Ark. (1994, 31)

Here and elsewhere[3] in *First Language*, stars stand for the nodes of a semiotic system; in *The Star Factory*, Carson's second work of prose, the metaphor will be further developed, and stars will be juxtaposed to form a multitude of constellations.

The Star Factory is dedicated to Belfast; its prose rephrases and rearticulates a number of statements previously made by Carson on his native town; Belfast is seen as a city caught between the *grandeur* of its industrial past and the incertitude of its violent present.

The Belfast poems form a substantial portion of Carson's production, and are often read as a contemporary version of *dinnseanchas*, which can be translated approximately as "place-name lore". According to Ní Dhomhnaill, *dinnseanchas* springs from a religious impulse that is typical of the Irish psyche:

> It is patently obvious that different tribes worship different gods and it would seem that in Ireland we tend to give value to places, rather than things […] Dinnseanchas is not just mere naval-gazing but a human necessity and a fundamental part of our human underpinning. (Ní Dhomhnaill 118)

Dinnseanchas was one of the main genres of Irish storytelling; Carson's obsession with topography and mapping is thus re-interpreted as a modern adaptation of a fundamental feature of Irish traditional culture.

Carson's relationship with the Irish tradition is mediated by the figure of his father William, son of a Protestant who turned to Catholicism when he married. William Carson, in the effort of obliterating his Protestant origin, became "more Gael than the Gaels", championing the Irish cultural cause. The Carsons learned Irish at classes, but their sons were brought up with Irish as their first language; William Carson had a rich store of folk tales, "incessant stories and yarns and songs" (Brandes 77). This passage is dedicated to the storytelling of William Carson; here Ciaran Carson is commenting on the serial mode which his father employed to link his tales:

> The serial mode allowed ample scope for such scenarios, whose iconic details might be mirrored over many episodes, in different shifts of emphasis or context. At such points, my father's voice would elevate and quicken, since remembering

> the narrative depended on these rhythmic clusters or motifs. Compressed mnemonic musical devices, each contained within itself the implications of its past and future, like a Baroque phrase which undergoes conversion and inversion as the tune proceeds in constant renegotiation. They were *aides-memoire* for both audience and teller.
>
> It has been suggested that the mind of the storyteller is inhabited by *constellations* of such crucial points, *whose stars are transformed or regurgitated into patterns of the everyday*. (1997b, 66)

The fragments of narrative which are assembled into storytelling are like stars; they shine vividly on the landscape of memory. Each storyteller stares at his inner sky, looking for connections and links, in order to trace new constellations and to recognize the old ones.

The Star Factory is a collection of such fragments, bits and pieces of life from Belfast, its building and its lore. "The Star Factory" is described as a mysterious building, a mill which was demolished; it stands as a symbol of the long gone era of Belfast industrial prosperity. The star is embedded into Belfast topography, for a stellar pattern is drawn by the roads converging to the centre of the city. "The Star Factory" might be Belfast itself; for it is Belfast the ultimate source of the stars we have been referring to, the narrative scraps inscribed in Carson's memory.

Every constellation is made up of single stars, and each star is a story in itself; *Fishing for Amber*, Carson's third prose work, tells us the story of Io, Ganymede and of other heroes who have been transmuted into stars by the capricious gods of the Greek pantheon. *Fishing for Amber* deals with the golden era of Dutch painting, with the ambiguous fortunes of Esperanto and, again, with the storytelling of William Carson. *Fishing for Amber* is an embroidery of stories: Irish tales, Dutch anecdotes and classical legends are woven together into a complex pattern. Every narrative fragment is thus, fragmented in itself: every story contains in itself the seeds other stories, just like amber beads, which contain in their yellowish wax insects, leaves and other relics of the past.

A narrative is a tale, a story, but it is also a *recit*, a representation, a plot; Carson's constellation of stories is in itself a trope, a device he uses to represent the complex nature of oral culture. The scientific paradigm might be inadequate to understand the multi-dimensional nature of oral knowledge: Carson's stylistic turn might be regarded as a cognitive approach, a epistemological device envisaged to overcome the limits of conventional linear textuality. Carson's theory of traditional culture is not constituted by a hierarchy of ordered ideas: Carson's constellation of stories is the stylistic projection of his constellation of ideas on traditional culture.

Notes

1 It is worthwhile noting that the first chapter of this book, "Last Night's Fun", was previously published in the essay section of *The Southern Review – A Special Issue: Contemporary Irish*

Poetry and Criticism 31.3 (Summer 1995): 499-502. This suggests that Carson was still looking at this chapter as an essay. Further citations will be included in the text mentioning page number only.

2 *New Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments*, Macmillan, 1984.

3 See "Bagpipe Music", where the reference to the Zodiac and its constellation is constant.

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Voices from Brazil

"Costumes de São Paulo" by Johann Moritz Rugendas (lythograph 25 x 17cm, 1835). In: Pedro Corrêa do Lago, ed. *Iconografia Brasileira* . São Paulo: Itaú Cultural, 2001. 187.

"Costumes do Rio de Janeiro" by Johann Moritz Rugendas (lythograph 25 x 17cm, 1835). In: Pedro Corrêa do Lago, ed. *Iconografia Brasileira.* São Paulo: Itaú Cultural, 2001. 187.

Representations of Women in Nineteenth-Century Brazilian Literature

João Roberto Faria

Abstract: *This essay discusses the representation of women in nineteenth-century Brazilian literature. Portraits of rich women, wives, lovers, widows and "old maids" can be seen in the literature produced in that period, but every one of them is drawn by men.*[*]

Systematic studies of the role of women in history or in everyday social life have only recently begun appearing in Brazil. The first publications addressing this topic came out in the 1970s, the decade in which the first Brazilian researchers and specialists were trained in the area. The 1980s and 90s, when new postgraduate courses were created in Brazil, saw the production of many theses and dissertations in women's studies. This research brought to light diverse aspects of the lives of Brazilian women, from colonial days to the present, aspects that have been definitively incorporated into Brazil's broader history. To cite one example of this research, Miriam Moreira Leite wrote a pioneering study entitled *A condição feminina no Rio de Janeiro: século XIX.* She examined all the texts written by foreign travellers to Brazil and identified passages that dealt with women in nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro. The result is a remarkable portrait of these women and their lives - rich and poor, married and single; their work and entertainment; their beliefs and values. I would like to mention just one more notable book, published in 1997: *História das mulheres no Brasil.* Organised by the historian Mary Del Priore, the work has become a landmark text for the scope and quality of its twenty essays, which reveal an expanding resource base: inquisition trials, medical books, manifestos, documents relating to social movements, laws, women's newspapers, travel books, marriage and baptismal certificates, letters, diaries, photographs - all portraying 500 years of the lives of women in Brazil.

As one of our richest documentary sources, literature has naturally provided information for these studies of the lives of Brazilian women. But many historians, sociologists, and anthropologists did not focus on this rich material. Literature was often used as no more than one of many documentary sources, serving to illustrate or

prove a given aspect of daily life. It was not long, however, before Brazilian cultural historians, literary critics and professors of literature began writing specific studies on women in Brazilian literature. I would mention, for instance, Ingrid Stein's 1984 book *Figuras femininas em Machado de Assis*, and Luis Filipe Ribeiro's more recent *Mulheres de papel: um estudo do imaginário em José de Alencar e Machado de Assis*, published in 1996.

Numerous specialists in women's studies are now on the staffs of Brazilian universities, as demonstrated by the theses and dissertations defended in recent years. Another sign of the interest that this topic has generated in our academic community is the large number of scholars belonging to the "Women in Literature" study group, part of ANPOLL, Brazil's National Postgraduate Studies Association in Letters and Linguistics. The results of ongoing research projects are presented at biennial meetings, and these papers are published in the form of annals. Thanks to this growing attention, a small publishing house has been founded in Florianópolis, in southern Brazil, dedicated to the publication of works by women that have been forgotten and omitted from the canon.

This preliminary information aside, I would like to reflect on representations of women in Brazilian literature during the nineteenth century and to share with the reader the results of this reflection. What you will read here will include some examples of purity and others of licentiousness; you will also read about rich women, poor women, wives, lovers, widows, and 'old maids'. But every one of these pictures will be drawn by male hands, for practically all - or at least the best known - of Brazil's nineteenth-century literature was produced by men. When observing women, this nineteenth-century male eye could be paternalistic and authoritarian, although softened by good intentions, as in romanticism. It could also be cynical and pessimistic about human nature, as in the case of Machado de Assis. It could be radically conservative, as in some comedies of manners. And it could think itself scientific, in naturalistic writing. Let us now take a look at these moments in Brazilian literary production, through the pages of novels and plays.

Brazil's most important romantic writer was José de Alencar. Born in 1829, Alencar inaugurated his literary career in September 1854, as a columnist for Rio de Janeiro's *Correio Mercantil*. He debuted as a novelist less than three years later, with the publication of two books: *Cinco Minutos* and *O Guarani*. In a period of less than twenty years - Alencar died in 1877 - he wrote two dozen novels and eight plays, engaged in a series of polemics within the literary world, and enjoyed a career as a politician as well. Driven by a strong nationalist sentiment and a desire to help Brazil forge a national literature, Alencar painted a broad panorama of the nation. He wanted to serve as an example for other writers. He also indicated some pathways the Brazilian novel might take: indianism, regionalism, the historical novel, the urban novel. Within his vast legacy of admittedly variable quality what concern us here today are his texts portraying everyday urban life in mid-nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro. For, although Alencar was a profoundly romantic writer, as attested by his dramatic plots, he behaved as a

realist in his observations of Rio de Janeiro's customs and the social types of his day, as transported to his fictional universe.

Let me state first of all that Alencar was no revolutionary in his creation of female characters. If some of the women in his novels and plays occasionally stand up to men and to society, suggesting they might be different from most women of their day, and even that they might embark upon independent lives, they always end up regretting their actions, changing their behaviour, and submitting themselves to male expectations. In late nineteenth-century Brazil, there were no social roles for women to play other than those of wife and mother - in other words, of a woman devoted entirely to her husband and children. But what we may interpret today as extreme conservatism gains a new meaning if viewed from the proper historical perspective. We must remember that during colonial times and through the first half of the nineteenth century, the Brazilian family structure was not very orthodox. Marriage was of secondary importance, and men did not take monogamy too seriously. The nuclear family often consisted of an 'official' wife, one or two concubines - chosen from among female slaves - and children, who might be white or racially mixed. In short, the concept of the bourgeois family, sanctified by marriage, held no sway in Brazil. Alencar himself, I might point out, was the son of a priest.

A lot changed in Brazil after 1850, when slave trading came to an end. Money formerly spent on the purchase of slaves for plantation work was now invested in the cities, especially Rio de Janeiro, capital of the Empire. Banks, small industries, railways, steamboat companies, and other businesses sprang up, stimulating urban life and allowing a small bourgeoisie of businessmen, professionals, journalists and intellectuals to emerge. This incipient capitalism proved a strong modernising instrument in a society that had hitherto followed the models of colonialism and slavery, the latter to remain legal until 1888. Brazil would live through a period of contradiction that has been the object of many studies in recent years: a large part of Brazil's financial elite adopted European liberal ideals, yet did not relinquish the advantages of slavery. Literary critic Roberto Schwarz has written an outstanding essay on the topic, entitled "*As idéias fora do lugar*" (*Misplaced Ideas*). Professor Schwarz has studied all of Machado de Assis's works from the standpoint of this contradiction within Brazilian society in the second half of the nineteenth century.

In many ways, Alencar's works reflect this contradiction but do not take issue with it. From the French literature of his time, but above all from the theatre, Alencar learned that bourgeois ethical values like marriage, family, work and virtuousness made French society modern and civilised. Why not adopt these values in Brazil? His works are consequently somewhat didactic in nature, especially in their praise of marriage and the family. Furthermore, he focuses on the richest social strata, precisely the people who were open to bourgeois ideas. Alencar's heroines are thus, for the most part, eligible young women, while his plots revolve around courtship and marriage. These plots would be quite conventional and boring had Alencar failed to add the disruptive element of money to his fictional universe. It is a curious aspect of Alencar's novels that all the

eligible young women are wealthy, whereas their suitors are poor. This disparity moves the plot along, but it is always cancelled out in the end, when love triumphs over money.

The best example of this literature - that undoes tensions and conflicts in the end - is Alencar's 1875 novel *Senhora*. Its protagonist, a poor young woman named Aurélia, is engaged to Fernando Seixas. But he breaks the engagement off to seek the hand of a well-to-do young woman. Aurélia suddenly inherits a fortune from her grandfather and becomes a millionaire. Calling on the services of a go-between, and without identifying herself, Fernando's ex-fiancée offers him an even bigger dowry - and he agrees, on the condition that he receive part of the money in advance. When Fernando discovers that Aurélia is the woman who 'bought' him - undoubtedly the most appropriate verb - he is happy. Aurélia, however, is only out for revenge and, once they are married, she subjects Fernando to all kinds of humiliation. The young man learns his lesson, leaves the dowry untouched, saves up his money, and eventually returns the entire 'down payment' to his wife. Through his moral regeneration, he becomes deserving of Aurélia's pure love. In the end, it is she who kneels down and begs that they stay together, confessing that she never really stopped loving him. She wants him to be "master of her soul" (Alencar 1959, 1208). In other words, she erases the other person she had been – the woman who had challenged social norms - and renounces her own individuality. She will no longer be her own woman. From now on, she will be a wife and mother, while her husband will take charge of the family money. This is, after all, the natural order of things.

Another Alencar novel ends on a similar note. In *Diva*, the female protagonist transforms herself from a haughty, rich, powerful woman into a docile fiancée, the future wife with no identity of her own, a mere extension of her man. As the main character herself says to Augusto: "My life has ended; now I begin living through you." Or, in the book's closing dialogue: "You are not only the supreme sovereign of my soul; you are the motive power of my life, my thought, and my will. You are the one who should think and want for me … Me? … I belong to you; I am something of yours. You can keep it or destroy it; you can make it your wife or your slave" (Alencar 1959, 558)

Nowadays we find it disturbing to see a woman negate herself like this, becoming her husband's property, with no apparent will of her own. Love simply veils the married woman's position of inferiority. What underlies the endings of both *Senhora* and *Diva* is much less Alencar's personal opinion than notions rooted in the bourgeois mentality then expanding in Brazil. This position is also consistent with the Catholic notion of marriage. In his *Epistle to the Ephesians*, St. Paul describes marital obligations in the following terms:

> Wives, be subject to your husbands, as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Saviour. Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands (5.22-24).

Alencar believed that marriage and the family were modern, civilising institutions. If the women in his texts accept a supposed male superiority, let it be said in

the writer's defence that he at least advocated a change in Brazil's patriarchal customs, allowing his young female protagonists the right to choose their future partners. Parents generally arranged their children's marriages in the mid-nineteenth century - a tradition inherited from colonial times. Alencar and various other writers combated this old custom and endeavoured to show that it was not suited to preserving the family as society's *celula mater*. Needless to say, arranged marriages or marriages grounded on monetary interests are particularly susceptible to adultery and the separations and tragedies this can bring. Marriage based on love is thus an ideal in Alencar's novels and plays, for love is a sentiment that fortifies the family as an institution. A prime example is his play *O que é o casamento?* (What is marriage?), first staged in 1862, whose title is an agenda in itself. Once again somewhat didactically, Alencar creates dialogues between his characters in which they can voice their opinions on marriage and the family from a deeply bourgeois perspective. At one point, for instance, the protagonist explains that she had grown unhappy after some years of marriage. She had felt very lonely because her husband had devoted himself to business and politics, and was hardly ever at home. But she managed to overcome her sadness when she finally realised what marriage was all about. She had to devote her love to her husband and daughter. As she herself says in the play:

> Then I once again found the man I had loved; I joined in this life that before had seemed so barren and so selfish; I accompanied him from afar, and I saw how much generosity and how much kindness is hidden in his reserve. My loneliness was gradually filled. Administrating the house, domestic tasks, the desire to make a sweet and cosy life for he who was devoting himself to his family's happiness, brought me the most pleasurable, purest feelings I have ever had (Alencar, 1960, 374).

As one can see, woman's happiness lies in her understanding the role she must play within the family. She must be a mother and a wife, not an impetuous lover. Alencar goes so far as to 'de-romanticise' love in this particular play, redefining it in terms of conjugal love, something more serene and tender than mad passion.

Even in Alencar's more controversial and courageous works, like the novel *Lucíola* and the play *As Asas de um Anjo*, which both address the question of prostitution, he finds ways to affirm bourgeois values. In *Lucíola*, the protagonist punishes herself for losing her bodily purity by refusing to have relations with the lead male character once she has fallen in love with him. She instead reserves her purity of soul for him, and tries to convince him to marry her younger sister, to build a family, to become a father - because this is what life in her society demanded of men. In other words, there was no future in a relationship with a prostitute. She argued:

There are feelings and pleasures you have not yet felt, and only a chaste, pure wife can give these to you. Would you for my sake deprive yourself of such sacred affections as conjugal love and paternal love? (Alencar 1959, 452)

We perceive in this quotation the first prerequisite to be met if a woman is to marry: she must be chaste and pure, that is, a virgin. Even though the novel's protagonist

lives on the margins of society, she endorses its moral code. She is well aware that there is no place for her in this society, even if she regenerates herself and leaves prostitution behind. Thus, at no point in the novel does she think about marriage. But for the young man who was her lover, no harm comes from associating with a prostitute. He can still socialise with the finest families and marry with no problem. Alencar refers to this double standard in the play *As Asas de um Anjo*. The central character, Carolina, who would like to regenerate herself, is indignant when she realises society will not accept her. At a certain point in the play, one of the characters justifies this double standard in terms that clearly illustrate the strength of bourgeois ideology:

> Perhaps it is an injustice, Carolina; but don't you know the reason? It is the enormous respect, a kind of cult, that civilised man devotes to woman. Among the barbarians, she is but a slave or lover; her worth lies in her beauty. For us, it is the threefold image of maternity, love, and innocence. It is our custom to venerate in women virtue in its most perfect form. This is why the slightest fault in a woman soils her body as well, while in a man it soils only his soul. The soul can be purified because it is spirit; the body, no! … Here is why repentance wipes away a man's blemish, and never that of woman; here is why society will accept a man who regenerates himself, but always spurns she who carries on her body the indelible marks of her error (Alencar 1960 274-275).

It will be recalled that a large part of the reading public in the mid- nineteenth century was made up of women. The didactic tone we find in Alencar and other romantics, like Joaquim Manuel de Macedo, is directed at women, in order that they might see themselves in these pure young ladies, virtuous wives and self-denying mothers. We can conclude from José de Alencar's works that he believed strongly in bourgeois institutions; he felt they were modern, and perfect for building the Brazilian society of his time. But we can also say that Alencar overlooked the ideology - in the sense of false appearances - contained in these imported bourgeois values, and how much they clashed with the reality of slavery and the patron-client model, which kept people from realising their full potential as individuals. With the action of his novels almost always located in the upper classes, Alencar did not take issue with the supposed universality of bourgeois ideals - although these were meaningless to the poor, free men and women of nineteenth-century Brazil. In a slave society, these individuals had no way of working, and generally depended on favours granted by the wealthy.

It was only when the novels of Machado de Assis appeared - especially those produced after 1880 - that Alencar's positive point of view would be replaced. Machado, born in 1839 and thus ten years younger than Alencar, was an earnest liberal in his youth. He believed in bourgeois institutions; he wrote romantic short stories, which were published in the *Jornal das Famílias,* read by young ladies; and he was optimistic about the human being and about literature as well, which he saw as an instrument for regenerating and moralising society. His early novels, written in the 1870s, contained

no criticisms of Brazilian society, even though they exposed the patron-client relation and the workings of Brazilian paternalism. In these early texts, poor young women dependent on well-to-do families endeavour to climb the social ladder through marriage, with their protectors' help. Less romantic than Alencar, Machado creates heroines like Guiomar, in *A Mão e a Luva*, a young woman guided more by reason than by emotions when she chooses her future husband. But as Machado had not yet developed his cynical, pessimistic view of man and society, the author was still depicting rich families through a positive prism - for it was thanks to them that intelligent young women like Estela, in *Iaiá Garcia*; Guiomar; and Helena, from the novel of the same title, could rise to the social position they deserved. In these works, the novelist values and respects the family as an institution, while he depicts the social roles played by women as being no different from those we saw in Alencar.

However, with his 1880 novel *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas*, Machado not only introduces into his fiction a new way of narrating, but also a new way of seeing the world as well. Disillusioned, cynical and ironic, he takes aim at both genders, viewing them through a psychological prism while at the same time situating them in a historical time and place: that is, Rio de Janeiro's social life during the second half of the nineteenth century. We are now distant from any naïve understanding, whether of human behaviour or of social mechanisms. Vanity, egotism, financial power, social conventions, dissimulation, lies, ambitions – these are the driving forces behind the characters and the society in Machado's novels. His women are consequently either accomplices or victims of this state of affairs, depending on their social position. Let us look at some examples.

Virgília, the rich young lady who marries Lobo Neves for his money and position, becomes Brás Cubas's lover, yet suffers no consequences as a result of her adultery. A dissimulating woman, she deceives her husband but lacks the courage to leave him for Brás Cubas. Like many of Machado's other characters, she places great value on social opinion. In this same novel, Eugênia, a poor young woman born out of wedlock, eventually ends up living in a *cortiço* - a kind of tenement - because she was unsuccessful in getting Brás Cubas or any other man to marry her. Two other poor women in the novel, Marcela and Dona Plácida, meet similar fates. It is known that poor women had no dowry and therefore could not expect to marry, because - although Alencar and the romantics preferred not to see it as such - marriage was often a business transaction. Virgília, for example, is offered to Brás Cubas as his fiancée, and he agrees for political motives - so that he can run for state deputy - even before meeting her. But Virgília trades Brás Cubas for Lobo Neves, because the second suitor guarantees he will make her a marquise. *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas* does not idealise husband-seeking females, or wives or mothers - and much less does it idealise institutions like marriage and the family. Unlike Alencar, Machado realised to what extent ideology underpinned bourgeois ethical values, and he showed his readers the other side of the coin. To use current critical terminology, we can say he deconstructed bourgeois institutions.

Take *Quincas Borba*, for example, a novel written after *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas*. Sofia and Palha's marriage is one of appearances. She is a young woman from a poor family who married up in life. Her husband is a slick businessman. The ambitious couple join forces in order to swindle the simple-minded Rubião. Sofia leads Rubião on but does not go as far as adultery - because she does not like him. She might, however, have committed adultery with Carlos Maria, had the idea attracted the young man. Like most of Machado's female characters, Sofia is deceitful, false and a liar.

Dissimulation is the ultimate female weapon. Machado's most notable female character, Capitu, from the novel *Dom Casmurro*, is described as a woman with "the eyes of a sly and cunning gypsy." The character-narrator, who has known Capitu well for many years, repeatedly reminds us of her ability to dissimulate. In fact, it is because he is so certain she is false that he believes himself to be the victim of betrayal. His story is an indictment of his wife, and for a long time it convinced the novel's readers. In a 1917 study, for example, Alfredo Pujol had this to say about *Dom Casmurro*:

> It is a cruel book. Bento Santiago, of good and guileless heart, submissive and trusting, made for sacrifice and tenderness, has from childhood loved his delightful neighbour, Capitolina - or Capitu, as she is known by her family. Capitu is one of Machado de Assis's finest and strongest creations. She wears deceit and treachery in her eyes brimming with seduction and charm. Cunning by nature, dissimulation is for her […] instinctive and perhaps subconscious. Bento Santiago, whose mother wanted him to be a priest, manages to escape his destiny, graduate from law school, and marry his childhood friend. His wife Capitu then cheats on him with his best friend, and Bento Santiago eventually learns that the child he presumed to be his is not. His wife's betrayal leaves him cynical, almost evil (Pujol 240).

Incredible though it may seem to us today, *Dom Casmurro* was read as a novel about adultery until at least 1960. Critics generally accepted the narrator's viewpoint and believed his story. It was necessary for a woman - the American Helen Caldwell - to come to Capitu's defence, in her book entitled *The Brazilian Othello of Machado de Assis: a study of Dom Casmurro*. Caldwell argues that the narrator is unreliable and that his story is a one-sided interpretation of the facts. She acquits Capitu - likewise an error, because the novel does not enable the reader to judge Capitu's guilt or innocence. In any case, what is fascinating is that readers in the past took the narrator's side. It was much easier to condemn Capitu - indeed, Machado's works are filled with false, deceitful, adulterous female characters.

Was this the writer's view of women? Obviously not. Machado was interested in human nature - of both men and women. There are no stereotypes in his works. Virgília, for example, is not evil because she is an adulteress. On the contrary, her concern over Dona Plácida's state of health and future are signs of Virgília's goodness. Machado's short stories and novels also portray women who are entirely virtuous and good. One

fine example is Dona Carmo, in *Memorial de Aires*, who is devoted to her husband, to Fidélia and to Tristão. In a letter to Mário de Alencar, Machado himself confessed that he constructed the character Dona Carmo based on his wife, Carolina, who had just died.

Machado's female characters are almost always complex, whatever their social position. Capitu and Sofia are poor young women who marry into wealth; Virgília and Fidélia are already rich, and marriage makes them no richer. Machado preferred to observe the wealthier strata of urban Rio de Janeiro and their relationship with bourgeois ethical values. Unlike Alencar, Machado idealised neither sentiments nor institutions and did not write literature of a pedagogical bent. But we should not be deceived: underlying his critical view of society is an angst-filled soul that laments, in the case of women, the fact that they are not always sincere and virtuous, exemplary wives and mothers.

Exemplary wives and mothers: living for men rather than as independent individuals. This is what was expected of women in late nineteenth-century Brazil. Ibsen had already written *A Doll's House* - the remarkably feminist drama in which the courageous Nora leaves her husband and children to lead her own life - when one of the most conservative Brazilian plays ever written enjoyed a highly successful run in Rio. I am speaking of the comedy *As Doutoras* (The Physicians) by França Júnior. Premiered in 1889, it brought to the stage a concern that must have been on many people's minds: what would the future of the family be like in a society where women went to college and worked as professionals, at the same level as men?

This is what had indeed started happening in 1879, when the Brazilian government opened the doors of higher education to women. Five years earlier, in 1874, 14-year-old Maria Augusta Generosa Estrella had to go to the United States to attend medical school, from which she graduated in 1881. Another young woman, Josefa Agueda Felisbella Mercedes de Oliveira, followed in her footsteps. Together they founded a feminist newspaper in New York called *A Mulher*, in which they defended the idea that both women and men can devote themselves to the study of the sciences. Moreover, they argued that women should work to support themselves.

Documents suggest that the first woman to graduate from medical school in Brazil was Rita Lobato Velho Lopes, in 1887. In reporting this event, the feminist paper *Eco das Damas* praised Lopes as an example to young Brazilian women, whose only hope of achieving independence and personal dignity was through education.

While Machado's novels simply ignored these early expressions of feminism in Brazil, França Júnior, on the other hand, satirised the *femmes savantes* that had begun to appear on the scene. Exploring this very timely topic, his comedy *As Doutoras* underscores the conflict by putting on stage a married couple who are both just out of medical school. Since husband and wife do not support the same theories, they often become involved in scientific discussions, inevitably humorous, especially when the female doctor's simple-minded mother or garrulous maid are around to add their

comments. França Júnior is as successful with his characters' exaggerated use of technical terminology as he is with the inflammatory rhetoric of the cast's other female professional, a lawyer who always talks as though she were in the courtroom.

The first three acts are marked by humorous language and situations. As the plot moves along, the couple's scientific discussions evolve into professional rivalry and arguments, culminating in a separation. But normality is resumed with the wife's providential pregnancy and ensuing shock - which leads her to give up medicine. In the fourth act, the utterly happy doctor is content to be a wife and mother. In a symmetrical parallel, the same thing occurs with the loquacious attorney. The play's conclusion evinces the conservatism of its author - true not only of França Júnior but of most men in those times. How else to explain the 50 presentations in a row of *As Doutoras* and its tremendous box-office success?

The same theme was taken up shortly afterwards by a playwright whose name has since fallen into oblivion: L.T. da Silva Nunes. Nunes stated that he wrote the comedy *A Doutora* to show that a young woman should not go to medical school because the position of doctor might itself place her at times in situations inappropriate for a virtuous woman, for instance, when making house-calls. In other words, medicine was an improper profession for women. Practically the only profession seen as acceptable for women at that time was that of schoolteacher.

Bias against women was not limited to the social sphere. At the close of the nineteenth century, women were considered biologically inferior to men. Scientists believed that women's genital organs were the source of nervous illness and even mental disorders. Theories on hysteria abounded, and it was soon labelled a typically female disorder, often caused by sexual abstinence.

While the field of science was coming up with absurd ideas about female sexuality, naturalist writers were applying them in their novels. It is difficult for contemporary readers to accept the naturalist view of women because nineteenth-century "truths" no longer hold good. The "hysterical" woman was a central or secondary character in many European naturalist novels. Read in Brazil, supported by scientific and medical treatises, these books provided models for those Brazilian writers who adhered to naturalism, like Aluísio Azevedo and Júlio Ribeiro. In 1887, Aluísio Azevedo published *O Homem*, a novel grounded entirely on scientific theories about hysterical women. Although weak as literature, the novel is nonetheless striking for its portrayal of the 18-year-old protagonist, Magdá, who loses her mind because her sexual instinct is not satisfied. The plot begins melodramatically, with Magdá falling in love with Fernando, who, unbeknown to her, is her brother. The shock of discovery leaves her susceptible to nervous attacks. Her attending physician does not mince words in diagnosing the young woman's illness. In straightforward fashion he tells Magdá's father that she needs to get married. And he adds: "'Marriage' is just a way of putting it. What I insist upon is coitus! What she needs is a man!" (Azevedo 36). From this point on, we witness Magdá's descent into madness. Her nervous attacks progress, her health worsens

and her erotic dreams intensify, peppering the novel with scenes that were considered racy and shocking.

Even more scandalous was Júlio Ribeiro's 1888 novel *A Carne*, labelled pornographic by some. When he created the hysterical 22-year-old Lenita, Júlio Ribeiro must have drawn his inspiration from Aluísio Azevedo. After a series of nervous attacks, Lenita has an affair with a divorced man, who can never marry her. Once again we witness the story of a well-educated young woman who does not want to marry. But Lenita's sexuality is awoken after her father dies. In keeping with the naturalist style, the narrator describes Lenita's moment of insight in these terms:

> She realised that she, a superior woman, despite her powerful intelligence, with all her knowledge, was, as a member of her species, no more than a simple female, and that what she felt was desire, the organic need for a male (Ribeiro 30).

Again, the language is coarse and of questionable taste. So I will spare the reader the description of Lenita's first sexual experience and the descriptions of other hysterical women found in novels like *O Mulato* and *Casa de Pensão*, both by Aluísio Azevedo, or in *A Normalista*, by Adolfo Caminha. The two examples cited above suffice to demonstrate how women are generally represented in naturalist works. When the focus is not on hysteria, it is on something of a similar nature, a physiological element likewise derived from the science of that day. As a Brazilian myself I take solace in the fact that this way of looking at women was not a Brazilian invention. Our authors were merely faithful to European models. So much so that Júlio Ribeiro dedicated his novel to Émile Zola, while Aluísio Azevedo added the following warning to his: "Whoever does not love truth in art and does not have quite sure and clear ideas about naturalism will, should he fail to read this book, be performing a great favour to its author".

What conclusion can be drawn? Written mostly by men, the portraits of women in nineteenth-century Brazilian literature are, for the most part, tightly linked to the prevailing ideology of the period. Except for Machado de Assis, who preferred the psychological exploration of women as complex human beings, the outlook of Brazilian writers of that time was predominantly bourgeois, particularly in the case of Alencar and França Júnior. But the bourgeois mentality can be detected even in naturalist works. 'Normal' women are married: marriage not only lends structure to the family, but also guarantees women their health by providing them with a controlled sex life.

In short, nineteenth-century Brazilian literature depicts women as dependent creatures, whose lives should revolve around men. The chaste young woman, the faithful wife, the devoted mother - these were the only social roles a woman should play. Anything else was a transgression of the norm, for which she could expect to pay a very high price.

We can also conclude that this literature was out of step with social reality because, in late nineteenth-century Brazil, a good number of women were gaining

independence, taking charge of their own lives, challenging bourgeois norms, and earning their own way. The composer Chiquinha Gonzaga is a good example. She married at a very young age, later separated from her husband, made a living writing music, and engaged in the struggle for abolition - but she suffered tremendous social discrimination. Like her, other courageous women fought for equal rights, published newspapers and literary works, and moved into an arena formerly restricted to men. Recent research is bringing these first feminist struggles in Brazil to light. But telling this other story lies beyond the scope of the present article.

Note

* Text revised by Dr Peter James Harris (UNESP).

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Book Reviews

Inés Praga Terente (Ed.)

La novela irlandesa del siglo XX

PPU

Praga Terente, Inés (Ed) ***La novela irlandesa del siglo XX*** **Barcelona: PPU, 2005. 272pp.**

David Clark

The field of Irish Studies is currently going through a period of quite incredible fruitfulness in Spain. It is surprising, perhaps, to contemplate the sheer amount of scholarship on Irish matters appearing from a variety of different Spanish universities. One of the most important figures in this boom is the editor and co-author of the volume under discussion, Inés Praga Terente who, from her Chair in Humanities at the University of Burgos, has founded the Spanish Association of Irish Studies and has consistently encouraged young scholars from a number of institutions in the different regions of Spain to delve into the field.

This volume, as the title suggests, presents a refreshing study of the Irish novel in the twentieth century. Written in Spanish, its accessibility for readers in Spain and in other Spanish-speaking countries is undeniable, and the volume provides a wonderful starting point for students wishing to broaden their knowledge on the subject.

The book is divided into five chapters, each of which examines a specific area of the Irish novel in the last century. Chapter One, written by Praga herself, is entitled "About the Irish Novel: Notes towards a Tradition" and gives a general overview of the history of the novel in Ireland. Praga Terente, supporting the views of one of Ireland's most interesting contemporary writers, Dermot Bolger, claims that the novel has now overtaken the short story as constituting the "national art form" in contemporary Ireland. Recognising the enormity of the shadow cast by Joyce, the author takes the reader painlessly through the diversity and quantity of Irish long fiction in the twentieth century with an admirable sense of tact and of taste, resuscitating the importance of often unrecognised early writers such as Eimar O'Duffy and Mervyn Wall, whilst recognising the status deserved, but so grudgingly awarded, to James Stephens. Her analysis of contemporary writers is just and illuminating – nobody is overstated, and few writers are missing.

The second chapter, by Mará Amor Barros Del Río, under the title "To Name the Unnameable: Women and Literature in Ireland" reviews the situation of women's fiction in the island. Whilst acknowledging the early predominance of Ascendancy writers in the woman's novel in Ireland, Barros Del Río links the Anglo-Irish tradition to the contemporary novel in that there exists a common concern in "the presentation of the female psyche subjected to social force". Accepting J.M. Cahalan's grouping of Elizabeth Bowen, Mary Lavin, Kate O'Brien, Maura Laverty and Molly Keane as "a literary generation", the writer stresses the importance of a novel like Bowen's *The Last September*, in which "the knot of loyalties which members of her social class felt towards

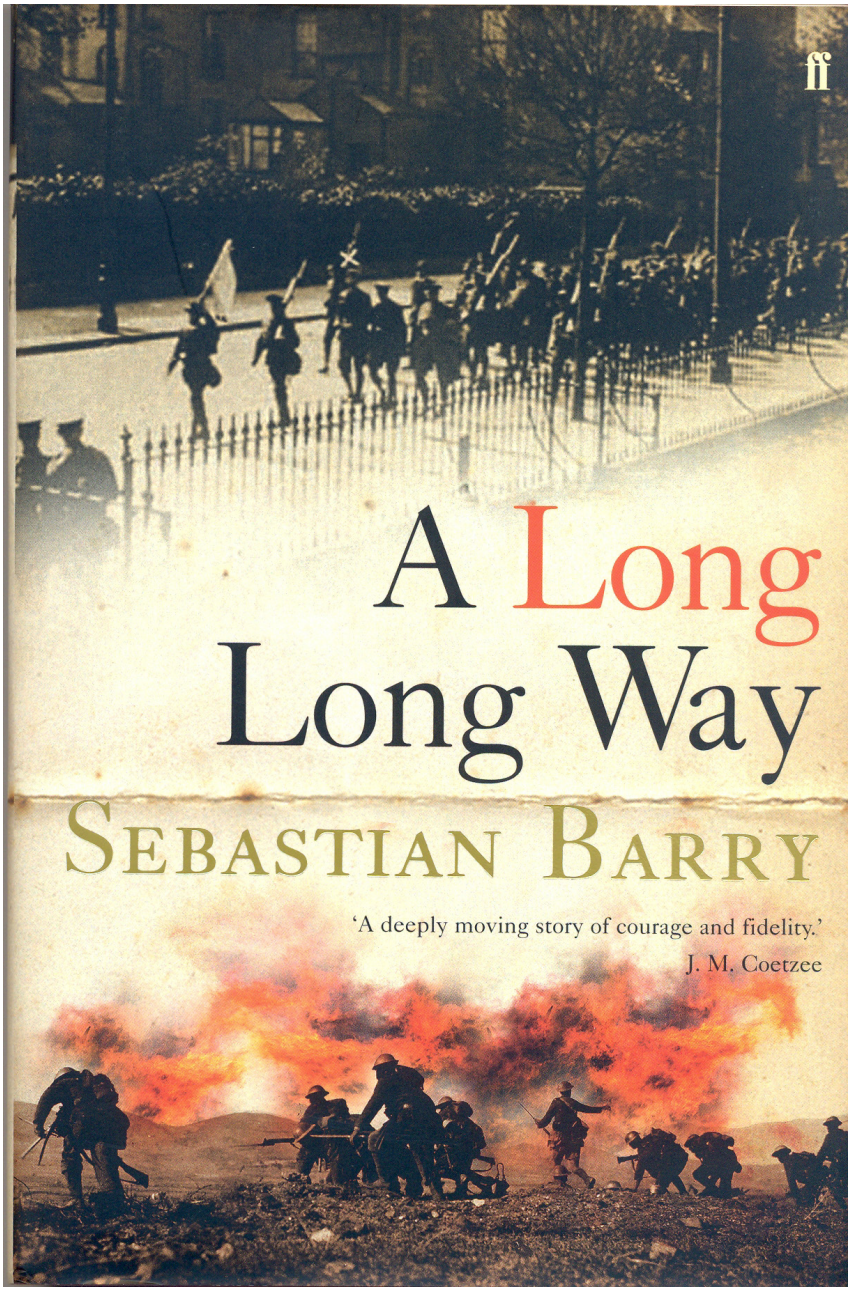
Ireland and England" are stretched to limits which, like Kate O'Brien in her treatment of the Catholic middle-classes are based on an intensity of personal experience and the public revelation of the personal consciousness. Barros Del Río cleverly equates the generation of writers which came to the fore in the early 1960's – Julia O'Faolain, Jennifer Johnston and Edna O'Brien – with Judith, the elderly protagonist of Julia O'Faolain's *No Country for Young Men* because, like Judith, they can be seen to be "re-writing multiple sub-histories, or marginal histories which had not before that time been related". Contemporary writers are covered with competence and skill, although one perhaps misses reference to such magnificent writers as Anne Enright and Anne Haverty, as well as the rising star of contemporary Irish narrative, Lia Mills.

Leonardo Pérez García is responsible for chapter three, "Representations of Dublin in the Contemporary Irish Novel". In this thoughtful essay, Pérez García provides a fascinating journey through twentieth-century Dublin as reflected in its narrative. For the author, the Dublin ant aspects of the recent history of Ireland". The author, according to Rubio Amigo, reflects "the effects of the clash between tradition and progress" while at the same time analysing "the pressure exerted on the subject by the community" and the futility of traditional mythical structures.

The final chapter, Chapter Five, is again written by the General Editor, Professor Praga Terente, and is entitled "The Novel in the North". Here Praga Terente convincingly argues in favour of a separate treatment for the novel from the North without implying any ideological reasoning behind such a decision. The Troubles are obviously central to her discourse, but the writer also stresses the fact that the "bad press" to which the city of Belfast (and the North in general) has been submitted is nothing new, predating not only the Troubles but, in fact, the twentieth century itself. Praga Terente, following A.Bradley, makes some interesting comments with reference to the different attitudes towards place in the writings of authors from both communities in the North. For Catholic writers, "place" is generally celebrated in atavistic terms, whereas for Protestant authors "place" often responds to a sense of alienation, and hence the tendency towards the Gothic. Thus the atavism of the early Michael McLaverty can be contrasted with the Gothic decadence of Sam Hanna Bell. Belfast, like Joyce's Dublin, is for many writers from the North, a city of paralysis, and Brian Moore's *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* inhabits the same spiritual and geographical territory as that which later writers such as Robert McLiam Wilson, Eoin McNamee and Glenn Patterson would use. Deirdre Madden is afforded her just role in the pantheon of great contemporary writers from the North, as are Bernard MacLaverty and Linda Anderson. Interestingly, perhaps, Praga Terente justly praises Mary Beckett's *Give them Stones* but does not mention Anna Burns' masterful *No Bones*, perhaps one of the most poignant studies of the Troubles to appear in any novel.

La novela irlandesa del siglo XX is, in conclusion, a most welcome addition to the steadily growing Spanish-language contribution to Irish Studies. The bibliography provided in the book is extensive without losing a sense of perspective, and the scale of

Praga Terente's scholarship (and that of her collaborators) is amply demonstrated by the constant reference to existing materials in the field. Particularly illuminating, perhaps, is the amount of Spanish bibliography cited by the authors. As well as being a generous gesture towards Spanish scholars working in the field, this also bears testimony to the flourishing status of Irish Studies in Spain today. This volume provides the raw material for the formation and training of new generations of students of Irish literature, as well as supplying an intelligent and reliable reference work for Spanish speakers working in the field of Irish Studies.


A Long
Long Way
SEBASTIAN BARRY
'A deeply moving story of courage and fidelity.'
J. M. Coetzee

Sebastian Barry. *A Long Long Way*. London: Faber and Faber, 2005, 294 pp., £ 12.99, ISBN 0-571-21800-8.

Heinz Kosok

"… they don't write books about the likes of us. It's officers and high-up people mostly", is the complaint of one of the Privates in *A Long Long Way*. One of the purposes of Sebastian Barry's book (shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2005) evidently was to rectify such a neglect. It is the story, told in deceptively simple terms, of one Willie Dunne who grows up in turn-of-the-century Dublin and in 1914, on the outbreak of the First World War, joins the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. After a brief period of training he is sent to Belgian Flanders and experiences the war in and out of the trenches with all its horrors and its brief spells of respite.

Barry, who was born more than forty years after the beginning of what is still referred to as the Great War and consequently could not rely on personal memories, has recreated with amazing clarity all the different facets of the Flanders campaign. He describes in graphic detail ("The approach trench was a reeking culvert with a foul carpet of crushed dead") such archetypal incidents as the initial encounter with the front-line situation, the horrors of the first poison-gas attack and the ensuing panic of a precipitous retreat, the shocking experience of killing an enemy soldier and the equally shocking sight of a soldier who refused to 'cooperate' being executed by firing squad, the brief exhilaration of success and the lasting despair of defeat, the small joys of a letter from home or a tin of hot stew and the relief of furlough in Ireland, the boredom during long periods of inactivity and the senseless exercises in the reserve lines, the unsentimental companionship in the trenches and the poignant grief of losing yet another mate. Superimposed on these typical experiences is the simple story of Willie Dunne, his devotion to his sisters, his doomed love affair with a sweet nonentity from the Dublin slums, his short-lived friendship with the man executed for his convictions, and most importantly his precarious relationship with his father, Chief Superintendent of the Dublin Metropolitan Police and a loyal follower of the King (familiar from Barry's earlier play *The Steward of Christendom*). With the one exception of the unlikely intrigue that ends Willie's love affair, all this is rendered immediately credible and convincing. To emphasize the senselessness of the war, Willie, in a scene somewhat overcharged with symbolism, is eventually killed a few days before the Armistice.

Barry describes all this, in third-person (or 'figural') narrative, as seen through the eyes of Willie Dunne whose lack of comprehension for all larger issues is one of the central impressions the book leaves with the reader, while the quiet humour of his observations (a fellow soldier "had a Cork accent like an illness") saves Willie from the

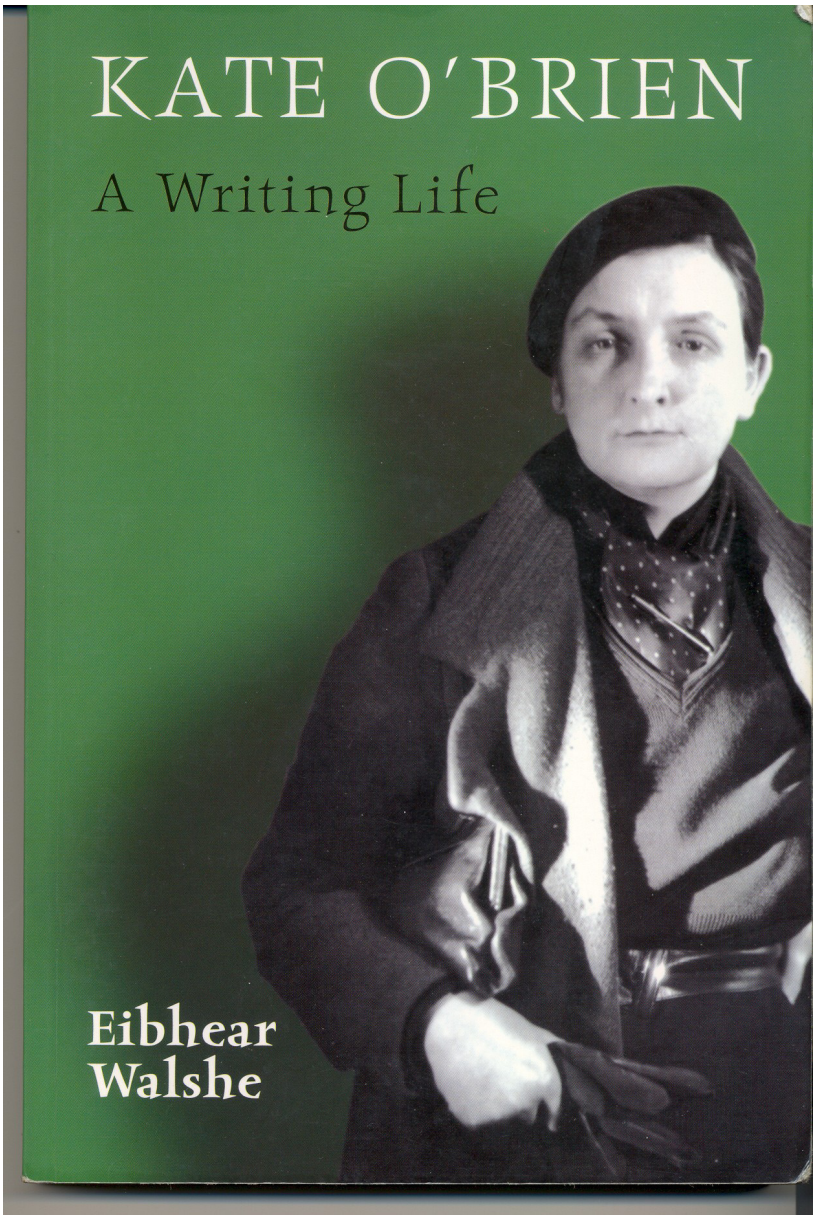
role of helpless victim. Nevertheless – this is one of the miracles that Barry performs – Willie's naïve thoughts and emotions are conveyed in a poetic language of highly original similes and metaphors which, amazingly, do not jar on Barry's depiction of the protagonist's simple mind. Going to sleep in a billet behind the lines, "he fell down between the boards of memory and sleep like a penny in an old floor." Such images are not concentrated in moments of high emotional intensity but saturate the narrative at every point: "The spring sun ran along the river like a million skipping stones." Naturally Barry's third-person narration prevents him (or permits him to abstain) from getting into the mind of any of the other characters, which emphasizes the book's concentration on Willie Dunne.

On the surface, then, this is yet another book about the Great War, ninety years after Patrick MacGill's *The Great Push,* albeit one of exceptional atmospheric intensity. At the same time, however, like so much of Irish literature, *A Long Long Way* has a solid substratum of political/historical facts. This is true not only of the actual war events where various specific battles – at Hulluch, Guinchy, Guillemont, Wytschaete, Langemarck, the Messines Ridge etc. – and a number of other events such as the Xmas Truce of 1914 or the Dardanelles landings, are mentioned or even described in considerable detail. It is even more true of the condition of Ireland during the war. Willie Dunne is named after William of Orange and grows up in an atmosphere of unreflected loyalty to the British Crown. His father, the Police Inspector who led the baton charge on the crowd in Sackville Street during the Larkinite Strike of 1913, is a staunch supporter of the status quo. He stands for the one extreme in the conflict of loyalties that was beginning to tear Ireland apart in the course of the war. The other extreme is, of course, represented by the leaders of the 1916 Easter Rising whose fate is referred to again and again in the novel. Willie himself becomes inadvertently involved in the Rising when he and some other soldiers, on the way back to Flanders from a short furlough in Dublin, observe the disastrous cavalry attack on the Post Office and are then ordered to take part in what was later known, somewhat hyperbolically, as the Battle of Mount Street Bridge, where the troops fire on the insurgents and Willie witnesses the death of a Volunteer right in front of him.

In the course of the novel, much is made of the irony inherent in the term 'volunteer'. Willie is one of the volunteers who make up the 16th Division in Kitchener's New Army after John Redmond had persuaded the majority of the Irish Volunteers to join up on the understanding that 'England will keep faith' and grant Home Rule to Ireland after the end of the war. Redmond's brother even volunteers for army service and is killed at the front. Willie Dunne and his mates then are on a par with Carson's Ulster Volunteers who make up the 36th (the 'Ulster') Division and sometimes jeer at the Southern Irish but also fight side by side with them. And the insurgents in Dublin, those who did *not* follow Redmond's advice, are also volunteers who believe they are fighting in a righteous course. Barry admirably captures the growing unease, even confusion among the Irish soldiers at the front, especially when they realise that they

are suspected of 'rebel' leanings and are not trusted any longer by the commanding officers ("What the fuck are they doing, causing mayhem at home, when we're out here fucking risking our fucking lives for them?"). Willie's bewilderment increases when he is spat on in the streets of Dublin by youngsters who despise his uniform and denigrate him as a 'Tommy'. Much of this may escape a reader outside Ireland, but for anyone familiar with the Irish situation it soon becomes clear that Barry has written a book not only about one Willie Dunne but about twentieth-century Ireland, where the Great War became a persistent trauma.

In the final analysis, this is a timely book. The title is highly appropriate because the novel was published at the end of a long process in Ireland of coming to terms with the conflicting roles of Irishmen during the First World War. The ridicule and spite that Willie and his mates experienced in the streets of Dublin – "these ruined men, these doomed listeners, these wretched fools of men come out to fight a war without a country to their name, the slaves of England and the kings of nothing" – continued well into the last decades of the twentieth century. Barry's book will perhaps help at last to lay at rest the ghosts of the past.



Eibhear Walshe. *Kate O´Brien. A Writing Life.* Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006,194 pages.

Inés Praga Terente

Virginia Woolf stated in *The Art of Biography* (1939) the importance of a biographer´s achievements :"by telling us the true facts, by sifting the little from the big, and shaping the whole so that we perceive the outline, the biographer does more to stimulate the imagination than any poet or novelist save the very great. For few poets and novelists are capable of that high degree of tension which gives us reality".

It is evident that a biography implies a selection of the large material any life generates, a verification of "the true facts" and great accuracy to identify the key elements in it. However, nothing could be achieved without the necessary empathy that must exist between the biographer and the biographee, some amount of complicity, some universe shared by both. Only in this way can a biography aim at higher targets than a mere chronological presentation of events, because quite frequently the artistic/academic approach overshadows the human dimension of a writer. Fortunately this is not the case of Eibhear Walshe´s book.

The"high degree of tension" mentioned by Virginia Woolf is ever present in Kate O´Brien´s life. Her biographer has faced the challenge of dealing with an author largely neglected and unhonoured in her own country, since only in the 80s, when Arlen House reissued her works, a true revival of interest in her came about. Traditionally there had been an uneasy reaction to this banned writer, with an unconventional physical appearance and a distinctly *unIrish* behaviour. Walshe goes so far as to hold that her own imagination was influenced by a sense of racial defensiveness and protectiveness towards Irish writing and that her fiction was in some ways the angry reply of the colonized writer. But above all he emphasizes her status as a *subversive novelist,* an author who pulled down many moral barriers and who dared the narrow and claustrophobic scope of her native Limerick. His commitment to recover and restore her position in Irish Literature is clear from the very beginning of the book.

Kate O´Brien is approached not only as the author of a good number of successful novels, plays, travel books, essays and biographies. The book particularly stresses the role she played as the representative of a class– the Catholic bourgeoisie– that had been practically non existent in Irish fiction. Walshe makes clear that in writing novels about the Irish bourgeoisie she was creating a literature from scratch, since most of Irish writing in the nineteenth century had been from the perspective of the Anglo Irish Ascendancy. And although Joyce had provided something of a model in his depictions of Irish middle class domestic life, a period of silence followed until her own voice sounded. Throughout seven chapters chronologically arranged, the book traces the endless number of addresses of O´Brien´s nomadic existence, offering an interesting intersection of her *sense of*

place and her *sense of self*. Both factors intertwined in her life and work and are crucial to understand her process of self assertion. Therefore Ireland, Britain and Spain prove everlasting references in her lifetime, each framing different stages and experiences.

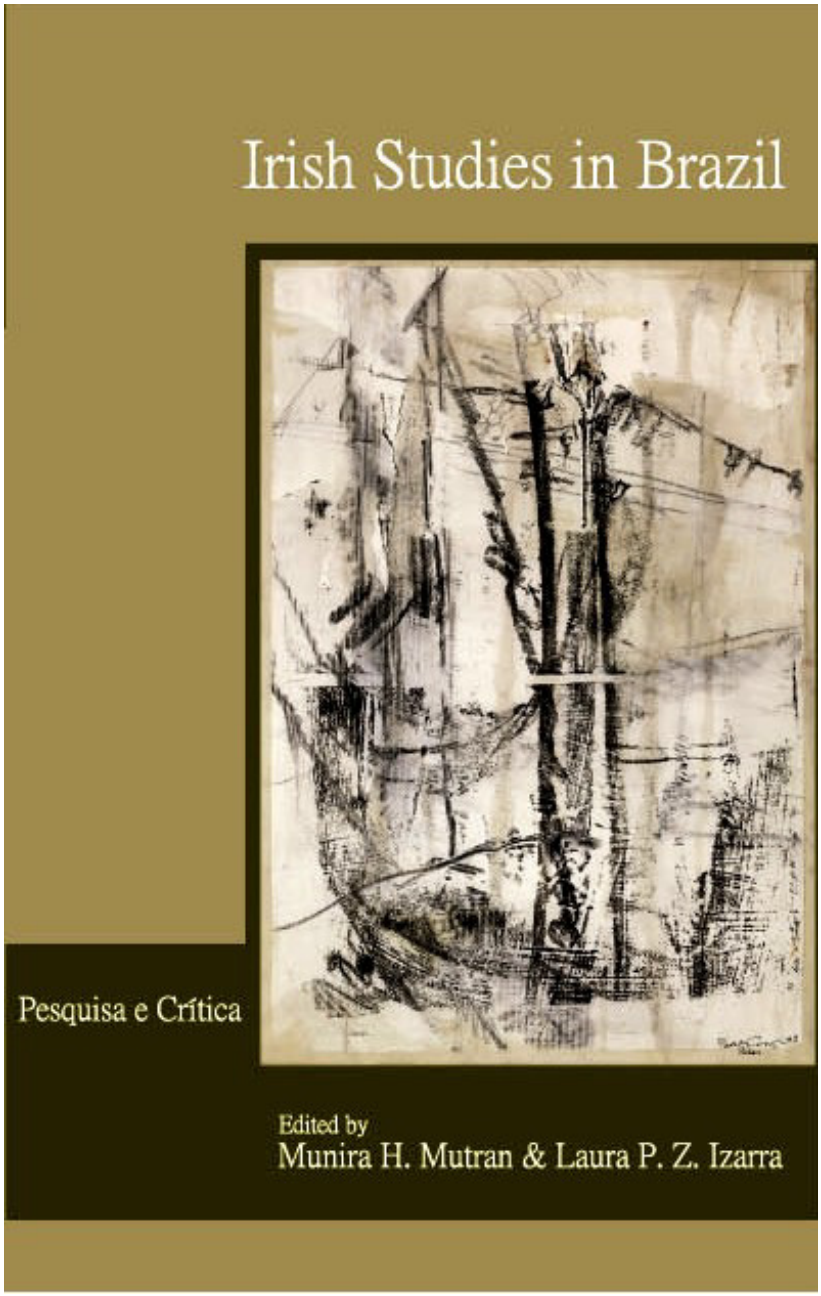
Kate O´Brien illustrates the Irish writer´s anxiety to possess a space of his/her own and the different strategies generated by it. One of the most frequent is that of transposing/ translating Irish experience to other scenes, something that Fintan O´Toole perfectly highlights when he says that "Ireland is something that often happens somewhere else". Distance was essential for O´Brien to render the details of her own country and her own class, as she herself puts it :"I for my part cannot write of Ireland without a great effort of exile, spiritual attachment". Therefore she expanded her views towards Europe, seeking new horizons for a new Ireland we have not read about previously,

The writer´s controversial relationship with her own country– her *odi atque amo* attitude – pervades this biography from her childhood in Limerick until the end of her life. She was educated at a time of nationalist and religious conflict and some of these conflicts find resonance in her fiction. Her contact with De Valera´s Ireland was hostile, increasingly antagonistic towards the kind of the country being created, an inward– looking and isolated one. She felt a sharp contrast between the cultural insularity of the Irish Free State and the enlightened, European Catholicism of her imagined Mellick. On the other hand, Walshe draws our attention on the important role played by Britain, both in her life and her work. Ireland /England epitomizes an axis of conflicting loyalties which no doubt had a great influence on her writings, particularly the fact that she wrote for a British readership**.** She turned to Ireland for imaginative material-the fictitious universe of Mellick– and used the Irish bourgeoisie to create characters that did not accommodate to the English stereotypes about the Irish, of which she was very conscious. Walshe rightly points out that a central impulse within her novels was to teach her English readers that Ireland had a civilised and educated bourgeoisie, as civilized as any in Europe, and that this was to be one of the strongest motivations in her novel making. In spite of that, she often sees Ireland as a place apart and the Irish as a race apart, and she deals with this matter in terms of other-worldliness.

This biography explores the ways in which she invented a literary identity for her own Irish bourgeois class and a successful independence and viability for her young Irish female protagonists, generally Catholics at odds with the sexual codes of her religious education and yet still enraptured with the beauty of its ceremonies and its liturgy. The business of being a European Catholic proved a defence against the colonial stigma of "mere Irishness" during Kate´s working life in Britain and was a key element in her elevation of the newly emergent Irish bourgeois. Living in England, she was free to invent her own version of Irish Catholicism where individual conscience and personal choice of moral uses was possible. But Walshe particularly emphasizes the fact that Catholicism operates in her fiction as a cultural symbol and that Spain was crucial to transform her imaginative concerns. Her Spanish intellectual and spiritual heritage

outstand as a landmark in her artistic development, she being strongly attracted towards Castilian austere landscape and the lives and beliefs of its great mystics and writers. O´Brien also dealt with a number of diverse subjects – contemporary politics, historical characters, the tradition of Spanish painting or her veneration of Teresa of Avila, of which she published a short biography. However, her relations with Franco's official Spain were never easy, though her work was translated into Spanish and freely available in the country.

It is this diverse and colourful sense of place that gradually provided the writer with a fuller selfhood, a stronger self assertion. Walshe approaches her complex and multi faceted personality with remarkable objectivity. Thus he raises the controversial question of O´Brien´s homosexuality and has no hesitation in maintaining that, given the evidence of her life patterns, Kate was a lesbian and that her sexuality was conditioned by her upbringing, her religious experiences and her culture. However, he makes clear that the web of interconnected relationship in her life is the only reliable biographical material available for an evaluation of it. He respects the writer´s own silences regarding private matters, such as her marriage, and he carefully values the reliability of every source. Eibhear Walshe has managed to offer a detailed and dignified view of the thorniest aspects of her life, such as heavy drinking, financial problems or utter loneliness, as well as a true profile of her commitment to democracy and freedom. Well structured, documented and balanced, this biography stimulates our imagination, as Virginia Woolf recommended, but above all reinforces our interest in Kate O´Brien´s and her work.



Munira Mutran & Laura Izarra. *Irish Studies in Brazil*. São Paulo: Associação Editorial Humanitas, 2005, 408 pages.[*]

Rosa González

A quick glance at the multi-authored and diverse table of contents of *Irish Studies in Brazil* might initially disconcert the prospective reader as to the rationale behind the inclusion of the thirty miscellaneous contributions that make up the collection. A careful perusal, though, will reveal that the book charts the fruitful cultural dialogue established by the University of São Paulo (USP), and other Brazilian universities, with Irish Studies in the widest sense of the term. The articles cover Ireland's cultural heritage as well as the long list of living writers and academic scholars from Ireland and abroad that have visited

Brazil and lectured on the subject over the last twenty-five years.

Originally emanating from the centre of the Postgraduate Programme of Estudios Lingüísticos e Literários em Inglês at USP set up in 1980, interest and research in Irish Studies have developed exponentially, as testified to by the establishment of the Associação Brasileira de Estudos Irlandeses (ABEI) in 1988, the publication of the *ABEI Journal – The Brazilian Journal of Irish Studies* since 1999, the organisation of the 2002 conference of the International Association for the Study of Irish Literatures (IASIL) and a solid corpus of academic research including books on George Bernard Shaw, William Butler Yeats, Sean O'Casey, Sean O'Faolain and John Banville. There have also been a large number of PhD and MA Dissertations on both canonical and recent Irish drama and fiction.

The first part of the volume *Irish Studies in Brazil* contains contributions by four creative writers. It opens with John Banville's "Fiction and the Dream" (21-28), a reflection on the process of writing a novel where the writer traces his own evolution from a "convinced rationalist" who saw himself as "the scientist-like manipulator of [his] material" to the increasing awareness that sometimes "things happen on the page" that fall outside the control of the conscious, waking mind, and that although "the writer is not a priest, not a shaman, not a holy dreamer [...] yet his work is dragged up out of that darksome well where the essential self cowers, in fear of the light" (24-26). Banville concludes by saying that "the writing of fiction is far more than the telling of stories. It is an ancient, an elemental, urge which springs, like the dream, from a desperate imperative to encode and preserve things that are buried in us deep beyond words. This is its significance, its danger and its glory" (28). Then come two poems, Paul Durcan's record of an epiphanic moment at Congonhas airport in "The Last Shuttle to Rio", from his collection *Greetings to Our Friends in Brazil* (1999) and Michael Longley's "The

Leveret" which captures the poet's measured excitement on the occasion of his grandson Benjamin's first night in his beloved Carrigskeewaun. Part One ends with the short story "Maggie Angre" by playwright Billy Roche, a tale about an overweight and graceless girl who only forgets her freakiness when she dives into the Rainwater Pond and "her arched body resemble[s] a bird in flight" (38), the very pond that had swallowed up her brother Stephen, the only person who had ever cared and stood up for her.

Part Two, the longest and most outstanding contribution in the volume in terms of scholarly input, includes fifteen essays, organised around generic clusters –Drama, Fiction, Poetry, and Culture and Translation. Each is written by a leading specialist in the area, and arranged in alphabetical order. Though the lack of a unifying topic means that the discussion is somewhat scattered in focus, the fact that many of the contributions come from their authors' current research work renders the book an excellent showcase of the range of interests guiding present scholarship in Irish Studies. Two of the essays devoted to drama dwell on the potential of recent plays to move beyond the burden of the country's colonial and post-colonial past. Dawn Duncan ("Compassionate Contact: When Irish Playwrights Reach out for Others", 49-67) discusses the work of two female dramatists – Anne Le Marquand Hartigan's *La Corbière* and Delores Walshe's *In the Talking Dark* – that make tactical use of voices outside Ireland. Believing that dramatists are particularly equipped to respond to and shape changing times, Duncan wistfully wonders whether the move from internal examination to external vision, and from isolated solidarity to global union in these plays might point towards the next phase in post-colonial writing. In this phase, the opposition between the self as victim, and the oppressor as evil, gives way to a "concentrat[ion] on people in all their humanity, their wickedness and their virtues." (65). In "The Easter Rising versus the Battle of the Somme: Irish Plays about the First World War as Documents of a Post-colonial Condition" (89-101), Heinz Kosok traces the reaction of Irish society, and in particular of Irish playwrights to the two key and divisive events of 1916: the much mythologised Easter Rising and the often overlooked Battle of the Somme. In recent plays such as Sebastian Barry's *White Woman Street* (1995), Kosok sees a sign that "the ghosts of the country's colonial past are perhaps at last being laid to rest" (99) in that the contribution of Irishmen to other colonialist measures is included.

In an absorbing and wide-ranging essay Nicholas Grene ("Reality Check: Authenticity from Synge to McDonagh", 69-88) uses his well-known dislike of Martin McDonagh's *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (1996) – a reaction he has qualified elsewhere by dubbing it a black comedy playing with its own artificiality (Grene 2000) – as a starting point to ponder on the authenticity that Irish audiences have traditionally expected of their drama. By considering contemporary reactions to Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*, O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* and Friel's *Translations*, Grene traces this expectation of reality from the commitment of the Irish national theatre

movement to challenge the colonialist misrepresentation of Irish country people to the post-Independence period: the past is never past but "a continually unfinished present" (84), national validation and self-conviction still depend on faith in the reality of the way history is represented, a "generic and absolute [reality], prototype of what [the] Irish people really are or aspire to be" (87). The section on drama concludes with Ann Saddlemyer's "Shaw's Playboy: *Man and Superman* (103-126), an enlightening reading of Shaw's multi-faceted 1903 play which he had described as "a modern religion [providing] a body of doctrine, a poesy, and a political and industrial system". (104-5)

The section on fiction begins with essays on the radically disparate work of two female novelists in the 1960s. In "'Beasts in the Province': The Fiction of Janet McNeill" (127-142) John Cronin regrets the way McNeill, who, though born in Dublin, spent thirty-five years in Northern Ireland, thereby restricted her own formidable narrative gifts. Cronin ascribes McNeill's muted quality and concern with the restricted sphere of middle-class, middle-aged Protestants on whose joyless creed and "hysteria of spawning mission hall" (130) she casts a critical eye without ever engaging with the Province's sectarianism and violence, to a calculated response to what Cronin considers to be her unwarranted fear of being considered a regional writer. In "Growing up Absurd: Edna O'Brien and *The Country Girls*" (143-161) Declan Kiberd offers an entertaining assessment of O'Brien's 1960 controversial portrayal of lack of innocence in the self-proclaimed Holy Ireland of De Valera. Kiberd draws attention to the novel's fairytale elements and argues that by challenging the notion of innocent childhood *The Country Girls* also questions the colonial stereotype of a childlike Hibernian peasantry. Maureen Murphy, who has published on female immigration to the USA, is the author of the article entitled "The Literature of Post-

1965. Indian and Irish Immigration to the United States" (163-173). Here Murphy undertakes a comparative analysis of the experiences of Irish and Indian immigrants who have recently settled the New York borough of Queens, and briefly considers their process of assimilation as reflected in the work of contemporary Irish-American and Indian-American writers. Murphy notes that the texts share some version of the American dream of success, though there is violence, or the shadow of violence, pervading the realisation of the dream.

The Poetry section contains three essays that range from nuanced close readings of particular texts to reflections on the intersection between poetry and political violence. In "Personal Helicons. Irish Poets and Tradition" (185-210) academic-cum-poet Maurice Harmon offers a personal survey of how Irish poets such as W.B. Yeats, Thomas Kinsella, Seamus Heaney and Michael Longley have negotiated the use of indigenous sources with literary and intellectual traditions from European and other cultures, in particular the classics. Confident in their own tradition, which they have helped to fashion, concludes Harmon, contemporary poets are free from the anxiety of influence and "relate

at will to tradition and achievement elsewhere" (210). Terence Brown ("John Hewitt and Memory: A Reflection", 175-184) offers an insightful reading of the persistence and significance of memory in Hewitt's poetry. Far from mere nostalgia, regret or romantic longing for what is gone, memory, argues Brown, gives Hewitt both pleasure and pain. Furthermore, memory embraces the personal and the public level, as seen in the poet's awareness of death – which he felt naturally drawn to, and at the same time saw as a duty incumbent on responsible citizenship – or in those familial memories that are intimately intertwined with Irish history and which allow the poet to claim his identity as an Ulsterman of Planter stock. Edna Longley ("Poetry & Peace", 211-222) revisits a long-time concern of hers: the notion that in the Northern Ireland context, where language has become highly politicised, poetry has no direct influence on politics and is not *ipso facto* pacifist but "carries symbolic weight as the most distinctive creative achievement from NI since the mid 1960s" insofar as it "both manifests and explores cultural complexities simplified by political enmities" (213). Despite the writer's pessimistic view of the current political impasse, she believes poetry can undertake a more beneficial conversation about peace "than most versions of politics, whether in the academy or the street" (214). After considering poems of the past decade by Seamus Heaney, Paul Muldoon, Michael Longley, Sinead Morrisey and Medbh McGuckian she concludes that " 'peace' not only entails real conversation, pragmatic negotiation and the slow dismantling of civil-war mindsets: like poetry, it must also be imagined" (222).

The section on Culture and Translation includes a series of miscellaneous texts. In "Northern Ireland: Politics and Regional Identity" (223-233), geographer R.H. Buchanan of Queen's University Belfast maps out the background to the sectarian violence in Northern Ireland, stressing the regional distinctiveness of the province in terms of environment and spatial relations, tracing the differing traditions and contrasting aspirations of the population, and advancing the contentious assertion that the "island of Ireland, a natural unit in terms of physical geography, is not necessarily a cultural or political entity" (229). In "Meanderings" (235-241) historian David Harkness provides an enthusiastic account of the many signs of the sophisticated interest and detailed appreciation in Irish literature and culture that he has come across during his visits to academic institutions round the world over a period of thirty years.

The translation section, which begins with "Nausicaa", Episode 13 of Joyce's *Ulysses,* and its transcreation into Brazilian Portuguese by the late poet and critic Harold de Campos (45-46), includes two further essays on Joyce's latest fiction. In "A Alquimia da Tradução" (247-260) Donaldo Schüler, the Brazilian translator of James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*, ponders on the challenge of writing and translating such a text. He considers the problem of translating a non-lexical text. Invention and translation, he says, compete at the moment of re-educating our senses to perceive the non-understandable; the truth of *Finnegan's Wake* is in the alchemy of its flow, transition

and translation. Maria Tymoczko's "Joyce's Postpositivist Prose. Cultural Translation and Transculturation" (261-294), is an extended theoretical essay that elaborates on her previous work on textual heterogeneity in *Ulysses* (1994) and cultural translation (2003). The essay makes a series of nuanced points about the function of the stylistic variations in the second half of Joyce's text, the part that most reflects the Irish half of Joyce's dual culture. That section of the book displays a postpositivist approach to knowledge and to narrative on account of its emphasis on and validation of subjective, and even metaphysical orientations to experience.

Throughout the one hundred odd pages making up Part Three, entitled *Irish Studies in Brazil: A Backward Glance* (295-408), witness is borne to the development of Irish Studies since the inception of the postgraduate programme in Irish literature in 1980 under Professor Munira Mutran. The section begins with the abstracts of the twenty-three postdoctoral, doctoral and masters theses submitted at USP, with subjects ranging from the short stories of Sean O'Faolain (Mutran 1977), John Banville's aesthetic synthesis (Izarra 1995), Sean O'Casey's letters and autobiographies (Harris 1999), feminine identity in the novels of Kate O'Brien (Araújo 2003) and the fiction of Flann O'Brien (Sousa 2004), to a large number of studies of playwrights Dion Boucicault, Bernard Shaw, J.M. Synge, Lady Gregory, W.B. Yeats, Lennox Robinson, Denis Johnston, Brian Friel, Stuart Parker, and Billy Roche. This is followed by the seven publications emanating from academic research, each of which is reviewed by a different author, and which due to lack of space we can do no more than list here:

Mutran, Munira H. ed. *Sean O'Faolain's Letters to Brazil*. São Paulo: Editora Humanitas, 2005, 174 pp. ISBN 85-98292-44-3. Reviewed by Marie Arndt (315-318).

Sepa, Fernanda Mendonça. *O Teatro de William Butler Yeats: Teoria e Práctica*. São Paulo: Olavobrás/ABEI, 1999, 136 pp. Reviewed by Beatriz Kopschitz Xavier Bastos (319-323).

Harris, Peter James. *Sean O'Casey's Letters and Autobiographies: Reflections of a Radical Ambivalence*. Trier: WWT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2004, 194 pp. ISBN 3-88476-687-2. Reviewer Richard Allen Cave (324-330).

Haddad, Rosalie Rahal. *George Bernard Shaw e a Renovação do Teatro Inglês*. São Paulo: Olavobrás/ABEI, 1997, 136 pp. Reviewed by Peter James Harris (331-335).

Haddad, Rosalie Rahal. *Bernard Shaw's Novels: His Drama of Ideas in Embryo*. Trier: WWT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2004, 165 pp. ISBN 3-88476-654-6. Reviewed by Peter James Harris (336-340).

Izarra, Laura P.Z., *Mirrors and Holographic Labyrinths. The Process of a "New" Aesthetic Synthesis in the Novels of John Banville*. San Francisco-London-Bethesda: International Scholars Publications, 1999, 82 pp. ISBN 1-57309-258-4. Reviewed by Hedwig Schwall (343-348).

The volume concludes with a bibliographical list of Irish literature translated into Brazilian Portuguese since 1888, the date that *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift was first published in Brazil, and a list of Irish plays performed on the Brazilian stage since 1940. The lists were compiled by freelance researcher Peter O'Neill, who keeps

the information updated on the web site "Links between Brazil and Ireland" at http://www.visiteirlanda.com. The books most widely translated are those of Oscar Wilde, followed by James Joyce, Jonathan Swift, Bernard Shaw, Bram Stoker and Samuel Beckett, while the plays most frequently performed have been those by Beckett, followed by Shaw, Wilde and Synge.

While this book will be particularly useful to anyone wishing to follow the progress of Irish Studies in Brazil, the overall high standard of its contributions makes it also recommended for readers interested in the diversity of approaches within the discipline at the opening of the twenty-first century. Munira Mutran and Laura Izarra, the editors of the volume, are to be commended for having wisely promoted, and nurtured**,** such an active and fruitful national and international network of Irish Studies. The nineteenth-century flow of Irish migration to Brazil, a country which was advertised as Paradise on Earth, did not result, as the editors point out (16), in substantial Irish settlement in the south of this tropical country. Nevertheless**,** as attested to by *Irish Studies in Brazil,* the cultural flow between the two countries has broadened incessantly during recent decades.

Note

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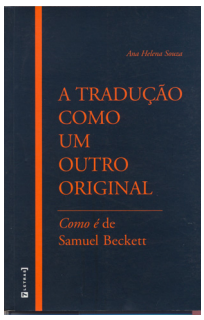

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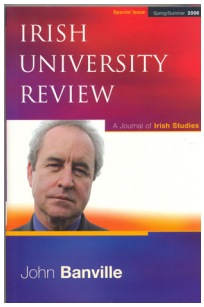

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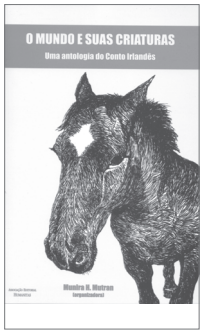

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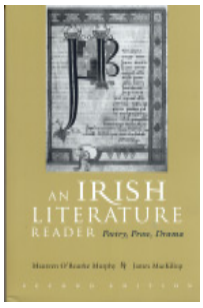

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