

Daniel Patrick Shea

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Stage Irishman, Stereotype, Performance: A Perspective on
Irish Drama of the Second Half of the Twentieth Century

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The last word on the Stage Irishman hasn't been said. As long as there is a country called Ireland so that people may appear in plays as Irish, the Stage Irish will continue.

More than an answer to the questions just exactly who and what is Irish, the Stage Irish encounter onstage what Irish means and thereby make this stage a kind of Irish. The key words here are onstage and stage because, as it is the theater context which specifies the endlessly variable significance of the word Irish, so I think it is the Stage in Stage Irish which gives the name meaning by signaling that this is a performance of Irish and not the real thing—whatever that looks like. Reality as fact and realism as an artistic style have no privilege with the Stage Irish or in the study of them. And any true Irishness expressed in a dramatic figure or embodied by an actor seems to me of minor significance compared to just how that figure or actor assumes this Irishness or, in other words, how he acts Irish. (I consistently apply Manfred Pfister's structuralist terminology for talking about drama, so here I replace the term character with (dramatic) figure (160-164).)

Owen Dudley Edwards perspicaciously defines Stage Irishry as an exercise in "masks and dialogue" (83), or, in a word, as performance. Stage Irishry is, succinctly, Irish Performance. This definition, because it reverses the head nouns Performance and Irishry to focus the theater instead of a

national or ethnic group of Ireland, reflects the way I aim to vary the perspective on the most famous stock character of the English-language stage. An Irish Performance occurs when people onstage act like Irish, and to ask whether the actor or actress really is Irish or whether he or she knowingly just plays the part is to neglect to see both the roles we play in real life and the playing-of-parts which theater performance is. The question to the intentions of performers is, at best, an indirect one because conscious as well as unconscious acts are continuously and simultaneously occurring onstage (from the blinking of the eyes to the misread cue to the speaking of the lines) and, also, because this question never concerns one person alone but will apply together to the directors and the producers backstage, the performers onstage, and the audience in their seats. Stage Irishry is a game of Irish identity because it is actors and dramatic figures doing as Irish do—an imitation in the theater of a representation in reality. This I find the touchstone of any Stage-Irish figure or any Stage Irishry at all, and while researchers such as Declan Kiberd, Joseph Leerssen, and Richard Cave have examined in Stage Irishry the issues of the colonial politics of identity and while others such as James Bartley and Annelise Truninger have categorized examples of the Stage Irish according to literary historical methodologies, if their work would have any theoretical validity for this creature of the theater, they

must return to the performative aspect of the dramatic figure at hand.

Since I view the Stage Irish as Irish onstage, it is the stage and all the stage encompasses that are most important to my study. I am writing on the Stage Irish also with the aim of urging literary critics to rethink how they interpret dramatic texts; therefore, I offer to consideration my approach of interpreting a dramatic text as I've imagined it being staged. The warning that a dramatic text is incomplete until produced has long since become banal and has always been unhelpful to the literary critic wanting sensitively to interpret that dramatic text. The warning is unhelpful foremost because it proceeds solely from the text and ventures into the realm of the performance only to gather novelties that might well serve one's interpretation of the dramatic text. When it comes to interpreting a play, I, on the other hand, consider the dramatic text not primary nor secondary nor otherwise hierarchically situated, but one equally relevant element of the performance alongside the playwright, the director, the producers, the actors and actresses, the audience, the scenography, the lighting, the props, and anything or anyone else that goes into making the performance. Even though Alan Read offers throughout Theatre and Everyday Life devastating criticisms of theater which is predominantly textually based, he affirms that "there is nothing intrinsically untheatrical about a text, and texts themselves have interactive qualities"

(99). What I always try to be interpreting, then, is a staging of the play at hand, though not exclusively or even necessarily an actual staging, but one as I imagine it possible and worthwhile. This I call imaginative staging in literary criticism. Although I give actual performances their due, I recognize with Read that it is through the images onstage and in the imaginations of the performers and their audience that a play becomes intelligible and, therefore, (in every sense of the word) meaningful. Because the imagination is formative to what is said and done onstage and because it belongs to a full understanding of theater performance, I propose imaginative staging as a provisional yet workable compromise between privileging the dramatic text over the performance and unseating the literary critic from his rightful place—as an audience to the dramatic text at hand, as an actual member of past theater audiences, and as a potential member of any future theater audience—in interpreting plays.

Because of my own imaginative staging in the following interpretations or, in other words, because of my role as critical spectator to these stagings of the plays, I subtitle this literary critical study "A Perspective on..."; at the same time, the subtitle credits J. Hillis Miller's "hypothesis of possible heterogeneity of form in literary works." Miller supposes the contingency as well as the peculiarity not only of literary pieces, but also of one critic's interpretation of any piece or, as it is more fittingly expressed for dramatic

texts, of that critic's perspective on the piece: "The specificity and strangeness of literature, the capacity of each work to surprise the reader, if he can remain prepared to be surprised, means that literature continually exceeds any formulas or any theory with which the critic is prepared to encompass it" (5). I am not advocating for its own sake an anything-goes approach to literature, but I am pleading for what will derogatorily be called a subjective approach. Sometimes the best, most convincing, even most rational interpretations of literature result from exercises in seemingly poor, untenable, irrational thought. In interpreting literature I regard concepts not as the elements of a systematic, disciplinal methodology, but as "tools," as instruments for opening a piece and extracting a meaning. This is Gilles Deleuze's philosophy "pragmatics": "its goal is the invention of concepts that do not add up to a system of belief or an architecture of propositions that you either enter or you don't, but instead pack a potential in the way a crowbar in a willing hand envelops an energy of prying" (qtd. in Read 237). Deconstructionism has been attacked for a criticism without system and for a philosophy without positive tenets, but for just these reasons I find it a good tool in the unregulated activity of interpreting literature as well as in my present task of understanding the Stage Irish.

Before sketching how my study of the Stage Irish proceeds through the next four chapters, I first address my selection

of the material for inquiry and I then briefly review various writing on the Stage Irishman.

Material

Choosing twelve plays to represent fifty years of drama and theater in any country is very difficult, and Ireland is no exception. In addition to or in place of the playwrights I've chosen to study, many critics would consider the following obligatory: Sebastian Barry (b. 1955), Dermot Bolger (b. 1959), Marina Carr (b. 1964), J. B. Keane (b. 1928), Hugh Leonard (b. 1926), Martin McDonagh (b. 1971), Jimmy Murphy (b. 1962), Thomas Murphy (b. 1935), or Donal O'Kelly (b. 1958). I think good arguments can be made for the inclusion of every one of these playwrights, but the play limit I've set myself for more focused interpretations has forced me to exclude them. I will, though, refer to their plays and others' where relevant. I have also not selected Samuel Beckett, but his work has influenced my understanding of the Stage Irish, so I refer to it intermittently.

Although the playwrights and their work usually comprise the literary critic's only material for study, they are insufficient for a good understanding of the fields of drama and theater. For this reason, in selecting the twelve plays I have considered directors, producers, actors, companies, and playhouses. These further aspects of drama and theater I have documented in the first section of the appendix, "Productions of Plays Interpreted," but I mention them in the text, too,

where relevant. The glaring weakness of my study is that I have seen none of the plays. Some haven't been produced in my lifetime and others not during my academic career and still others not outside Ireland. The literary critic writing on plays he has not seen is like the astronomer gauging the mass and distance of a star by its brilliance: neither sees nor could see their object completely, so both make a model of it through knowledge and imagination. A strength of my study grows out of this weakness because I consider production data from secondary sources and otherwise attune my interpretations to proxemic, kinesic, and scenographic aspects of the theater (cf. Walder 136, 144).

From the chronology of the production dates it is clear that the weight of my study falls not on the middle, but on the latter part of the twentieth century, that is, after 1960 when, for example, Brian Friel, Hugh Leonard, J. B. Keane, Thomas Kilroy, and Thomas Murphy were writing their early successes. This period of Irish drama and theater has yet to be closely studied from the aspect of the Stage Irish, and so will serve better to guide re-evaluations of the Stage Irish in earlier periods. Within these forty years the weight falls again on the latter part because half the plays I'm interpreting were first produced after 1990. It is here that I consider a new, vital component of Irish theater: independent companies like Rough Magic in Dublin and Dubbeljoint in Belfast.

Although I head each interpretation by naming my reasons for selecting the play, I want to comment here on two general criteria of my selection as well as on my inclusion of David Rudkin and Frank McGuinness. When choosing playwrights, I have closely attended to the categories of sex and birthplace. Although only two of eleven playwrights are female, this ratio sadly represents for Ireland women playwrights' access to drama publishing and theater production. In the conclusion to his 1994 study of contemporary Irish drama, Anthony Roche writes that women have been excluded from the theater, if not for worse reasons, then simply because men in power have failed to recognize them. The two women playwrights I study are from the North, where Roche believes women playwrights to be better represented. Notwithstanding, I would urge critics to remember that theater productions are the work of more than just the playwright and that women in Ireland, as Margaret Llewellyn-Jones demonstrates by the examples of Garry Hynes, Lynne Parker, Marie Jones, and Mary Elizabeth Burke-Kennedy (71-74), do succeed as actresses, directors, and producers.

Lynne Parker receives from me only passing mention as the Artistic Director of Rough Magic Theatre Company and as the director of Declan Hughes's Love and a Bottle at the Projects Art Centre (Dublin), but to Marie Jones's Stones in His Pockets I turn in my concluding chapter. One of the five "effervescent out-of-work actresses committed both to their community and the theatre" who formed Charabanc Theatre

Company in 1983 (Harris 105), Jones went on, in 1991, to co-found with Pam Brighton and Mark Lambert Dubbeljoint Theatre Company. The support Jones always lent community theater has been Dubbeljoint's mission, as they state on their home page: "Nearly all of the company's productions have opened in west Belfast and have absorbed the ethos of that area—critical, serious, progressive and great craic." Precisely this kind of "belligerently local theatre" (Read 98) is my main interest in Jones's Stones in His Pockets because it points the way to an Irish theater doing real cultural work; that is, doing that which one can today still expect a theater to do in the name of an Irish nation. "Cultural needs," for Read, are something apart from the hegemony of a capitalist world economy because they "rely upon other peoples not as producers but people from places identifiable in relation to one's own settlement" (98). Next to Tbilisi, Manila, and Ljubljana he names Belfast as city where lay theatre of national aspirations is taking place, by which I presume he means companies like Prime Cut, Tinderbox, as well as Charabanc, but I think that, even in consideration of the publication of his Theatre and Everyday Life in 1993 (right after Dubbeljoint formed) Dubbeljoint would no doubt meet with his approval as an example of Irish lay theatre working in Belfast.

Birthplace is significant to Irish literature because of the Border; therefore, I have sought to provide a balanced picture of the achievements of Southern and Northern theater

as well as of theater in Dublin and Belfast and theater outside these cities. Precisely the criterion birthplace Heinz Kosok would disregard in the decision whether or not a piece is Irish because many Irish writers, like Oscar Wilde, have written in the English tradition and still others can be claimed by several English-language literatures, as Dion Boucicault by both Irish and American ("Anglo-Irish" 9-12). But Kosok's minute categorization of literature under national denominations is a hopeless and, more importantly, useless endeavor, because not only will categories always leak, but they also obscure one's view of what is being categorized. (His use of as well as the whole debate surrounding the term Anglo-Irish I find pedantic because it distracts critics from their first task of interpreting literature and, besides, misses the fact that from the region of the world calling themselves Ireland comes Irish literature.) There are good arguments to be made that The Importance of Being Earnest is the apex in Irish comedy of manners. And where would Beckett's Act Without Words I or Film fall in these categories? Claiming pieces of literature for one national literature or another is precisely the normative discourse one would like to see critically approached and not methodologically enriched.

If Rudkin has been neglected as a playwright, as an Irish playwright he has been all but ignored. This I hope to correct. In addition, I hope to show why his Cries from

Caseant As His Bones Are Brought to Dublin has been called "unparalleled in drama of the 1970s, and beyond" (Rabey 53).

Including two plays by the same writer may seem exorbitant considering the limited number I've set myself to interpret. But from thematic, formal, and theater aspects McGuinness's work—and not just the two plays selected—has contributed greatly to my understanding of the Stage Irish; and so I do not think it exorbitant to sacrifice variety for relevance. In my interpretations of Mutabilitie and Someone Who'll Watch over Me I will try to lay open his characterization, his artful mix of the opposing tendencies of realism and romanticism (or, as James Hurt has it (281), realism and "allegory") which at first let figures appear wooden and shallow who then appear living and intense.

In sum, I believe my selection of plays is not only representative of Irish drama and theater especially since the 1960s, but all twelve make individual contributions to my theme while indicating beyond themselves the other people and places of the theater in Ireland that I must leave unmentioned. Although I claim at many points throughout that my thoughts and conclusions have a wider applicability in Ireland and beyond, I am certain they apply to these plays as wholes and not just to some minor aspects of them. That these twelve plays, in which the conclusions of my study are so tied up, are in their own rights very important plays makes my

understanding of the Stage Irish equally relevant to Irish drama and theater of the second half of the twentieth century. Writing on the Stage Irishman since the Founding of a National Theatre in Ireland

"I have not asked my fellow-workers what they mean by the words National literature," wrote Yeats in the 1904 issue of Samhain, the publication of the Irish National Dramatic Society,

but though I have no great love for definitions, I would define it in some such way as this: it is the work of writers who are molded by influences that are molding their country, and who write out of so deep a life that they are accepted there in the end.

(qtd. in Harrington 11)

Yeats reassessed for an Irish national theater the centrality both of Irish birth for the playwright and of Irish content for the plays in order to avouch for the entire venture of establishing an indigenous theater that "It is sometimes necessary to follow in practical matters some definition which one knows to have but a passing use" (Harrington 11). These as well as other passages from Yeats's famous essay "First Principles," along with unnoted contemporary documents and events in Dublin, John P. Harrington revisits in order to vary the usually uncomplicated perspective taken on the legendary founding of the Irish national theater. He discovers that Yeats's and Lady Gregory's prospectus of 1897 (the document

that set in motion the theater activity leading to a national stage at the Abbey) itself discloses what many theater historians and literary critics have failed to note: the venture's inextricable situation among both Dublin's cosmopolitan theater scene and the reactionary, insular tendency of Revivalist cultural nationalism. Emphasizing the theatrical practice of the time over those dramatic texts since canonized as modern Irish drama, Harrington argues:

In practice the Irish national theatre is not, as the late Robert Hogan suggested some time ago, when its history was shorter, 'basically an ingrown and an inward-looking movement.' From the day when Yeats and Lady Gregory set down their prospectus, Irish national theatre seemed ingrown but was in fact a maze of international debts and ambitions. (15)

Placing the founding in this historical context, Harrington shows how the future Irish national theater had first to carve out a cultural and economic niche for its endeavor by defining itself through negation of its predecessors and competitors. As evidence Harrington cites the resonant phrases from the prospectus: "that freedom to experiment which is not found in theatres of England"; "show that Ireland is not the home of buffoonery and of easy sentiment"; "confident of the support of all Irish people, who are weary of misrepresentation" (4). If colonial hegemony was to blame for England's heinous misrepresentation of Ireland,

the simplest route to "a Celtic and Irish school of dramatic literature" was to portray the Irish onstage against the Stage Irishman. Such reasoning gave rise to an Anti-Stage-Irishman, vehemently defended, for example, in the 1904 pamphlet The Stage Irishman of the Pseudo-Celtic Drama, as well as to the "peasant quality" which would so shape the Abbey's theatrical fare that, as Truninger concludes, the peasant became the "accepted view" on the Irish nation. Similarly, Kosok cites the figure of the Stage Englishman as Irish playwrights' revenge for that centuries-old butt of English wit, the Stage Irishman. In his article "Transformations of the Stage Irishman in Irish Drama: 1860-1910," Jochen Achilles argues that the national theater transformed the Stage Irishman either by qualifying, for example, the exuberance and optimism of Dion Boucicault's imaginative outcast to Christy Mahon's alienating independence from society or by criticizing (like Shaw's Larry Doyle) Irish imagination as seductive in its delusion and obstructive to self-determination.

Coming from the branch of Comparative Literature called Imagology, Michael Bolten pursues from the Middle Ages up to today the vicissitudes in conceptions of Ireland as, for example, a periphery to civilization in order to explain how the playwrights Conor McPherson and Martin McDonagh employ such Irish "images" either to the realization of their intentions by their writing or to the achievement of a certain style in their plays. Because Bolten's approach might seem the

most appropriate to my subject, I briefly digress to answer why I've decided against imagology and to give my opinion on this sub-discipline of Comparative Literature.

Imagologists insist on their proper field in literary criticism only to insist, again, on their interdisciplinary approach to this roped-off field. It is a circular move that disavows interdisciplinary work "for what it always is, the identification of already catholic borrowing and influence that occurs between practices and their theories" (Read 83; cf. Bauman, Story 114). Literary criticism in the hands of imagologists becomes a search for authorial intention and an inspection of sociopolitical, historical forces through the visor of literature. From the articles and monographs I've read (e.g., Blaicher; Bleicher; Dyserinck and Syndram; Dyserinck; Leerssen "Mimesis"; Syndram), I must conclude that imagologists explain, but do not interpret literature. Their essential apparatus, the "image," seems to me redundant since it stems from a term that itself is imprecise and controversial, the stereotype (cf. Redder). The "image" is meant to replace with its own historicity and variance the absolute rigidity of the stereotype, but most conceptions of the stereotype predicate no such rigidity (cf. Barz 67-73). The imagologist's detailed mappings of the genesis of selected images runs counter to my understanding of the Stage Irish not as evolving types, but as performances. Also doubtful is the imagologist's supranational point of view (cf. Dyserinck 128;

Syndram 183) because, in objectifying his material through the methods of his own discipline (i.e., in finding "images" and the "imagotypical" in pieces of literature) the imagologist necessarily frames literature. So an imagological study of plays seems to me doubly contradictory since, without a perspective on the stage, theater cannot occur because, as I will argue in detail in my chapter "Entertainers," the performer always enters to an audience who have already been looking for this entrance (cf. Read 95). Although imagologists fervently claim that their field has transcended its roots in national psychology, this past resurfaces both in a strong anti-essentialism that defines their approach mostly by negation and in a favoring of realistic, psychologically complex literary figures that betrays a bias toward one literary style. Finally, since I have nowhere in this study intended more than to better our understanding of literature, my results will hardly contribute to the secondary imagologist aim of combating prejudice between nations and improving international relations (cf. Dyserinck 132).

Missing to the above perspectives on the Stage Irishman (which I collect in the second section of the appendix, "A Chronology of Writing on the Stage Irishman since the Founding of a National Theatre in Ireland") is an understanding of the processes by which the figure comes to being and the conditions of his existence. Researchers like Truninger, Kosok, Achilles, and Bolten are so concerned with answering

the questions whether a stereotyped representation of the Irish is offensive or congratulatory and whether it is imposed by foreigners or original to the Irish that they only describe the figure's appearances instead of explaining the figure. For example, the considerable branch of the research addressing Dion Boucicault's Irish figures tries to assess from the evidence of his plays the extent and earnestness of his political commitment. But as Homi K. Bhabha has found for the colonialist subject and Judith Butler similarly for the feminist subject, explanation of any stereotyped representation depends on understanding the "processes of subjectification" (Bhabha 67) by which the stereotypical discourse produces the subject as an effect of its own power regime. For Butler, there is no "I" outside the difference and processes of signification that produce that "I"; the self is both signifier and signified in one, and as such enmeshed and embroiled in the politics of representation. From Bhabha's inseparable concepts of the stereotype and colonial mimicry emerges a repetitive, representational form of discursive knowledge he considers another of the processes of signification.

Because both stereotypification and acts of mimicry, then, are writings, or usual modes of representation (Bhabha 87-88), the literary critic can approach them as he would any other text. Through its etymology the stereotype discloses its literariness: στερεοί τύποι are "fixed markings," and so I

view the stereotype as that representational mode which one might call "stiff writing." Any and all forms of writing are "stiff" because writing is a way of setting things straight and putting things in order, and even writings as fleeting as emails or as provisional as rough drafts stiffen when read into the moments of a correspondence or the stages of a continuous thought process. Put bluntly, you can ask questions of what you've read, but you can't expect it to answer because, in this context, an answer needs more writing.

Beyond counting the stereotype one more process of signification I will not be conceptualizing it because I believe this knowledge alone sufficiently clarifies its relevance to literature. Besides, the stereotype, or the imagologist's "image," has distracted literary critics studying the Stage Irishman from their task of interpretation so that, time and again, they have faulted this oversight in others but themselves have used literature as mere documentary proof of their ideas on stereotypes and stock characters. They have used literature to explore a concept whose social-psychological and philosophical foundations have since Walter Lippmann's Public Opinion (1922) increasingly come under attack (cf. Redder). Their results have been highly differentiated categorizations and lists of characteristics of the Irish onstage and, instead of interpreting the plays or the figures at hand, they have in the obscurest plays discovered the smallest parts representing Ireland in order to

interpret their own findings, delineate the development of the Stage Irishman, and characterize his sub-types. Because they make the plays stations in the development of a stock character, the Stage Irishman becomes larger than all the plays from which they derive him and because they posit some unrealized greater design or original for their positivistic analyses, their lists of various types and typical examples point unswervingly toward the ideal Stage-Irish figure they have created. Their approach misleads. Reading Truninger's conclusion, for example, I can't help but think that she, like so many researchers of the Stage Irishman, lets her categorization of the material get the better of her so that not the playwrights or the dramatic arts or societal forces alter, discard, refashion, originate, and develop the figure, but she herself does.

Neither this cursory account of others' failings in their study of the stereotype in literature nor the above perspective taken on the stereotype elevates me above the trouble inherent to the stereotype and its study. How should a critic writing on stereotypes and literature extricate his work from those same processes operating both in himself and in his object of study? Whenever an explanation sounds convincing or the evidence appears to have decided the case, I begin to wonder if the explanation and the evidence have not just substituted themselves for the truth, because the truth one knows when it has slipped through one's hands...again.

When what we hear or what we read presents no difficulties to understanding and meshes ever so well with what we know and have come to expect, then we can be sure we are dealing in stereotypes. Just think of how often we understand what we read. So often that not understanding gives pause, makes us ask what's wrong. Only unintelligible speech, as sometimes spoken by theater performers, or illegible writing, as sometimes appears in the words on the page, exposes us dealing thus in stereotypes, but the stereotype itself is a hard thing to grasp because that which is needed for any act of understanding to come off lies outside the scope of understanding itself.

Lippmann notes the difficulty in coming to knowledge of "actual culture" which never plainly states what it is nor leaves behind a legible record of itself. The cultural researcher and theorist must make do with "a vast amount of guess work," "and it is no wonder that scholars, who enjoy precision, so often confine their attentions to the neater formulations of other scholars" (105). As Read in his opposition of everyday life to science, Lippmann recognizes how stereotypes infiltrate even those institutions and studies which would claim to elucidate and dispel them. So Lippmann defines the stereotype, in part, by making the analogy to the blind spot of the eye, that break in the photosensitivity of the retina where the optic nerve connects. My perception of things will always be obscured by my blind spots, just as my

perspective on a piece of literature must always remain limited. For this reason it is good that other literary critics are willing to point out their colleagues' oversights and errors and that I am willing to do the same. As an institution, literary criticism with its paramount task of interpretation is in the business of uncovering stereotypes, or as Fredric Jameson calls them, "blurs":

Every work is clear, provided we locate the angle from which the blur becomes so natural as to pass unnoticed—provided, in other words, we determine and repeat that conceptual operation, often of a very specialized and limited type, in which the style itself originates. (qtd. in Culler 151)

Literary criticism is work of both a derivative and a creative kind: derivative because the critic interprets a piece of literature and creative because he writes his interpretation. Any piece of literature might present a new aspect to yet another literary critic. What seems a difficulty to one critic will to another be perfectly clear, and not necessarily because the other is more intelligent, more well-read, or longer at it, rather because he brings a different perspective to the piece.

I view literary criticism as the taking up of a perspective on a piece of literature and the arguing its consequences for and effects on that piece in the hope of moving the institution to a better understanding of it and a

fuller knowledge of literature in general. This opinion on the work of literary critics is a second reason for my subtitle "A Perspective on..."

My study re-evaluates the Stage Irishman by locating him on the stage and explaining him through the acts of performance which have always been the locations and conditions of his being. The turn to the twentieth century is significant for any understanding of the Stage Irish, but, having grounded the figure in a performative context, I argue against the transformations and diversification critics like Truninger, Achilles, and Maureen Waters believe to observe and I counter that transformation and diversification, as fundamental processes in the practice of performance, have always been elemental to the Stage Irish. And that Declan Kiberd can effect what he calls "The Fall of the Stage Irishman" only through the rise of the "Stage Writer" proves that, to this figure, change is the one constant. A "continuous state of inversion is in fact an intrinsic feature of the character's history (and attractiveness)," Christopher Morash concludes after noting how exposing the Stage Irishman was no unique achievement of Shaw's but had been being done at the latest since the eighteenth century (159). So from the moment Ireland had something calling itself a national theater the Stage Irish, far from entering a new phase, found open to them one more stage, one even decreeing itself Irish.

Both Irish and national in the term Irish national theater have, from the start, been suspect. The Abbey's relation to the Irish and Ireland, just as any national theater's relation to a people and their country, will always be problematic because, as Read argues, when a stage should represent a nation, one has "an imagined response, theatre, to an imagined formation, nation" (97). Read's concept of theater as a process of image creation I will be explaining in my chapter "Imitations," so let it suffice here to say that while humans and material comprise a theater performance, it is irreducible to these; so Read concludes that the theater image, the "something more" of performance, emerges from "the complex relation between performer and audience, both active in the process of image creation at a point somewhere between the two, but never wholly within the territory of one or the other" (96). Theater is really there and it occurs in our imaginations, so it is reality as constructed through images, it is the metaphysical in the physical. Citing Benedict Anderson's Imagined Communities, Read notes how the nation, too, "'is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion'" (100).

A theater bearing Irish in its name, and so claiming somehow to represent this nation, encounters (willingly or unwillingly) those images created by virtue of its medial

structure as well as the image of an Irish nation "constructed from innumerable elements which do not meet except in the mind of the beholder" (Read 100). The very establishing of a national theater

is what stimulates attention because it is in its form that its limitations are so noticeable. To confront a theatrical institution with these questions of identity seems a peculiar target in one sense. But it is precisely the existence of national theatres that governs the relations between other emerging local theatres that in their plurality might be considered constituting what is truly 'national' about any theatre. (98)

Dissatisfaction with and dissent from the Abbey led early to such enterprises as the Dublin Drama League and the Gate Theatre which owed "their existence and degrees of success to the Abbey's self-imposed limitations and creation of anti-Abbey opportunities" (Harrington 14). Edwards and Richard Cave look at the less frequently visited documents of historical record in order to show how even from the first appearances of Irish figures on English stages critics both Irish and English spoke out in the belief "that the stage Irish fixed an image of Ireland in the minds of the powerful, and that the Ireland of the stage might determine the Ireland of the future (Edwards 92). Up through and beyond the founding of an Irish

national theater, the politics of identity and the images of the stage go hand in hand.

The "structural acquaintance," as Read calls it, between the image-making processes of the theater and the nation makes for the literary critic largely irrelevant the questions whether a play is fictitious or realistic and whether a national dramatic figure is false or genuine. When it comes to constructions of reality like theater and the nation—and perhaps like human perception at all—not these constructions as such are of interest, but their style of constructing themselves (Read 100-101). I ask, what else could that stereotyped representation of the Irish and their nation, the Stage Irishman, ever have been than a stereotype and a representation? And as a Stage Irish Man, a male-dominated one at that! As the very processes of signification get in the way of one sole and primary meaning of the word Irish, so do the reflexive processes of performance in the theater get in the way of presenting one sole and primary Irish figure. Every Irish onstage has something of the Stage Irish about him.

Occasional new impulses to the research on the Stage Irishman have seldom been pursued, even by those suggesting them. Both Truninger and James Malcom Nelson, for example, mention the potential for interaction existing between the Stage Irishman's visual appearance and nineteenth-century cartoons and caricatures. This study of the closely related aspects of the theater image and the graphic image would

contribute to a variety of interests in the study of images, not to mention to the research on the Stage Irishman, but remains as yet a suggestion. One impulse I have followed comes from Kathleen Rabl's critical attention to the composition of London and Dublin audiences as well as such seventeenth-century theater practices as "collaborative play-writing, satiric retaliation among rival authors and theatre groups, and the re-working of texts" (48). While in the tandem chapters "Entertainers" and "Turncoats" I examine the audience's role in Stage Irishry, in "Imitations" I emphasize how important the intertextual, adaptive processes of literary composition and theater performance are to the Stage Irish.

The one researcher I've found who has recognized and developed the above understanding of the Stage Irish is Owen Dudley Edwards. His article, "The Stage Irish," from which I have the title of my thesis, not a mere impulse to the research, but a whole new direction, I will review closely.

He begins:

I could begin, of course, in a perfectly decent and academic manner with which you are comfortably familiar, paying graceful tribute to others in the field especially when they might one day review or assess me, balancing my several judgments and conclusion and contributing enough whiff of originality to stimulate, without stifling you.

For example...No, on second thoughts, no examples. But look in any authorised academic journal of Hibernicity and see for yourself. There you have our exempla prima gratissima, of the stage Irish. Behold him, demurely ensconced behind footnotes and reservations, qualified and modified beyond reproach, making radical amendments to conservative theses, and restraining caveats to persuasive hypotheses, and exuding quiet reliability.

The most successful form of stage Irishry is that which is taken for what it mimics. Accordingly, orthodox academic Hibernian scholarship as conventionally presented is stage Irishry, and its camouflage succeeds by becoming also the reader's. Its consumption is gratifying to all parties. Truth is the casualty.

At this point you should be questioning the above, 'our first example.' Am not I, the writer, the first stage Irish person under your scrutiny in this investigation? Perhaps I am. I shall try to keep myself as your first example. Where I am analysing myself under the guise of objective scholarship, that is for you to discover. You may call it a sale of deficient produce. I may call it an additional bonus at no extra charge. (83)

Stage Irishry puts on display for all who'll see the relative positions of performer and audience; it makes relative one's perspective on the position of the Stage Irish and that of their audience so that both positions are exhibited for parts in a performance. But as Edwards's own Stage Irishry above evidences, Stage Irishry is never straightforward because in the very act of making apparent the positions of performer and audience as the positions of a performance the questions "Who is performing?" and "What are they performing?" are superseded by the question "Which performance at all are we talking about?" In other words, one's attention focuses not on one or another part the Stage Irish play, with the audience's according parts, but on the role of the Stage Irish as players of roles, with the accordingly relative and, therefore, contingent roles for the audience. Stage Irishry reveals, above all, the contract of performance for the complicity between performer and audience which it is.

The general term to describe Edwards's inclusive understanding of drama and the Stage Irish role in drama is performance. Because, long before the English tradition imported itself, Ireland knew performative literature and, consequently, the Stage Irish, and because a Dublin playhouse operating under royal authority did not confine performance to inside the Pale, Edwards claims, "The stage Irish existed before recorded history" (85). We are left to decide for

ourselves if he has vastly widened the field of research on the Stage Irishman or if he's making the Irish bull academically acceptable or if he's aiming at something from both. Again Edwards illustrates the paradoxes of performance which are the Stage Irish. But what precisely makes the performance Irish? The question (which chapter 5 tries to give one specific answer to) admits no plain answer since, on the one hand, Edwards exposes exemplary Irish for shams (e.g., Saint Patrick and Micheál macLiammóir) only to recoup them as great examples of the Stage Irish by granting that "they were peerless masters of their crafts while being all stage and no Irish" (88); on the other hand, he brings us the English Stage Irishman, Tony Lumpkin, from the hand of the Irish playwright on the English province, Oliver Goldsmith.

Notwithstanding, I find something Irish in the ways conflict has consistently brought forth Stage Irish; that is, in the ways pain and tragedy on the most personal and universal levels have in Irish hands become entertainment and comedy. No matter if between warring Irish chieftains, if between the pagan Celt and the Christian missionary, if between the native and the planter, or if between the Republican and the Unionist, conflict in Ireland has often become the source of laughter. One reads this in Oisín's uncouth remarks to Saint Patrick's teachings, in Thomas Murphy's laughing contest over examples of human suffering

(Bailegangaire and A Thief of Christmas), or in Elizabeth's (Mutabilitie) insecurity at how the Irish answer her:

ELIZABETH. [. . .] How do your people respond to death?

FILE. They laugh at it. It is a habit amongst us, a custom, to laugh when we should cry.

ELIZABETH. You are a mad race.

FILE. If you say so.

ELIZABETH. You'd put your hand into the fire if it were to defy the English.

FILE. No. The fire burns. Are you afraid of fire?

ELIZABETH. Should I not be?

FILE. I do not know.

ELIZABETH. If I asked you to prick your finger, would you?

FILE. Give me your hand.

Elizabeth does so. The File winds thread about Elizabeth's finger. She bends and bites the thread.

Elizabeth.

Fade on the File and Elizabeth. (66)

To the English colonialist's belief in total domination (Elizabeth would order the File to jab herself) the Irish respond in such a way that it seems that they dominate (it is the File who might jab Elizabeth). One might say, in accordance with the File's action of winding thread around Elizabeth's finger, that the Irish have the English

colonialist wrapped around his own finger. Elizabeth receives no plain answer to any of her questions or wishes, but is left to make sense of the Irish for herself. If you say we're mad, the File suggests, then mad we'll seem (and, in her part as spy for the Irish rebels, mad she plays to her English masters).

The Stage Irish spotlights conflict so that it appears funny, pleasing, and entertaining, but always behind the scenes lurks a threat that will bring the show to a crashing end, or worse, betray the show for the only thing we have to be calling reality: "It's a queer world, God knows, but the best we have to be going on with," as Brendan Behan has it in Borstal Boy (77). In Irish scholarship, "Truth is the casualty" because the university professes more sober truths and would first deny any theatricality in its institution. In Irish theater, though, truth may just be the outcome, because the stage brings about the Stage Irish and the Stage Irish have a way of performing stages into existence. If Stage Irishry can be reduced to one word that word is metatheater (cf. Edwards 108-109); the self-consciously theatrical construction of Stage Irishry makes it not the definition or even a definition of Irish, but a defining onstage of some definition of Irish.

This Edwards makes clear through the example of the Stage Irishman to begin all Stage Irishmen, Shakespeare's Captain Macmorris. In V. G. Kiernan's interpretation of Macmorris,

Edwards finds solved the "ancient problem" of what we are to make of Macmorris and his wordily short part in Henry V. The scene is not about Macmorris being a Celt or an Old English or a Protestant settler or any mixture of these, but it is about him playing any one of these types from the contemporary Irish repertoire, "each type no doubt very clear in its view of its competitors for Irish identity and ready to dispute identity with any of those competitors, but capable of filling the role, and thereby encouraging the competitors to do the same" (96). In short, Edwards believes, "Shakespeare is in fact asserting the Irish crisis of identity" (96). This would hardly be surprising considering that Shakespeare asserted just about every other crisis of identity from man and woman to sons and fathers, to daughters and mothers, to rulers and ruled. Shakespeare used the stage to best advantage because, as Richard Hornby reminds us,

Theatre, in which actors take on changing roles, has, among its many other functions, the examination of identity. [. . .] Both performers and audience members are in a sense 'actors' in the theatrical experience, dropping their regular identities and trying out new ones. (71)

Between any group calling themselves Irish and another laying some claim to the same denomination this has been the "pattern" of the Stage-Irish identity (Edwards 96-97). And as a "pattern" (i.e., as a repetitive, double scenario) it can

serve to remind both parties of their relative parts in the Irish encounter, the Irish being who they are (i.e., actors) and their "competitors" being who they are (i.e., audience). Under these circumstances, role reversals are the order of the day. To survive the Irish experience, to rise above the degradations of religious dogmatism, colonial hegemony, nationalistic politics, and internecine conflict, the Irish have needed a stage to step up onto because "to be Irish is an experience formulated and developed in response to persons who are not Irish and who say you are. They place you on a stage, and you perform" (Edwards 87).

Entertainment of this kind has a subversive potential that Edwards recognizes in that "genius for entertainment" the Irish exhibit (107), or, in Peter Kavanagh's words, "that distinctively Irish trait of dropping [their] most serious thoughts at their highest point, into a pool of laughter" (qtd. in Edwards 107). Either, playwrights like Wilde and Shaw can't help but laugh at serious intentions, or, the English, not being attuned to their serious intentions, never noticed Wilde and Shaw laughing at them. Both ways the Irish laugh, and to not know why makes it subversive. Edwards again recognizes this subversive potential when he describes the term Stage Irish as "emotive language"

intended to separate the integrity of the accuser from the self-prostitution of the accused: actually its user for purposes of reproach has simply climbed

on to another stage, called a pulpit. You are stage Irish, from that pulpit view; I am a national spokesman. But a pulpit is a stage, and an Irish person on a stage is not easily distinguishable from a stage Irish person. (84)

Although the Catholic and Protestant religions in Ireland, too, have condemned the theater, both propagate sanctified one-person shows with homilies and sermons for the betterment of the congregation and for the address on God: "The stage Irish seldom forget that God has a box seat, whether they believe in Him or not" (87). So Ireland flaunts many stages, and where somebody finds one lacking, he improvises.

Understanding the entertainment the Stage Irish provide as metatheater means recognizing that in the theater there are only changing perspectives on moving images, that the spectator can be watched and heard, and that even the researcher who purports to objectively study the figure is implicated in this play.

Edwards argues, discusses, and illustrates the supreme form of entertainment engaged in by the Stage Irish, variously called "self-mockery," "self-analysis," "self-exploitation," and "self-laughter" (109-110). For evidence of Stage Irish laughing at themselves Edwards lists examples and anecdotes from George Farquhar, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Bernard Shaw, James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, Brendan Behan, and Brian O'Nolan. I choose but one example from Charles Macklin:

His second play A Will and No Will; a Bone for the Lawyers (1746) opened with a prologue in which the stage revealed actors 'disposed in the form of a Pit' and making 'a great Noise by Whistling and Knocking for the Farce to begin,' followed by derisive discussion about Macklin and how he would speak the prologue. And then Rattle, Smart, Dullman and Snarlewit quiz an Irishman as to whether he was to 'be the Pit and say the Prologue':

IRISHMAN. No, indeed, Sir, it is as false as the Gospel I do assure you, Sir, I never spoke a Pit or Prologue in my Life—but once when I was at School, you must know, Sir—we acted one of Terence's Tragedies there, so when the Play was over I spoke the Prologue to it.

OMNES. Ha! ha! ha! ha!

SMART. [. . .] Pray, Sir, may I crave your name?

IRISHMAN. Yes you may indeed and welcome, Sir. My name is Laughlinbullruderrymackshoughlinbull-downy, at you Service [. . .] (109)

This is the Stage Irish in a name, a parodic, speaking, self-conscious name that directs as many laughs at the bearer as it wins for him.

Edwards's article stands alone as the most important study of the Stage Irish because it replaces the methods of categorization and classification stifling the research with a

sensitive examination of the Stage-Irish modes of presentation and with the knowledge that to encounter the Stage Irish really means to participate in Stage Irishry. Edwards tells us little about what we normally consider to be Irish and a lot about the stage or, put another way, he shows us just how much the stage is part of being Irish. Lists of attributes and differentiated categories divide and separate a dramatic figure best viewed as one: the performer of Irish or, simply, the Stage Irish. And Edwards's own firework performance of academic writing shows up previous researchers of the Stage Irishman for inadvertent Stage Irish themselves—provided, of course, they didn't know what they were doing.

Outline of Chapters 2 through 5

Mine is the first study devoted to the Stage Irish of the twentieth century. Adhering to Edwards's inclusive view of the Stage Irish as performers of Irish, I apply to the figure concepts and findings from performance theory in order to break with the previous research and its standard of a realistically styled, psychologically deep, socially representative dramatic figure. The Stage Irish is an operative term of theory, so while all Stage Irishmen are Stage Irish, not all Stage Irish are Stage Irishmen.

I think we will better our understanding of the Stage Irish (1) if we accept imitation as a process of signification vital to both literature and performance, (2) if we acknowledge the audience's part in all Stage Irishry, and (3)

if we recognize the stage as one possible meaning of Irish. These three matters, therefore, I make focuses of my interpretations in the following chapters. More than a study of one particular aspect of Irish literature, my thoughts and interpretations are immediately relevant to any study of drama or theater because they address the relationships between playwrights, performers, and audiences as well as the relations between dramatic text, stage, and "everyday life" (Read's more accurate term for what normally goes under the heading reality, since both dramatic text and stage are in themselves realities).

My chapter "Imitations" will show how a Stage Irish comes to be through performance and will consider the consequences for interpretations of the figure. (In order to circumnavigate the singulars and plurals of the substantives Irishman, Irishwoman, and Irish person I use, idiosyncratically, the adjective Irish not only according to common usage as a plural nominal (i.e., the Irish), but also as a singular nominal (i.e., an Irish); thus, I speak both of the Stage Irish and a Stage Irish.) Working with the concepts of performativity (Butler), the theater image (Read), stage adaptation, and the intertextuality of literature, "Imitations" (as the title announces) is about the ways Louis D'Alton's This Other Eden, the 1967 stage production of Brendan Behan's Borstal Boy, and Declan Hughes's adaptation of George Farquhar's Love and a Bottle repeat and adapt earlier pieces or performances in

order to show again how Irish is made to mean onstage. Contrary to the bias of previous research, I do not understand the Stage-Irish figure as the author's mouthpiece for satire, social criticism, or racist caricature. In three plays seeming to welcome biographical criticism, I re-interpret authorial intention as the performance either of a writer composing a piece or of an actor playing that piece. In this way, the critic's concern in interpretation shifts from what the author intends to how he plays his role as the author intending something; so the vexed question to authorial intention in literature becomes the question to "masks and dialogue" or, in Irish literature, to Stage Irishry. Edwards reminds us that "a playwright in composition is in a condition of stage Irishry" (83), so I conceive of the author as the wearer of a mask and authorial intention as his appearance in this mask. One can always read the Stage Irish into an Irish onstage because, far from being a message or a device controlled by the author's pen, the Stage-Irish role is a mask of its own performative dynamic.

If Irish is the product of a performance or, in other words, if Irish is a construct of the stage, then the plays I interpret are Irish because they perform it. Viewing the Stage Irish as imitations means acknowledging them alongside any other possible imitations of Irish, none privileged in order or place. How can any particular construct of Irish precede or dominate other real or possible constructs of Irish?

Performing Irish installs a split in the term Irish and defers its meaning across all the imitations that one might call Irish. This splitting and deferral is the closest I can come to defining the Irish context in which Irish drama and theater occur. And in the drama and theater of the Irish context the border is constantly fading between fiction and reality, between dramatic figure and real person. Because in the act of imitating one must attend to what one is doing, constantly relating one's actions to some model, imitations are always (to whatever extent) self-conscious. Together, repetition and self-consciousness define the performer's art or, in the Irish context, the performer's art of performing Irish.

On the role of the performer as played by the Stage Irish I write in the tandem chapters "Entertainers" and "Turncoats." Since the Stage Irish are dramatic figures, these two chapters focus on the main figures of the six plays interpreted in order to show how a great number of the roles a Stage Irish might play are played from behind the two opposing masks entertainer and turncoat. Our understanding of a dramatic figure depends on defining the figure's structural position in the play or, as I call it, the figural status. Structural examination of a figure is finding how a figure means, and this usually involves finding how it relates in a temporal and spatial framework to other figures, to the actor, and to the audience. Irish dramatic figures have particularly had to contend with their audiences, and the Stage Irishman's

traditional place has been before an audience of superiors and, in particular, before an English audience. And so it is that I derive the masks entertainer and turncoat from other researchers' distinctions, respectively, between the footman or servant and the kern or braggart soldier; but my entertainer and turncoat also derive from two fundamental positions which any performer, becoming a performer by stepping onstage, may take up in relation to his audience. The power relationship between an English audience and any performer making a claim to Irishness puts the choice to that performer, either he flatters the English sense of superiority to become an entertaining, because accommodating figure or he intrudes on their sense of superiority to become a threatening, because untrustworthy figure.

This situation has been highly formative to Stage Irish of all types, as has been the reverse situation of an Irish onstage before an Irish audience. An Irish's act has often turned more on his reception than on his intentions, so, for example, while an Irish showman like Dion Boucicault might have wanted to dismantle the Irish buffoon of the stage but became the one to give the figure popularity, Roger Casement saw himself as an Irish patriot but became an English traitor. Similar to the masks of tragedy and comedy being together the sign of the place and of the act of theater, the entertainer and the turncoat go a far way to defining the roles the Stage Irish can play—and these roles usually do have in them both

something of the tragic and something of the comic. With Heavenly Bodies, Clowns, and Faith Healer in "Entertainers" and Cries from Casement As His Bones Are Brought to Dublin, Double Cross, and Mutabilitie in "Turncoats" I emphasize how the performance itself can always tip the presentation of the genial Stage-Irish performer over to something sinister, and vice versa.

Examining, thus, the Stage Irish for what is performative in Irishness and not what is Irish in the performance puts necessary questions to the conclusions I draw from my interpretations in chapters 2, 3, and 4: "Why, then, Stage Irish at all? Why not just Stage —?" In chapter 5, entitled "Irish," I argue that "Stage —" would answer one polarized perspective with the other and so be no more accurate an account of the Irish of the stage than has been the Stage Irishman as characterized, categorized, and classified by the research. It is bad method in deconstructive interpretation only to reverse the accepted view of things and not to return one's findings to this same hierarchy in order, then, to qualify even these. Moreover, "Stage —" would predicate an empty imagination that merely reflects reality, no matter how this reality is understood, either as itself a reflection of perfect forms or as a differing and deferring play of signs. Here I follow Richard Kearney's and Alan Read's understandings of the imagination as creative because only such an imagination can engender the ethical relationships from which

theater performance springs. "Stage —" would be a performative conception of dramatic figures that disregards the real people actually performing something to others, somewhere and at some time (cf. Kearney 185, 206, 209); it would concentrate the worst extremes of poststructuralist formalism and functionalism to blot out the human beings whose performing of, whose attending of, and whose believing in a play actually constitute what I alternately call Irish Performance and Stage Irishry. By way of conclusion, I try to rectify my findings from the earlier chapters through my interpretations of the endings of The Weir, Someone Who'll Watch over Me, and Stones in His Pockets.

Chapter 2: Imitations

Micheál macLiammóir, cofounder of the Gate and purveyor of international theater in Ireland, self-proclaimed Irishman (of English background), actor, playwright, and man of letters, appeared from 1960 to 1975 in theaters around the world in his one-person show The Importance of Being Oscar as Oscar Wilde. In his life and art, macLiammóir was an imitation in the senses I will be using the term in this chapter. Not only was he, together with Hilton Edwards, a shaper of Irish theater at mid-century, and not only was he in many ways the Irishman the Revivalists had envisioned, macLiammóir was also a homosexual at a time when and in a country where this sexuality was handled as an illness and perceived as a sin. With his other two one-person shows on Irish writers, I Must Be Talking To My Friends and Talking About Yeats, The Importance of Being Oscar introduced performance art to Ireland while the country's theaters were still widely considered realistic in acting style, bound to the playwright's text in production, and parochial in content. That macLiammóir achieved a late success in his career speaking as and imitating the appearance of Wilde has an irony most relevant to the following interpretations. Here was an apparently exemplary Irishman playing an Irishman who styled himself as the exemplary Englishman.

Although I will also be regarding the ways the writer's or the performer's life infiltrates the dramatic figure, I

want to draw greater attention to the main performative aspect of macLiammóir's or any actor's part onstage: reflexivity.

Richard Bauman notes the two ways that any performance, from the saying of grace before a holiday meal to an actor's portrayal of Hamlet, is reflexive.

First of all, performance is formally reflexive—signification about signification—insofar as it calls attention to and involves self-conscious manipulation of the formal features of the communicative system (physical movement in dance, language and tone in song, and so on), making one at least conscious of its devices. ("Performance" 266)

For macLiammóir's one-person shows this means that the actor both talks about and actually presents Wilde, Yeats, and other Irish writers so that the art form theater refers to art and artists and so that the performer uses his own words and actions to present those of the figures he plays.

Second, performance is reflexive, as Bauman writes, in a social-psychological sense; it is a consciousness of consciousness.

Insofar as the display mode of performance constitutes the performing self (the actor onstage, the storyteller before the fire, the festival dancer in the village plaza) as an object for itself as well as for others, performance is an especially potent and heightened means of taking the role of

the other and of looking back at oneself from that perspective, in the process that social philosopher and social psychologist George Herbert Mead and others like him have identified as constitutive of the self. ("Performance" 266)

For The Importance of Being Oscar this means that also subject of his performance of Wilde's biography is macLiammóir's autobiography, and macLiammóir makes Wilde's life and art into a self-commentary (to name just one aspect) of his homosexuality.

But more important for the theater perspective I am taking on the Stage Irish is the opposite aspect of macLiammóir's performance, namely that someone other than Wilde (who himself made no secret of the fact that he, too, was playing a part) is playing Wilde. If both Wilde's Wilde and macLiammóir's Wilde are imitations, who is the real Oscar Wilde? One might answer, the Oscar Wilde playing Oscar Wilde. But the reflexivity of performance, not to mention the refractive reflexivity of performing oneself, introduces a split in the subject and always defers one's identity to the next imitation. This resembles Richard Schechner's restored behavior, "under which title he groups any behavior consciously separated from the person doing it—theatre and other role-playing, trances, shamanism, rituals" (Carlson 3). Restored behavior posits a reality that is simply "done" and a performance ("done onstage") that reflects this reality. When

referring to performance or other art forms current usage prefers this term reflective to reflexive because most people imagine art as being somehow derived from reality. Against this Bauman emphasizes the appropriateness of the term reflexive not only because performance, like culture itself, is "a system of systems of signification," but also because theater anthropologists have been making convincing arguments that discrete cultural performances constitute, rather than merely express, "people's understandings of ultimate realities and the implications of those realities for actions" ("Performance" 266). Such findings give new expression to Wilde's philosophical tenet "Life imitates Art."

Judith Butler, who "more than any other single theorist" has advanced the term performativity in performance theory (Carlson 76), dispenses with the distinction between done and performed, between reality and performance, to reveal how notions like essence and identity are "fabrications" produced by those acts, gestures, and desires governed by societal norms (Butler 173). For Butler, the subject exists as actor and existence is a doing; neither performer nor performance can be outside the imitative structure and contingency that define identity under the compulsory norms of specific formations of power. Against a feminism that predicates a subject preexisting culture and discourse, that is, preexisting the very process of signification, Butler pleads for a feminism that situates the subject and her means to act

within the rules of phallogocentrism and compulsory heterosexuality:

The subject is not determined by the rules through which it is generated because signification is not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects. In a sense, all signification takes place within the orbit of the compulsion to repeat; "agency," then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition. If the rules governing signification not only restrict, but enable the assertion of alternative domains of cultural intelligibility, i.e., new possibilities for gender that contest the rigid codes of hierarchical binarisms, then it is only within the practices of repetitive signifying that a subversion of identity becomes possible. (185)

The etc. Butler finds concluding the various definitions of feminist identity she calls "the supplement, the excess that necessarily accompanies any effort to posit identity once and for all" (182-183) and, instead, calls male and female and the myriad variations on these, performances. As I've argued, the actor's identity onstage—his appearance and how he appears, his actions and how he acts, his speech and how he speaks—is

always already doubled and repeated in his acting self, in the figure he plays, and in the ways this figure reflects on him. An Irish onstage is not so much given up to the reflexive process of performance as he or she is the performance.

If Butler's feminist subject is a construct of her own performativity, all the more the Stage Irish who is a dramatic figure and an actor's performance. This would seem to answer the question "Who is Oscar Wilde?" but, since Butler studies performativity as it operates in the institutions defining gender (i.e., phallogocentrism and compulsory heterosexuality), she prudently warns against the unthinking adoption of her concept for fields other than gender studies (xv-xvi).

In this chapter, though, I don't propose to answer such a question as "Who was Oscar Wilde (or Micheál macLiammóir or Brendan Behan or George Farquhar)?" but only a part of this question, namely "Who was the Oscar Wilde being performed?" To this I answer Micheál macLiammóir's. But because of the reflexivity of performance my answer only begs the question "Who was the Micheál macLiammóir being performed?" Ultimately, these questions and questionings admit no answer, so that one's critical attention shifts from their content to their form, or from what is asked to how it is asked. Likewise, writes David Cotter, the questions "Who is Irish?" and "What is Irish?" can only be answered with types, stereotypes and lists of characteristics which will remain "always spurious,

in servitude to context" (38). In the comparable instance of performance artists playing the stereotypical clown, Annemarie Matzke recognizes:

Gerade durch das Stereotyp, durch die aufgesetzte Maske, stellt sich die Frage nach dem, was hinter oder unter der Maske ist, was aber wiederum nur auf eine weitere Maskerade verweist: Die Maske ist eine Maske ist eine Maske. Die Maske des Clowns verweist auf eine Leerstelle. Die Frage nach dem, was dahinter liegt, wird selbst thematisiert. (366)

Cotter asks more pertinently whether "Who is Irish?" and "What is Irish?" are at all useful questions to be asking because "We should keep in mind that Irishness, like any idea, is always a model, and never a reality" (38).

Whether called Stage Irishmen, Stage Irish, or Irish onstage, the Irish of the stage have always been accepted or rejected as one form or another of Irishness. But this perspective on Stage Irish figures misses the context in which they appear and the reality to which they belong: the stage. When I use the term performativity I am returning to the conventions of theater a concept whose very efficacy in anthropology, sociology, psychology, and cultural theory derives from these same conventions (cf. Bauman, "Performance" 266). By performativity, then, I mean everything concerning performing on the stage of a theater. My usage in no way undermines Butler's or anyone else's conception of

performativity—it leaves their work where their work leaves the stage. Since the stage marks the limits of my study, I re-evaluate the term Stage Irish to place not Irish, but Stage at its center. Although deconstructing Stage Irish in this way means that Irish will return in Stage, as will Stage in Irish, and so on, I aim in my interpretations to show what is lost from our understanding of the Stage Irish when only Irish, Irishness, and Ireland are subject and the stage on which actors and actresses present these is neglected.

I conceive the stage not only as the material “boards” of the idiom, but also as an effect of what Read calls the theater image, “a composite of the visual, aural and nasal” (66):

The theatre image is composed of material elements—bodies in action and speech articulated in places, and a receptive audience for that action and speech. The images of other arts are constituted in quite different ways. This engagement has a metaphysical aspect in that the image between the performer and the audience adds up to more than the sum of its various parts. (58)

In the image resides “the essence of theater”; and, because it can only be experienced in the “transaction” between actor and audience as well as in the coincidences of a live performance, the image ceases to be when analyzed (63). Taking David Hare’s

example for how theater works, Read explains just how the image conveys theater's working:

The knowledge of theatre is perhaps more a know-how for it combines the simplest physical demonstration with the most complex mental adjustments. At the simplest level in the theatre the hand of the woman moves towards a man under a table, as she speaks to her husband. The image is neither hand, speech nor table, but the realisation of the expression of infidelity and the feelings consequent on this revelation. It is a cheat, not a knowledge of marital relations, but an awareness that something's up. This sense is the sixth sense of theatre and while it is metaphysical it is commonly shared and understood. (67-68)

Such imagery Read calls "the defining limitation" of theatrical form because the nearness, the presence, and the experience of theater all demand participation but, at the same time, "will never produce more than an empathy born of intelligence and feeling" (60). In contrast, because the imagery of television is only mechanical, its pleasures are both "a gratuitous sympathy" proceeding from the distance of the medium and "a knowing banality" depriving "us of naive and simple responses which are important to any range of expressive behaviour":

A relevant theatre is truly banal without any sophistication. 'Banal' is used here in the sense of commonality—a potential meeting site for people in a common culture. It is not sophisticated because of the connotations of 'artifice' that word brings with it. For theatre is an act of presence and presentation, and if relevant it confronts and confounds pretence and representation. (60-61)

Viewing or performing the Stage Irish as representations of the Irish and Ireland is one perspective on the figure, if not so advantageous a one as the theater perspective that views and performs them as Irish. As representations, the Stage Irish must always be moving away from what only a "relevant" Irish theater can be: the experience of Irish. About these and related concerns I write in my concluding chapter, "Irish."

The best way I see of defining Irish theater is through its dramatic figures, and so I venture to define Irish theater as stage performances that present figures as figures onstage being Irish.

Semiotics and structuralism might explain the scenography of a production, the literary form of its dramatic text, and the actors' speech, kinesics, and proxemics, but cannot begin to explain their effects on the spectator (cf. Read 74), "For in the last analysis it will be the individual imagination that creates the image in question, in collectivity with the theatre performer and the audience, neither one nor the other"

(Read 88). While in the next two chapters I will be pursuing this combination of witness and participation specific to theater, I want here to indicate the wider field of iconology as well as other fields studying the image to which the study of the theater image belongs. Images are never neutral, but must be either good or bad; an image either pleases or displeases us, it either does the job or it doesn't. Read locates the image's metaphysical dimension where it extends beyond the sciences and methodologies that examine in it what is visible, where it extends even beyond vision: "For beyond vision there is a comprehension born of the mental and the material," that is, somewhere between the virtual image together with its significance and what Read calls the experience of the witness in the bodily presence of this image (73).

Much has been written about the fact that theater is the only live medium among the arts and, especially after poststructuralism, much has been criticized on these models of theater's presence. Richard Hornby, for example, offers the insight that theater's presence lies, paradoxically, in its absence:

In other words, we experience real life in theatrical performance as a potential; not as what is, but as what might be. It is this 'might be' that creates the air of special intensity and magic surrounding living performance that is missing in

film and television (although it was there in the days of live TV), even when a live performance is filmed or taped and then shown unedited. There is no longer any danger in the background when we see a performance via the medium of film or taped television. Furthermore, in the theatre, the better the production, the closer it moves to the edge of chaos, to the anarchy that threatens all live performance. (99)

For Hornby, theater is good when it takes its distinguishing feature to the limit, when it is as un-mechanical or as spontaneous as possible. As a theater practitioner himself, Hornby's intuition on the presence of theater anticipates Read's theoretically founded definition of the theater image as that which, in performance, is formed in the combination of order and coincidence:

That formation, the relationship of necessity and freedom, describes the relationship of composed and coincidental elements that go to make up all images. The changing nature of audiences, the changing circumstances in which images occur and the coincidental relationship between this geometry all question the notion of a theatre that can wholly control its meaning. This is the theatre of mistakes, the accident that makes theatre images possible and resonant for changing audiences and so

difficult to capture by the metanarratives of analytic theories built to understand more orderly fare. (77)

The image and imagination as specific to theater delineate the stage that the Stage Irish play on.

In my interpretations I will try always to be returning the dramatic figure at hand to his place onstage and his presentation in the theater image. But I know already that I must fall short of this aim since I have only the published dramatic text and my imagination from which to create such an image. On this difficulty Read acutely observes that, if one would consider any performance, even a performance one has seen, one must rely on memory, documents, photographs, and the like, all pointing to the images which "literally do not exist at the time of their study" (12). So the theater image belongs to a theater that is "unwritten"; it is

a 'saying' rather than the 'said.' The said is the discourse that is translatable, transferable and performable. The saying is the speech act itself that resists removal from its context however banal that arena might be. Saying replaces the inert object of literature and language with the process of enunciation, as words which remain the property of users though infinitely hearable in the everyday babble of conversation. (95)

For a literary critical study of plays, or, for that matter, for any study of the theater, the "unwritten" theater poses difficult questions to methodology and documentation. I do rely on the dramatic text, but I also try to compensate for this heavy reliance by what I have called imaginative staging. I maintain that textual scrutiny as well as imaginable scenography and directing can locate the significant performative aspects of a play even if one hasn't seen the play performed, which, anyway, is no guarantee to good understanding. In this respect, literary criticism of plays resembles the work of the director or even the artistic director. If literary criticism will still justify its place to write about plays, it must not only consider productions as more than dates in a footnote, but also read and interpret the dramatic text with a view to its staging.

This Other Eden

It will seem unusual that I include Louis D'Alton since he died in 1951, the beginning of the period I am studying. Including D'Alton as one representative of Irish drama and theater at the middle of the century means excluding other possible candidates, such as Paul Vincent Carroll (d. 1968), Austin Clarke (d. 1974), Teresa Deevy (d. 1963), St. John Ervine (d. 1971), Denis Johnston (d. 1984), Walter Macken (d. 1967), Louis MacNeice (d. 1963), M. J. Molloy (d. 1994), Sean O'Casey (d. 1964), Lennox Robinson (d. 1958), George Shiels (d. 1949), and Joseph Tomelty (d. 1995).

Critical opinion of this period of Irish theater history as a "doldrums" is self-perpetuating when not accompanied by research on and publishing of the plays and playwrights for a good understanding of the theatrical culture of the time (O'Farrell 13). Recent scholarship and theater work, though, are contributing to a rediscovery and a new critical assessment of this period. In his reading of O'Casey's The Drums of Father Ned, Christopher Murray approaches the late 1950s as a time of controversy in the Irish theater and as the precursor to the 1960s ("O'Casey's"). The Druid Theatre Company has newly produced M. J. Molloy's The Wood of the Whispering in 1983 as well as D'Alton's Lovers' Meeting in 1990. In Theresa Deevy is being discovered (as in a 1995 special issue of Irish University Review) a forerunner woman playwright of the middle of the twentieth century. And Louis MacNeice has earned attention also as a consummate playwright when a collected edition of his plays and radio plays was published in 1993. Likewise Ciara O'Farrell's Louis D'Alton and the Abbey Theatre re-examines the playwright's/producer's work in the theater and finds not only that a "good theatre craftsman" has gone mostly unrecognized (Ó hAodha, Theatre 133), but also that the importance to Irish theater of fit-up drama has escaped critics ignorant to its very existence. D'Alton's parents were fit-up entertainers. D'Alton himself worked in and led various companies before heading the Abbey's provincial tour in 1941. And it was the fit-up companies of

the British Isles continued up through the 1960s in the countryside the melodramatic tradition, long a force behind the Stage Irishman. Precisely this melodramatic strand of This Other Eden accounts for certain figures' strong resemblance of the Stage Irishman of conventional research, which is one good reason for me to start here my reassessment and reorientation of the Stage Irishman on the Stage Irish. That the play's brand of comedy has led Christopher Morash to call it "one of the paradigmatic Irish plays of the 1950s" is another good reason (216-217).

The first figure on the stage of This Other Eden, Pat Tweedy, as his name indicates, resembles Truninger's servant type, "good natured" and "garrulous" (D'Alton 4). He talks himself through bulls and blunders as when he declares what great changes independent Ireland has seen, only in the next line to exclaim, "Damn the changes I can see anywhere" (20). The classic scene of rustic-Irish-meets-urban-English-gentleman is replayed between Pat and Roger Crispin when the elderly Irishman requests recommendations for his two sons who want to become pilots:

CRISPIN. You forget that I don't know them, Pat.

PAT. (Not without dignity) You know me, sir, their father, and I'll vouch my word for them. You're not that bad a judge of a man.

CRISPIN. They are boys of good character?

PAT. They are. Though I can't see what character you'd want for that class of a game; flyin' pilot, I mean. I'll not deceive you sir...they're a pair of walkin', bloody divils at the moment; a pair of flyin' bloody devils if they get out. Ah, but as honest as the day is long. (54)

When Crispin corrects Pat's fabulous account of Carberry's brutal murder at the hands of an English officer, Pat concedes without argument or annoyance, commenting only on his own expressiveness in the telling: "But sure doesn't it make a lovely story with the Commandant dyin' a martyr's death, an' all" (20).

Although Pat most often appears together with Crispin, Mick Devereaux reminds us that he serves not an English master (the traditional role of the servant Stage Irishman) but the exploitative Irish industrialist John McRoarty. This new relationship brings with it a new attitude in the servant. On the one hand, Pat counterfeits (actually at Crispin's request) a shrill hatred of all things English; on the other hand, he subverts McRoarty's authority by overplaying his part in the small town's hypocritical devotion to the deceased IRA leader Commandant Carberry. The opening exchange between Pat and McRoarty shows the factotum ruffling his boss, a man "quite impossible to rattle," by incessantly praising the Commandant. Since there are no outsiders to justify Pat's zeal in praising the man both he and McRoarty know to have been much less than

the ideal patriot, he is trying to rouse his boss. He succeeds when McRoarty interjects, "Will you get to hell out of here" (5).

Pat's mischief reaches its height when yet again he praises Carberry during the concluding three-way conversation between Devereaux, Crispin, and Conor (79). By this time, the audience have learned not only that Carberry the hero and Carberry the man have little in common, but also that the one person in Ballymorgan not attuned to the facts about him (i.e., his illegitimate son Conor) also knows. Unmitigated praise for Carberry now can fool nobody, and yet Pat persists. Unlike the TD McNeely, the personification of hypocrisy, Pat knows better and makes others aware of this; Pat is no hypocrite for the sake of respectability. The comic irony in his final praise of the tainted Irish patriot is an example of the mischievous humor of the Stage Irish who plays his part self-consciously and enjoys his own performance.

This conversation at the ending recalls the similarly constructed one in John Bull's Other Island and it is one good example of how This Other Eden imitates its model. (Because the term model connotes not priority but similarity, as in a model airplane or the model house to help prospective buyers in imagining the actual property, I prefer it to the term original.) The configurations (Pfister 171-176) in both endings relate closely, so that one can make tentative identifications between them. Devereaux is a Larry Doyle who

stayed in Ireland, but Devereaux is the real exile of This Other Eden because staying has shown him how far apart lay his ideal Ireland and the one he lives in (81). His separation from the community is expressed through his role as the ironic commentator who the respectable members of Ballymorgan endure like a licensed fool. Conor is the mirror image of Peter Keegan. Whereas Keegan has traveled the world and been defrocked, Conor has been obstructed in even taking holy orders and is just setting out on his journeys. While Keegan searches for the true Ireland in that same country, for Conor "This is only the cradle of our people, but in the end we shall possess the earth" (79). Between Roger Crispin and Tom Broadbent lie merely the fifty years in which Ireland changed from a British colony to a Free State soon to become independent Republic. Although Crispin no longer can run for public office, he is still capable of gaining in Ireland an influential position and good property in the town, and this is a major point of the satire.

These structural and figural similarities indicate the way This Other Eden imitates its model and, by extension, the way the Stage Irish imitates the Stage Irishman. Shaw's Tim Haffigan has often been read as the exposure of the Stage Irishman. Because Tim Haffigan has never been to Ireland and learns his Irish expressions and mannerisms from the music hall stage, he is a phony. And because the English, like Broadbent, collude with this phony by accepting the

performance for the real thing, Tim Haffigan is doubly a phony. But what is this relationship between Tim Haffigan and the comedian and Broadbent if not the relationship between the dramatic figure, the actor, and the audience? The basis of the Stage Irishman has always been the basis of performance. Not only has Tim Haffigan learned his part from the theater, that is, from the actors playing Irish to their audiences' expectations, but he, too, is a dramatic figure repeating the Irish of the stage for other dramatic figures (i.e., Broadbent and Doyle) as well as for the audience of any production of John Bull's Other Island. So the reflexive, metatheatrical status of the Stage-Irish figure, the performer's performance of Irish, conditions his existence because without the theater there can be no Stage Irish. The history of the Stage Irishman is actually a history of the Irish onstage, or of the stage in Ireland.

If one dispels the myth of original, essential Irishness and reads being Irish as a theatrical pose, then Shaw's exposure of the Stage Irishman as an imitation of the stage performances of or by Irishmen perpetuates the figure as an endlessly repeating and repeatable type. That This Other Eden imitates certain configurations, speeches, and structural elements of John Bull's Other Island further expands the possibilities of repetition on which the history of the Stage Irishman rests. Arguing the importance of intertextuality to

Irish drama, Christopher Murray compares Irish writing for the theater to the palimpsest:

It is not to say the Irish imagination is parasitical. Rather, it is to see its nature as persistently revisionist, assimilating and retaining a double response towards established texts. It is always engaged in translation, as adaptation from Synge's use of folktales heard in Irish on the Aran Islands, through Behan's assimilation of Douglas Hyde's Casadh an tSúgáin and Frank O'Connor's 'Guests of the Nation,' to Friel's, Kilroy's and McGuinness's versions of Chekhov and MacIntyre's recycling of Irish classics in The Great Hunger and The Bearded Lady. ("State" 22)

So one mustn't set This Other Eden under or after John Bull's Other Island, but alongside it. O'Farrell portrays a D'Alton disenchanted with the audience reception of his early experimental plays and, in particular, of The Money Doesn't Matter (first produced at the Abbey in March 1941), after which he "vowed he would never again write a serious play" (111). After some six years on the fit-up circuit, D'Alton returned to the Dublin theaters with They Got What They Wanted, "a play that set the standard for his subsequent dramas" (O'Farrell 194). I think D'Alton saw the potential of fit-up methods of composition and set a new standard in his plays by adapting successful plays. Comparison can be made

between They Got What They Wanted and Juno and the Paycock, between The Devil a Saint Would Be and Paul Vincent Carroll's Shadow and Substance, as well as between Cafflin' Johnny and The Playboy of the Western World. During his six years on the road, before returning to Dublin with his new plays, D'Alton acted in and produced all three of the above models (O'Farrell 132-134, 142-145).

Although D'Alton preferred popular model to original piece, to condemn these plays because they imitate Irish classics would be to miss how D'Alton's imitations reworked old material in order to, like Shaw before him, win audience sympathy before subverting expectations. In most D'Alton plays, argues O'Farrell, the dichotomy between fantasy and reality underpins the action sequence (163). (In adherence to Pfister (199), I differentiate the term action into action, action phase, and action sequence.) In This Other Eden I discern in the general dichotomy "fantasy/reality" the following three variations: "hero/human-being," "hypocrisy/truth," and "art/nature." I will show how the figures and the action sequence treat these three dichotomies and what significance they have to the satirical and imitative methods of the play. I will show how the satire works by deconstructing the dichotomies "hero/human-being" and "hypocrisy/truth" and that the figures' comments on art and nature as well as the action phases about Carberry's bust demonstrate the text's reflexive concern with its imitative

methods. This last point leads into my discussion of the two figures Humphrey Clannery and Roger Crispin who, likewise, satirize Irish-English relations and whose respective failure or success at adopting Stage-Irish or Stage-English roles make evident their dependence on a receptive audience.

Our first picture of Carberry forms in the interplay between McRoarty's suspicious glare and Pat's ironic garrulity. It is a picture that prepares us for McNeely's sincere devotion to the hero Carberry, one of "The Dead who Died for Ireland" (8). And it is a picture Devereaux helps paint when he reminds McNeely that they only wanted "to know what Carberry was like as a human being" (7). Hero and human being are thus identified with two extremes of a dichotomy that can only be upheld through the machinations of hypocrisy, the main satirical butt in all D'Alton's later plays (O'Farrell 194).

Unlike Pat whose devotion is a conscious performance, McNeely engages in the doublethink of maintaining at all times his knowledge of the human being Carberry while veiling that knowledge in the image of the hero Carberry. In earnest he asks, "Have I said one word about him that isn't true?" to which Devereaux replies, "Not a vestige of a lie in it. You have literally embalmed him in words, man" (8). Referring directly to the working of hypocrisy, Devereaux's words bear scrutiny. Instead of responding no, Devereaux expands the single word to the point where it is neither clearly negative

nor clearly affirmative. Devereaux answers McNeely's question by illustrating the very process of the hypocritical view of things. "Not a vestige of a lie" could mean "a whole lie and nothing but a lie." Devereaux implies this reading when he uses the trope "word" to describe McNeely's hypocritical portrayal of the Commandant. I read literally embalming him in words as significantly redundant: since literal can mean word (< Latin littera), Devereaux doubly emphasizes the linguistic functioning of the hypocritical act. It's all talk and no substance. McNeely's words preserve Carberry and thus stave off the natural processes of the advancement of time, such as decay and change. So the hero exists only in words and in the real world not at all; therefore, Devereaux warns them, "Let sleepin' dogs lie, gentlemen. And don't go looking to see what sort of a man Carberry was" (8).

The one man who should have heeded this warning, because ignorant of the Commandant's past, is his illegitimate son Conor. Like an Oedipus bent on self-torture, Conor will not listen to others' advice to stop his questions. In contrast to the undivided acts 1 and 3, act 2 has two scenes, each climaxing in melodrama. This structure not only evinces fit-up influence because the two scenes end melodramatically, but also emphasizes the central conflict of Conor's self-discovery. Offstage the last speaker of the Commemoration ceremonies praises Carberry, while Devereaux stalls Conor's demands for the truth:

SPEAKER. His memory will remain as an inspiration to future generations of Irishmen. Let it be our prayer that if the hour should ever strike again, it may please God to raise up another Carberry for the defence of liberty and truth and justice.

DEVEREAUX. (To himself) Amen

There is a great burst of cheering. The drone of a single pipe is heard in a lament.

DEVEREAUX. (His head bent, speaking meditatively)

You'd think it a pity of a man the like of Carberry not to have left sons, would you not?

CONOR. Yes, a pity. (Devereaux lifts his head and stares at him intently) You're trying to say something to me.

DEVEREAUX. (Gently) Carberry had a son...a illegitimate son. You Con Heaphy, you're Carberry's son. Commandant Jack's son.

The pipe bursts suddenly into a stirring triumphant march and drowns the solitary drone. It rises above the cheering of the people.

CURTAIN. (40-41)

All the most typical features of melodrama are here. Devereaux overstates his approval of the speaker's sentiments ("Amen"), while those same sentiments are about to be proven true, if through an ironic twist of fate. From an unsentimental perspective, Conor's innocent "You're trying to say something

to me" verges on the comic as it is by now obvious, considering also the previous events in this scene, that he is Carberry's son. And the repetitive syntax of Devereaux's disclosure is again overstatement; but since the audience knows what he will say, not its information value but his delivery become interesting. The lone pipe provides for the music, if naturalistically motivated, from which melodrama takes its name and, shifting from "the solitary drone" to "a stirring triumphant march," it reflects the figures' emotions. Finally, the action follows the melodramatic technique of ending a scene in tableaux, when, at curtain fall, Conor and Devereaux hold their positions, flooded in emotive music and torn by the pain of the truth.

Besides being a direct link to the heyday of the Stage Irishman, the melodramatic tradition has been a motor for the Stage Irish because, I argue, it is one of the most self-conscious art forms known to the stage. Melodrama is forever reworking the same scenarios and forever adapting the same models in order to produce again and again something the audience will want. The unbroken success of soap operas and Hollywood romantic comedies attest to this fact as well as to melodrama's medial shift from the stage to the screen. But this shift changes little in the basics of the mode. A major practitioner of melodrama, Dion Boucicault, worked by the dictum "plays are not written, they are rewritten" (qtd. in Ó hAodha, Theatre 15). A "great retoucher" he was called by his

contemporary, his admirer, and a renowned producer/actor of the time, Frank Dalton, Louis's father (O'Farrell 18). Boucicault even retouched his now unmistakable name, as have so many artists, including such Irish playwrights as Charles McLaughlin (i.e., Charles Macklin) and Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde (i.e., Oscar Wilde). It is this incipient (like one just christened) and multifarious (like one who makes believe) personality of the artist that is at the heart of the Stage Irish; the personality that prefers the stage name to letters fate penned in a birth certificate. Louis D'Alton, too, is the artist because he was the first Dalton of his relations to write the last name D'Alton (O'Farrell 17, 211n1). Re-writing a name re-writes the past and is one way of transposing a stage persona into real life, one way of scripting reality.

Citing Robert Hogan, O'Farrell argues that Shaw influences This Other Eden particularly in the play's aim to entertain the audience. I doubt whether this is Shaw's influence and cannot explain why O'Farrell lapses here in her argument that D'Alton's fit-up background can be read in most of his work. On the fit-up circuit, pleasing the audience was everything, not least, survival. The debt to Shaw in This Other Eden is much smaller than O'Farrell and Hogan think. It is true that a Shavian turn of phrase or a Shavian outlook surfaces now and again in the text, but so do other styles and modes, as for example the melodramatic just discussed. At

first glance, Devereaux's response to the tales of Carberry's heroic deeds seems Shavian: "There was nothin' romantic about Carberry, Sergeant. If you put any man in gaol won't he do his best to break out of it; if you put him in danger of his life he'll run mad with a gun an' kill all before him" (8). In Shaw, a hard-nosed, bare-facts response like Devereaux's would obliterate the romantic stories surrounding the local IRA hero. But the action in This Other Eden is about more complex human reactions than Devereaux's response permits. Not everyone will react the same to oppression or to dire threat, rather these situations elicit a whole range of emotional and other responses. Conor's reaction to his illegitimacy, for example, is something nobody, not even the audience, has foreseen. The fire in the Memorial Hall not only provides the spectacle typical of melodrama, but also demonstrates the complexity of human response to psychological pressure.

"What harm is done to say nothing of a man's faults," McNeely asks, "to pretend so to speak, they don't exist?" and, in one of those moments when D'Alton's drama transcends the melodramatic mode (O'Farrell 15), Devereaux replies:

(Pointing to Conor) There's your answer. Try not to pretend he doesn't exist! He does exist and can't be denied. He made his existence felt here tonight, and that's something you didn't reckon upon.

MCNEELY. Yes, yes, but I still can't see what harm
is in it.

DEVEREAUX. The same harm that's in every lie; isn't
the answer enough for you? The boy is there, he
exists to expose the folly of your lie and the
wickedness of your damnable heresy; and to prove
that the sins of a man like Carberry can be
greater than the virtues of other men!!! (51)

In Umberto Eco's use of the term, Devereaux ostends the
physical presence of Conor by using the stage itself as an
argument for his existence: I point to him, so he is.

But the intractable hypocrisy of Ballymorgan still cannot
see Conor because their stereotyped perception has been so
molded by what they expect to see that they no longer are
capable of seeing the unexpected. Once Conor has become aware
of his background, the respectable people of Ballymorgan
expect him to go into exile discreetly, but he decides to
stay. He also persists in claiming responsibility for the fire
that they have, in conspiracy, explained as an accident and
thus made innocuous to their reputations. "I don't think I can
listen to this sort of thing," sputters McNeely. "It's not at
all what I expected" (67). But Conor won't relent:

When I saw the flames roar up and heard the crash of
the roof falling in, I felt peace and terrible
relief. I knew I had destroyed a lie. But the lie I
destroyed wasn't the lie I thought. It wasn't the

lie of a hypocritical Carberry who'd imposed himself on an unsuspecting community; it was the hypocrisy of a community setting up a lie in place of the man that had been, and erecting a memorial to a man who had never existed. The lie I destroyed was your lie, Mr. McNeely. (67-68)

The dichotomies "hypocrisy/truth" and "hero/human-being" exhibit here their relation to the overarching dichotomy "fantasy/reality." Again, a figure uses the stage to argue; Conor directs the blame at the hypocrite: The lie is yours, Mr. McNeely.

Conor's speech changes the relationship between himself and Ballymorgan. Without regard for Conor's feelings or for his plans for the future, they have been accomplices in creating a hero in his father and, consequently, denied Conor's true identity and his real circumstances. Conor reasserts himself even against Devereaux's suggestion that he is the true memorial to his father:

(Pointing to Conor) Look there at him!! There he is! Which of you that knew Carberry can deny him for the son of his father? Oh, there's many a Godfearing father would give a lot to be as sure of his son's breeding as Carberry could be of his.
 CONOR. (Quietly) You mistake me, Mr. Devereaux, if you think I uphold my father's wrongs. I had a mother, too, remember. (69)

By valorizing the father, even Devereaux succumbs to the stereotyped vision of the patriarchal community. He is in the way of recreating the hero Carberry in his son. But Conor refutes him when he returns Devereaux's ostending hand by saying "You mistake me, Mr. Devereaux." Conor remembers his mother, who till now has been silenced by the hero worship of her lover. No hero, no hero's son, and no illegitimate birth will Conor be, but a person extracting himself from the diverse narratives of his and his country's past in order to be himself.

That Conor decides in the end to emigrate is D'Alton's most scathing criticism of De Valera's Ireland as well as his most mordant attack on the audiences of his day who misunderstood his plays because, like McNeely, they couldn't see what they didn't expect to see. O'Farrell argues convincingly that D'Alton's posthumously produced Cafflin' Johnny is "a direct parody of this deliberate refusal to acknowledge the truth" (181).

"Art/Nature," the third variation on the dichotomy "fantasy/reality," finds expression in the figures' commentaries on and reactions to Carberry's bust. As the counterpart to Barney Doran's account of the drive with the pig, the Sergeant enters at the beginning of 2.1 relishing the fun at the unveiling of the bust:

It was the sight of a lifetime: 'I now unveil this bust,' says the speaker, whippin' off the

coverin'. 'Far better you kep the lid on it,' says some counthry fella standin' near the platform. 'I seen,' says he 'far more sensible lookin' faces in the Home for Eedjiots.' Well, there was a tither went through the crowd an' some o' the women got hysterical!

MCNEELY. I didn't see anything funny about it.

SERGEANT. Well, bedad, they did! The ones standin' near the lad thried to shush him. Oh, but no! Bust, is it? Be heavens, Mr. McNelly, it was more than a bust be this time...it was an explosion!The rowd was shakin' from end t' end, with the lad goin' on passin' his remarks, like a radio runnin' commentary. Your man had them in stitches o' laughter, they were in kinks. An' sure wasn't he right? (Doubled up and weeping with excess of mirth) Honest to God. I'd have made a betther lookin' image meself with a bent penknife an' a batthered turnip! (30-31)

The nonrealistic style of the bust meets with misunderstanding and ridicule in this rural community, but men such as McNeely, Clannery, and even the Sergeant know the difference between laughing at the sculpture and deriding the hero it represents.

When Crispin "most fervently" denounces the bust, Clannery thinks he is denouncing Carberry and all he stands for (31). The misapprehensions that ensue not only are comic,

but illustrate the multiple levels of representation in art. Each figure interprets the bust and each figure relates these interpretations to what the bust represents. Like Clannery, the Canon understands Crispin's words as an attack on Carberry himself, but because of his disapproval of Carberry's immorality and because of his anti-nationalist political views he welcomes the Englishman as an ally. When the Sergeant painstakingly explains how the people mistook Crispin's outrage at the bust, he ends, "Sure, they imagined it was th' other thing he was comin' at...if you know what I mean." Devereaux replies brusquely, "We know" (64). In this exchange I read a parody of the interpretive process because the obvious (i.e., that which needs no interpretation) is detailed excruciatingly only to be summarily explained with the phrase "they imagined it was th' other thing he was comin' at." I wonder that Devereaux refrains from adding to his curt reply "you idiot." The parody extends, as well, to the other interpretations of the bust. Enraged by what he thinks is the height of Crispin's English pride, Clannery, for his preoccupation with Crispin's opinion of it, doesn't even acknowledge the bust. And although the Sergeant recounts with zest the bystander's "radio runnin' commentary," he quickly comes to the defense of the bust when he hears Crispin is denouncing it.

The text switches from parody to reflexive interpretation when Maire, answering Crispin's criticism, suggests he might have preferred something more like the Albert Memorial:

CRISPIN. I fear you're laughing at me?

MAIRE. No. But you see the real point of the matter is, what would Carberry have thought of it?

Albert, I imagine, would thoroughly have approved his Memorial. Do you know what Carberry would have done? Like the rest of the people, he'd have broken his heart laughing at it.

CRISPIN. You mean he'd have considered it of no importance?

MAIRE. Oh, no. When he'd finished laughing at it, he'd have been very angry. He'd have realised that all the vulgarity and crudity, all the insensitiveness and mediocrity of our lives is symbolised by that bust. (33)

Much in the same spirit, Devereaux votes against rebuilding the Memorial Hall arguing "th' empty shell" is more suitable a memorial since Ireland has yet to gain the kind of freedom Carberry was fighting for (60). Devereaux believes—and here one could well argue D'Alton, too—that during the first decades of independence the Irish have sought ideals and worshipped heroes instead of seeking freedom and accepting their fellow human beings. "When I think of the high hopes that went into it," exclaims Clannery lamenting the Memorial,

"I could weep!" "It's an epitome," Devereaux says and "laughs quietly" (60). The end of the Memorial is the type for hopes set too high, for ideals far distant from reality.

Like Pat Tweedy, Humphrey Clannery is an imitation of the Stage Irishman. Clannery resembles Annelise Truninger's braggart type, which since its first notable appearance in Captain MacMorris has led an ambivalent existence. On the one hand, the braggart is an exuberant boaster whose bark far exceeds his bite; on the other hand, he is a renegade who not only threatens England, but also hopes to fulfill those threats. This second Stage Irishman, the sinister type, is the product of political animosities between the two countries, like the Stage Irishmen of such late seventeenth-century anti-Irish dramatic pamphlets as The Royal Voyage and The Royal Flight (Leerssen, Mere 108-113). In this connection one can best understand the portrayal of Republican and Unionist terrorists at the height of the Troubles in Ron Hutchinson's Rat in the Skull.

In Clannery, though, we have the harmless braggart type. The secondary text describes him as "a stout middle aged man who, when he is denouncing England, is forceful, emphatic, determined and sure of himself. When he is not, he has a rather bewildered air, like all men who are at heart unsure of the validity of their conceptions" (9). There is an important ambivalence at the center of this figure because, although he never appears threatening to anyone, it is unclear whether or

not he even wants to threaten. All braggarts are, in some way, uncertain of themselves, but Clannery is unsure of his very role as braggart. His uncertainty provides for much of the comic potential of the figure.

Together with the lover of all things Irish, the Englishman Roger Crispin, Clannery's comic role is evident. It is useful to abstract Clannery's and Crispin's relationship beyond the respective positions of Stage Irishman and Stage Englishman and, in Northrop Frye's use of the terms in comedy (171-186), to identify Clannery with the alazon and Crispin with the eiron. Their interaction comprises the comic conflict, that is, they prove that, although they are seeming opposites, they actually have everything in common. When the boastful figure meets the self-deprecator, they cancel one another and disperse the tension that might have endangered a comedic outcome.

Clannery and Crispin differ only in the audiences they play to: Clannery plays to an English audience, Crispin to an Irish. For this reason Crispin is in his element amongst the Irish because he may be as English as he likes, while Clannery, for the most part, goes unheard and unnoticed. Only Crispin pays him careful attention because an Irishman like Clannery is just the person to make him always appear in the best light. Crispin's earnest sympathy for the Irish nationalist cause undercuts Clannery's repeated efforts to turn the others against this Englishman. But again and again

Clannery loses his nerve as Crispin assures him that patriotism, hypocrisy, and many other Irish vices are imports from England. D'Alton's satire reminds militant Irish nationalists, always persistently emphatic about being Irish, that the most ardent proponents of the nationalist movement (i.e., those Protestants of English backgrounds), wouldn't qualify for them as being Irish.

Since the Irish figures don't pay Clannery attention, they are for him no audience; therefore, the Stage Irishman Clannery is dependent on Crispin to be able to fulfill his role. But Crispin concedes to him his every grievance, so that Clannery's part is robbed of all form and meaning.

Unwittingly, Crispin alludes to their interchangeability when Clannery accuses him of setting fire to the Memorial Hall. Crispin expresses his complete sympathy for Irish righteous anger at English injustice and atrocity. He astounds the others "as his indignation waxes and surpasses that of the frustrated Clannery": "By heavens gentlemen, were I in Mr. Clannery's place I should feel the same burning indignation as he does!" (48). Only as long as Crispin was willing "to play the tyrant" to Clannery's angry rebel would Clannery's part make sense; therefore, he complains "despairingly," "Oh, d'ye hear him? D'ye hear him. What the hell could you do with a man like that?" (48). Like an actor pluming himself center stage, Crispin steals Clannery's show.

Paradoxically, Crispin and Clannery differ by sharing characteristics. For example, both are prejudiced. Crispin's overt love for Ireland masks an even greater love for England. Believing her an Englishwoman, he encourages Maire to try to overcome her dislike of the Irish because "[. . .] where Ireland is concerned it is for the English to remember and for the Irish to forget" (17). His platitudinous arguments weaken when his picture of English England gradually comes into view. For a man in his position, he ironically admits, "but I don't like foreigners" (26). His show as the Irish-loving Englishman works only before a willing Irish audience, which makes one wonder who is more Stage Irish, the English proprietor in Ireland or the Irish navy in England.

The distortions of the nationalist's stereotyped perception serve Clannery in deriding the eternal foe. He is disappointed that the English didn't invade during the war, as he had expected, so that the Irish could fight them in the open. Now he imagines an English conspiracy to buy Ireland out from under Irish feet. To suit his mood or to advance an argument, he alters the sources of patriotic quotations and makes them Irishmen. After falsely accusing Crispin of the Memorial Hall fire, he must apologize, but his indignation over English wrongs again gets the better of him: "He robs, exploits and oppresses us for the better part of seven hundred years! He afflicts us with his humbugs and heresies, his superstitions and incompetence, and departs leavin' us in a

mess" (57). There is more to Clannery's words than the Irish racist looking to exonerate his country by blaming everything on the English. Although he refers to Crispin, the actions were done by a long line of people over centuries, and it did not all happen in Ballymorgan. This is stereotyped perception, which speeds or slows the passing of time and shortens or lengthens the bounds of space to its picture of reality (Lippmann 133-148). In the stereotype, expectation is everything because it changes reality to suit the pictures in one's head. As I will pursue in chapter 5, it is not so much the reality which checks harmful stereotyping but the reality one discovers in someone else's own perception, opinions, and feelings on what is and who people are. People like Clannery believe, or pretend to believe, that every Irish person must conform to one idealized image of the nation; in short, the Irish are stereotypes of a nationalist ideal or they're not Irish.

Clannery's nerve is easily shaken because his position is untenable. Crispin's position is likewise shaky and demands the stereotyper's constant vigilance as well as an act of doublethink. In this both Clannery and Crispin ascribe to Broadbent's secret to success: "Let not the right side of your brain know what the left side doeth" (182). Crispin, for example, believes in socialism but votes Conservative: "One should have the courage to hold such principles and the good sense to refrain from putting them into practice!" (38).

Clannery's hatred of the English stimulates his idealized conception of the Irish nation, even though he likes Crispin: "I should like you to understand, of course, that while I have no feeling against you personally my principles are still unaltered. [. . .] Liberty is the price we pay for eternal vigilance" (78).

And so Clannery and Crispin continue playing their roles, even if with varying success. While Devereaux recalls "th' ould sayin'" "The English in Ireland become more Irish than th' Irish themselves" (73), Crispin believes "that in some ways the Irish are more English than the English themselves" (78). In conventional melodramatic fashion, only in the last act do we find out two shocking secrets about Clannery and Crispin: the Irishman's mother was English and the Englishman's Irish! In this crossover the action sequence reaches a comedic ending because the conflicting figures prove comic. Together Clannery's and Crispin's roles express the paradox that is at the heart of the Irish-English relationship and that is the source of both nations' stereotypes and mutual stereotyping. Devereaux aptly summarizes their parts when he tells Crispin they have everything in common, "You think all our virtues are English, and Clannery thinks all our vices are English" (78). Taken together Clannery and Crispin believe everything is English—or Irish. Whichever.

A Stage Production of Borstal Boy

Not fifteen years following the premiere of This Other Eden and in the second season at the Abbey's new house, Brendan Behan's Borstal Boy was adapted for the stage to critical acclaim and popular approval. I have chosen to interpret this adaptation because its main dramatic figure is Brendan Behan. Since the criticism on Brendan Behan the writer has long been distracted by Brendan Behan the man, the best way to refute this bias is to interpret an avowedly autobiographical work. That this happens to be the stage adaptation of a novel affords me the further opportunity of criticizing the bias against Brendan Behan's methods of writing and editing as well as the bias against adaptation in itself. Briefly, it has often been said that Brendan Behan's writing soon foundered after his early successes. This is not the place to re-assess his oeuvre, but I do want to vary the perspective usually taken on the popular and supposedly nonliterary aspects of Brendan Behan's writing.

What sort of play is the adaptation of Borstal Boy? And what is the importance of Brendan Behan's biography to its reception? I hope to answer these questions by taking an unorthodox perspective on adaptations and by discussing, through the example of Brendan Behan, the relevance of artists' personalities and lives to their work and its reception.

All three plays interpreted in this chapter are imitations of one kind or another. While This Other Eden is a variation on John Bull's Other Island, Borstal Boy and Declan Hughes's Love and a Bottle (with George Farquhar) are adaptations, respectively, of a novel and of another play. In this connection, to adapt means to change so as to suit new conditions; it implies flexibility, a common synonym for adaptability. So adaptation makes explicit the intertextuality of all pieces of literature and re-opens the latent potentialities of the model. The adaptor's work is always pointedly self-conscious because his material is given, he need only decide how to present it. Because adaptation opens new ground in which the model can reappear differently, it should not be narrowly contrasted to its model, but interpreted as any other piece would be interpreted. An adaptation gives the model new form and can increase our understanding of it by shaping unseen potentials of the model or if seen, then not from this particular aspect. One reason adaptations are popular is because they give a model we like another chance to interest us.

How different the adaptation looks when the model is stripped of its false authority, when the writer's intentions are no longer seen as absolute! With the adaptation, the content is always less interesting than the form because even the most drastic changes to a story or the action sequence don't change what the adaptation is about. (Even if the

adaptation is just about changing the content of its model, we always already know what the model is about.) We watch an adaptation for its variations and its shifting focus because how it will present new or old material is what we don't know.

The adaptation relates not metaphorically, but metonymically to its model. Like Verdichtung in dreams, the adaptation is a position at which various forces converge and from which the interpreter can move in various directions. Since the model is based on the same intertextuality, one might even argue that the model, too, is an adaptation of other literary works. In this way, I argue that the potential adaptation lies in every work, and each adaptation can again serve as model to a further adaptation. If we are not to condemn an adaptation from the start, neither may we approach it entirely on its own terms, nor may we judge it on a rigid faithfulness to its model.

In the theater, to adapt means to stage a non-dramatic piece or to re-stage another play. Nineteenth-century melodrama, so important to Stage-Irish conventions, often staged popular novels only to adapt again these same plays. Not only did the fit-up theater continue this technique of composition, but during the 1960s the Abbey successfully adapted a number of popular Irish novels, including Borstal Boy, Hugh Leonard's Stephen D (from Stephen Hero and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man), and Tarry Flynn (Ó hAodha, Theatre 150, 154). I see similar processes at work in

every stage production because the script must become the performance and the performance of the first night must be played again on the second night, and so on. Likewise, even the most improvisational stage piece has somewhere some form of a script, even if it is only the performer's intent to perform. So to adapt can mean, in general, to bring to the stage.

I will also be using the example of an adaptation of an autobiographical work to illustrate the relationship I perceive between the writer as a role and, in Brendan Behan's case, the Stage Irish. Brendan Behan's own role in the composition, production, and reception of his works has been too influential for the critic to ignore. I stress the word role, because I believe it the task of psychologists to define the real Brendan Behan—if they can—and the place of those who knew him to tell us about the real Brendan Behan—if they so will. The critic is left only with the role or, better, roles that Brendan Behan played in his prose, in his stage productions, and in public. Unique to someone like Brendan Behan is that his roles often seemed to converge in the one of the raucous, drunken Dublin poet, which then dominated his personal and public lives as well as his writings and plays. In this respect E. H. Mikhail's comparison between Brendan Behan and Oscar Wilde is justified, even if some of the smaller points, like their both starting out as journalists, seem irrelevant and gratuitous (Interviews ix-xi). The Irishry

in Brendan Behan's roles is obvious, but the "Stagery" requires a close look. It is best illustrated through his appearances during the production of his plays, often as a disorderly drunk in the auditorium or on the stage. I read these appearances as an overlay on the actual performance. This overlay changes one's perspective on the performance because one must see it through the other performance of the writer. And this overlay opens for the critic the possibility of further overlays in the piece itself; in other words, if the writer's part at the performance of his own play need be taken into consideration for a good understanding of the production, then his part at all the levels of composition and production and reception need be, too. So Brendan Behan can become a force one must always reckon with when interpreting his works, and importantly not the real Brendan Behan, but the roles he played.

(By now it will have become obvious that, when referring to the historical person Brendan Behan, I deliberately repeat the full name. This and the following denominative conventions are requisites of the clarity of my interpretation. First, from the play Borstal Boy I adopt the upper-case names BEHAN and BRENDAN to refer to the two dramatic figures. Second, to refer to Brendan Behan's narrative voice in the novel Borstal Boy, I write Narrator with initial; to refer to the adolescent narrative figure who appears together with the other narrative

figures in the novelesitic narration, I write Brendan with initial.)

During its first run at the 1967 Dublin Theater Festival, the adaptation of Borstal Boy had sympathetic producers, performers, and audiences who incorporated the roles of Brendan Behan in the figure BEHAN. This was emphasized by the actor playing BEHAN, Niall Toibin (also a friend of the writer), who impersonated Brendan Behan very well (Mikhail, Interviews 116, 286). When BEHAN first appears the secondary text describes him as "a familiar figure," as if he were still amongst his fellow Dubliners (9), and in just such terms did one contemporary reviewer praise Toibin's "virtuoso piece of impersonation": "Behan's stutter, his tipsy walk, his habit of holding his head to one side and a hundred other little details uncannily resuscitate the Brendan Behan seen around Dublin only a few years ago" (Roberts and Colgan 46).

The quasi-resurrection of Dublin's Brendan Behan in the adaptation can be seen not only in his re-appearance on the stage, but also in the ways BEHAN deviates from his counterpart in the novel (i.e., the Narrator). When I note these deviations, I am not criticizing the adaptation for not being the model; rather I am demonstrating the role Brendan Behan can play even in the posthumous adaptation of his Borstal Boy as well as the potential all literature has to be adapted. The drive behind the adaptation of Borstal Boy, especially considering its first production shortly following

Brendan Behan's death, was the larger-than-life role of Brendan Behan whose pervasiveness, like the revenant's, makes him appear from beyond. Brendan Behan shares this pervasiveness with another role whose importance to the Stage Irish I will now explain.

Brendan Behan's life has long interfered with critical assessment of his writings. Disapproval of the man has often led to disapproval of the writer. In this, critics show how they valorize the author's original since their distinction between the man and the writer is sublated by any conclusions drawn from it, because to condemn either side means to acknowledge the other. Criticism of Brendan Behan's methods of composition and the supposed levity with which he treated his final versions belie a prejudice against collaborative theater work, which forms the opposite to individual originality. Apart from the inaccuracy (e.g., Brendan Behan's meticulous editing of the manuscript of Borstal Boy and his reluctance to release the final version for publishing), this prejudice distorts Brendan Behan's writing through the lens of biased criticism. (About the other prejudice against the disease of alcoholism I will say nothing.) Prejudices, or negative stereotypes, are extreme expectations that judge others and the real world before one knows who or what one is judging. The importance of expectations to Brendan Behan's reputation with critics, with audiences, and with the public cannot be underestimated because the Stage Irishman he became in the ten

years before his death owes to them much of its tragicomic profile. While Brendan Behan was writing *Stage Irish* for the theatre, others were writing him up as well as writing him off as a *Stage Irish* in person.

BEHAN exemplifies this when, representing BRENDAN at the Liverpool Assizes, he confirms his younger self's premonition of an early death (42): "Sure to God, you'll kill yourself more with the drink than you ever will with the I.R.A." (61). The key to understanding the process of negative stereotyping I am talking about is to see that BEHAN's "you" refers also to himself. Recognizing this double reference goes beyond the knowledge that BEHAN would know this because he knows how they die; it means recognizing that BEHAN must be a product of the producers', the performers', and the audiences' imaginations because he knows what Brendan Behan only could have guessed. Although Brendan does have premonitions of an early death, a wide gap lies between a premonition and BEHAN's surety. In BEHAN's line, Brendan Behan's public have taken his gallows humor to a level that he couldn't have reached and that the Narrator doesn't think possible: "I have a sense of humour that would nearly cause me to burst out laughing at a funeral, providing it was not my own [. . .]" (131). Another *Stage Irish* in this study, David Rudkin's *Roger Casement*, takes on similar larger-than-life stature because of the overlapping of biographies and literary creation between the figure Casement and the writer Rudkin.

Expectations came at Brendan Behan from all sides. The media hotly awaited his next public appearance, while in London, for example, middle-class Irish resented him for "reviving the image of the stage Irishman" and so disgracing the nation (Mikhail, Interviews 141). Working-class Dubliners, on the other hand, apotheosized this painter-poet. And still six years after his death the IRA could raise an uproar because of Ulick O'Connor's "suggestion that he had been somewhat homosexually inclined" (Mikhail, Interviews 330). But if these are some of the Brendan Behans people have expected of the writer, how did he respond? What kind of Brendan Behan did he portray?

A writer as popular as Brendan Behan will necessarily fulfill some public expectations, but the same processes are, from a structuralist viewpoint, at work in every writer's relationship to his audience. Between the real writer and his creations (usually called characters) structuralists find at least two figures: "the 'ideal' author implied in the text as the subject of the whole work" (who I call the writer figure) and "the fictional narrator whose role in the work is formulated as the narrative medium" (Pfister 3-4). While the difference between narrator and character is evident, in autobiography the first person seems to conflate the narrator with one of the characters; but this conclusion misses the two figures' structural and functional distinctiveness.

In the novel, the Narrator distances himself again and again from Brendan, whose notions and actions awake everything from his sympathy to his displeasure. For example, the prison guards are reprimanding Brendan for keeping cigarettes from the outside when he offers the feeble, pointless resistance of refusing to address them "Sir." As the guards beat him, the Narrator's grand comparison to the dying Cuchulainn deflates to irony when Brendan complies sputtering, "'I, sir, please, sir, I am looking at you, I mean, I am looking at Mr. Whitbread, sir'" (40).

So the narrator and the narrative as a whole imply some figure that we expect to be the writer of the piece. This is a literary figure and is not identical with a real person principally because our narrow expectations of the writer will never apply to the whole person who wrote the piece. The process I am describing is basically like the schoolchild amazed at seeing his teacher at the supermarket. His amazement arises from his narrow expectations of his teacher as the one who teaches his and his classmates' classes, just as the reader's expectations make of a real person something that is, comparatively, small and unimposing (i.e., the writer figure). To invest in this figure the intention—whose intention, anyway?—and the design of the whole piece is an error.

When the real writer, though, resembles the writer of readers' expectations, the figure seems to take on real dimensions because he is personified in the sense of being

represented in the form of a person. A real person seemingly imitates a literary creation; whether the person does this intentionally or unintentionally is, in the first place, most likely indeterminable and, in the second place, irrelevant to interpretation of the piece of literature because, in any case, such interplay between the real writer and the imaginary writer confuses the line from cause to effect, from creator to created, and the possibility arises that what in actuality is a fiction (i.e., the writer figure) writes the part for a real person. Theorists and practitioners of performance would say this argues an archi-performance in our everyday lives; in other words, we all play parts that cannot be grounded on any more basic a principle than that being human means living through roles.

Although nothing certain can be said about the real writer's intentions, it is the literary critic's task to interpret the figures' because their intentions affect the other figures and the course of the narrative or the action sequence. A narrator who describes himself as readers would expect the real writer to describe himself implies a writer figure who is aware of himself, of his narrator, of his own author (i.e., the real writer), and of the audience's images of all three. This situation describes not only Brendan Behan and his creations in Borstal Boy, but also the Stage Irish. One way to understand the complex relations I am describing is to compare them to Beckett's concept of existence by proxy.

While the real writer can feel like he exists by proxy of his writing self, or even by proxy of his readers' expectations of his writing self, the real Irish often exist by proxy of Stage Irishmen and Stage Irishwomen, or some such imaginary characters. (Whether this is to their advantage or disadvantage is an open question, but they often can decide for themselves by adopting the part.) That the reverse is also possible can be seen in any of the Abbey Theatre riots when the public took offense at what they expected was a disgraceful representation of the Irish nation. As soon as one recognizes that the term Irish can be nothing other than an empty vessel to be filled by whoever will fill it, then such riots become proof of the sometimes frightening power of prejudice and belief.

The array of Irish people BRENDA meets in England he knows for the Irish they are either trying to be or trying not to be: from the pious old maid, his landlady, through the militant nationalists Callan and Lavery, to the Lancashire Irish screws proving they are as British as anyone else by being crueller to him than anyone else. The Narrator, too, shows his awareness of the performativity of nationality when, as a Dubliner, he denounces "that Abbey Theatre bogman talk" (98) and compares the Gaeltacht Irish to the rural Lancashire prisoner Brown, who everyone sees "as a bit of Old England" (74). "Well, everyone is a foreigner out of their own place," opines Brendan (195), but his definition begs two questions.

First, where is one's own place? Hard to say since that is just the question. Second, can a nation ever be one's own place? I think Borstal Boy answers no.

I turn now specifically to the relationship between Brendan Behan and his writings. Since the Narrator recurs to the topic of lying, the text shows itself to be fiction. The Narrator admits that he makes his stories up as he goes along and that almost all he says is lies (309, 314). Although the Narrator functions inside the narrative, his words cross all levels of the text; and since, as the Narrator, he is the figure closest to the reader, his opinion of his own stories is most influential on the reader. When Joe tells the story of being raped by an old maid, the Narrator stage-manages the three reactions elicited:

'Blimey,' said Chewlips.

'You lying sod,' said Charlie.

I burst out laughing thinking of it. Chewlips, like most people that don't tell lies or stories themselves, saw no reason to disbelieve it, and Charlie, who wasn't sure whether to believe it or not, laughed, and said again, 'You lying sod.' (164)

But this explicit treatment of the fictiveness of the narrative evinces an awareness in the writer figure that, in turn, justifies the Narrator's claims on our belief. In this connection, the question to the truth value of Borstal Boy is irrelevant, as it is in all literature. Literature is what it

seems and cannot be verified on grounds that discount its mode of being: appearance or, another word for the same thing, form. Any experience of Brendan Behan's life, for example, that might have found its way into his writings has not entered directly, but through the medium of the writer figure. These are not Brendan Behan's experiences but Brendan Behan's Brendan Behan's experiences.

It doesn't matter that Borstal Boy is categorized as autobiography nor that Brendan Behan often referred to it as a novel (Mikhail, Art 96) because the division between fiction and nonfiction (like that between fiction and fact) is at best a beleaguered boundary. The writer figure is always appearing, even in so-called nonfiction. Experts on the genre, such as William Zinsser, E. B. White, and William Strunk, Jr., acknowledge this, even if they seem unaware of the consequences for their practice and they disregard the presumption of titling a biography after its subject. "But it seems to me it would be an impossibility, a falsehood, a sham," writes the narrator of Graham Swift's Ever After to the suggestion he write his late wife's, the famous actress Ruth Vaughan's, biography. "It's not the life, is it, but the life? The life" (253). Dates and documentation packaged in smooth prose is not who had lived under the name on the cover because he or she had lived a life. What gives good biographies their interest and their vividness is the biographer himself, imbuing his subject with his own style and his life. The

biographies on Brendan Behan present the biographers' Brendan Behans and, likewise, Brendan Behan's autobiography is about Brendan Behan's Brendan Behan and not the real man. Perhaps a hidden significance of the title Borstal Boy is that, although the initials B. B. can stand for Brendan Behan, here they mean borstal boy, one of the writer's roles while he was in England and when he appears on paper.

But it is another thing when the piece seems to invite the biographical reading, as in the cases of those two Stage Irish related by their dissimilarity: Brendan Behan and Oscar Wilde. Although the usual perspective on these writers is that they wrote their lives into their literature, Wilde, for himself, denies this when he claims "Life imitates Art." So just as one can claim that fiction borrows from people's lives, one can argue that people live by playing the roles fiction scripts. The consciousness this requires is the reflexive consciousness of the performing self. That Oscar Wilde and Brendan Behan appear so differently from the outside is immaterial because the way they adopt their writer roles is very similar. Besides, what's more Stage Irish, an Irishman who played the Stage Irishman when the nation had just become a Republic or one who played the Stage Englishman when it was still a British colony? That one would have expected each writer to have done the opposite only proves their heightened awareness of public opinion and people's expectations of them.

Pushing the boundary to reality, the novel Borstal Boy reaches its formal limits when Brendan, on solitary, battles hunger during the others' dinnertime:

That it may choke you, you shower of bastards!
 Some in the convict's dreary cell,
 Have found a living tomb,
 And some unseen untended fell
 Within the dungeon's gloom,
 But what care we, although it be
 Trod by a ruffian band,
 God bless the clay where rest today
 The Felons of our Land...

The dinners went past me, I could smell. Wasn't it the great pity that the fellow that was doing the suffering couldn't be where the singing was to get the benefit of it. Mother of Christ, wasn't there a thousand places between Belfast and Bantry Bay where a fellow would be stuffed with grub, not to mind doused in porter, if he could only be there and here at the same time? But I supposed that would be like trying to get a drink at your own funeral. Make way there, you with the face, and let in the man that's doing jail for Ireland, and suffering hunger and abuse, let him up to the bar there. Oh, come up at once, the publican would say, what kind of men are you at all? Have you no decency of spirit about you,

that wouldn't make way for one of the Felons of our Land? Come on, son, till herself gives you this plate of bacon and cabbage, and the blessings of Jasus on you, and on everyone like you. It's my own dinner I'm giving you, for you were not expected and you amongst that parcel of white-livered, thin-lipped, paper-waving, key-rattling hangmen. And, come on; after your dinner there's a pint to wash it down, aye, and a glass of malt if you fancy it. Give us up a song there. Yous have enough of songs out of yous about the boys that faced the Saxon foe, but, bejasus, when there's one of them here among you, the real Ally Daly, the real goat's genollickers, yous are silent as the tomb. Sing up, yous whore's gets. (87)

Like the captives of Someone Who'll Watch over Me, the Narrator, through the power of his art, escapes the cell for Brendan. The Narrator is capable of uniting the singing and its reward, of combining fiction and reality. The Narrator even disappears shortly behind the mask of the publican, as if he were an actor playing a part onstage. To the customers he insists on the real presence of the prisoner Brendan, but neither is he real nor has Brendan really escaped, so the Narrator is briefly overcoming what he knows to be fact. Like Conn having a drink at his own funeral, the Narrator's art achieves the impossible by exceeding all expectations, even

those of the doubly fictive publican. In this way the Stage Irish recognize the paradox of self and environment which, although they appear distinct, cannot be differentiated.

This impossibility was nearly achieved at the premiere in Ireland where BRENDAN and BEHAN, through the actors playing them, were amongst friends. The adaptation's reproduction of the Narrator and Brendan in BEHAN and BRENDAN, respectively, demonstrates its structural similarity to the novel, but the figures do not stand in a one to one relation. Between the publishing of Borstal Boy and its adaptation lie the ten years during which Brendan Behan arose to international renown and notoriety and also met an untimely death. This decade influences BEHAN's role in the action phases because in this time took shape the public expectations of Brendan Behan as the singing, drinking, fighting Irish poet. Also, his death changes BEHAN's character in comparison to the Narrator. Unlike the Narrator who recounts the events of his sentence in England, BEHAN recounts the life of Brendan Behan through the form of the narrative Borstal Boy. As I've demonstrated, BEHAN knows his cause of death, while Brendan and the Narrator can only suspect it.

The change of medium from page to stage is the change from the narrative's past tense and its deixis of "there and then" to the performance's present tense and its deixis of "here and now." Missing from the narrative is the real role playing of the adaptation. This gives the novel, in some

respects, its most congenial form because, as Werner Huber notes, it contains an extraordinary portion of dialogue (205-206). The play is, anyway, notable for its deviation from the naturalistic style to include what commonly is called an epic narrator in BEHAN. But this epic narrator's participation in the action sequence, especially his interaction with BRENDAN, demonstrates how the roles of the main figure, split already into BRENDAN and BEHAN, are always in flux. BEHAN is narrator (9-10), defense attorney (60-63), singer, and BRENDAN's other voice (62-63) and his other set of eyes (121-122). The Narrator might be all these things and more, only it is the adaptation that places them in a figure who stands on the stage across from the figure representing Brendan Behan as an adolescent prisoner. During the trial, for example, BRENDAN is the militant patriot and BEHAN the ironic posturer, but they shout together, "'Up the Republic!'" (63). Because their views on the trial are so different, their shout is not in unison, but only simultaneous, which proves that their dialogue, as with Hughes's Lyrick and Roebuck, crosses two structural levels. That Niall Toibin's impersonation was so successful means that BEHAN might also have been the Brendan Behan who Dublin and the world knew, in the last years of his life looking back at who he had been.

The medial shift also affects the characterization of the borstal boys and, more importantly, the structure and meaning of the ending. For the most part, the play changes none of the

material from the novel, but it rearranges a lot and it cuts half of Part One, all of Part Two, and more than half of Part Three. The adaptation is not so much something new, but a part of the model; therefore, an interpretation of the adaptation should heed more how it changes the novel rather than what it changes from the novel.

The parading introduction to the eleven borstal boys which opens act 2 is a structural necessity because much of the humor depends on good acquaintance with these figures' characters. Not only does the play omit the time at Feltham Boys' Prison when the reader meets most of these boys, but also the narrative can interrupt the plot flow to introduce characters, while the actions onstage are not so easily slowed. The effect for the play is that act 2 becomes revue-like because the figures parade onto the stage, move in picaresque style from one action phase to the next, and, on their releases,

[. . .] strut in vaudeville-style, in civilian clothes, carrying cheap bags and singing.)

One more hour and we shall be,

Out of the dump of misery

Bye, bye, Borstal.

Out the door and we'll be free,

You'll see sweet fuck-all of me,

Bye, bye, Borstal.

The governor and the screws don't understand us,

All that Borstal bullshit they all hand us.
 I've packed my bag and packed my grip,
 We're not coming back next trip,
 Borstal-bye, bye! (114-115)

The song is new to the play, although it takes its inspiration from "The Borstal Song" (novel 189). It is true that the Narrator frequently pauses to include a song with varying relevance to the narrative, but nowhere does he narrate through song, as in the play's "Old Alarm Clock" or in this variation on "The Borstal Song." The structural differences to the novel make out of a first person account of Brendan's time in borstal a picaresque, show-style performance.

On the adaptation of the ending of the novel, the splitting of the main narrative figure into BRENDAN and BEHAN changes effect and meaning. Not just BRENDAN is returning to Dublin, but BEHAN too, and this, to eyes of the first audiences, meant the Brendan Behan they had known. The play interprets the ending through BRENDAN's relationship to Charlie, as the reprise of the song for Bonny Prince Charlie evidences. At first glance, BRENDAN and BEHAN speaking the closing lines change the narrative only in so far as they change the verb tenses and the deixis. But inspection of their speeches reveals three significant changes.

First, they don't make geographical location as clear as the Narrator does. The Narrator describes how Brendan is entering Dun Laoghaire while he observes the surrounding hills

and tallest spires in the city. When he has stepped onto the docks, he can see the spires of the smaller churches, the chimneys of the Pigeon House, and the road running along the edge of Dublin Bay through the suburbs which he names from south to north. The Narrator compares this road to a "framing circle" (339-340), and so evokes the metaphor "Dublin is a picture." This is not the first time the Narrator perceives his home city, and by extent himself, as artistic. Also omitted from the play is the essay contest at the Eisteddfod. The subject is "My Home Town," and it is with pride that the Narrator tells how he enters knowing he will win, how he writes and rewrites until his essay is perfect, and how the applause and cheering surpasses that for all the other prizes of the day. Since BEHAN describes the road merely as a "circle" (121), the dramatic text doesn't evoke this metaphor and so de-emphasizes Brendan Behan's role as an artist to foreground his role as a Dubliner.

The play also subtracts from the litany of place names Baldoyle, but this is insignificant in comparison to the mistake on Kilbarrack. I have till now pleaded for a more liberal view of adaptation, but when the adaptation mistakes the model, then correction is due. The Narrator's description of Brendan approaching shore moves from Dun Laoghaire to the docks and it is from these positions that he observes the city and its surroundings. BRENDAN and BEHAN move through the same positions until they linger on Kilbarrack. BRENDAN admits he

can't really see the cemetery at Kilbarrack even though he believes he sees the flag flying over Dan Head's grave "from ten miles out on the Bay!" (122). But the Brendan of the novel thinks he can see the flag "which I could not from ten miles over the Bay" (340). BREN DAN's line neither coincides with the actions the figures are performing nor seems to me otherwise significant.

Second, in the cemetery at Kilbarrack lie, according to the Narrator, "So many belonging to me" (340) and, according to BREN DAN, "So many belonging to us" (121). Only from one aspect does this us mean BREN DAN and BEHAN, and it is not the principal aspect because BREN DAN shows throughout little awareness of his older self, BEHAN. All theater is communal, so it is not surprising that the first production of Borstal Boy should have been of and for the Dublin audience. Who the Narrator calls his own, BREN DAN calls ours. The producers, performers, and audiences of the adaptation claim Brendan Behan as Dublin's own by making his family and closest friends Ireland's own. In addition, changing me to us valorizes Brendan Behan's commitment to the Republican cause, which throughout the play is never so problematized as in the novel.

Third, the novel and the play close with different configurations and different lines. The novel ends as follows:

[The immigration man] looked very serious, and tenderly enquired, 'Caithfidh go bhuil sé go hiontach bheith saor.'

'Caithfidh go bhuil.'

'It must be wonderful to be free.'

'It must,' said I, walked down the gangway,
past a detective, and got on the train for Dublin.

(340)

In contrast, the play ends as follows:

IMMIGRATION MAN. Caithfidh go bhfuil sé go h-iontach
bheith saor.

BRENDAN. Caithfidh go bhfuil.

IMMIGRATION MAN. It must be wonderful to be free.

BRENDAN. It must.

(He goes. BEHAN is left alone, gazing after

BRENDAN.)

BEHAN. It must indeed...(Sings)...Is go dtéighidh
tú, a mhúirnín, slán...

Curtain

Both endings demonstrate that freedom means more than release from prison; but while the novel leaves this meaning open for interpretation, the adaptation interprets the word freedom through BRENDAN's and Charlie's relationship. I want to show how one can read this relationship as a surrogate for the first audience's relationship to the recently deceased Brendan Behan.

In line with the style of the play, BRENDAN's and Charlie's parting is rendered sentimentally, while the novel's sparse prose leaves the reader to interpret its significance

for their relationship. The novel's omission of their parting words and the brevity of the passage are notable because elsewhere the Narrator spares no words and no dialogue. The narrative's last comment on Brendan's and Charlie's relationship is the juxtaposition of their parting and the news of Charlie's death at sea. With a figure like BEHAN, the play might also have narrated the parting; instead, it adds the missing dialogue and so interprets the novel's gaps. In the novel, Charlie can't see the difference between an Irish song and a song in Irish, never mind singing himself in Irish (24-25). But the play has him sing his version of the song "The sea, oh, the sea, a ghrádh gheal mo chroíche" (115-116). Before Charlie must go, they reminisce, and BRENDAN sings softly to himself "Is go dtéighidh tú, a mhúirnín, slán" ('Walk my love, walk surely') about Bonny Prince Charlie, by who he means his friend (novel 24; play 35, 117). After the news of Charlie's death, the Narrator states explicitly that Brendan talks no more that day, but BRENDAN again sings softly to himself:

Walk, walk, walk, my own,
 Not even God can make us one,
 Now you have left me here alone.

Is go dtéighidh tú, a mhúirnín, slán. (117)

Since BEHAN's closing line is again this verse of the Bonny Prince Charlie song, I argue that the play interprets the word

freedom as life, or more precisely, safety from untimely death.

Whether the death be physical, artistic, or otherwise I leave open and stress that attributing any exact meaning to the narrative's use of the word freedom will always be only one interpretation among many. But I believe the context of the first production of the adaptation supports my interpretation of the meaning of freedom in the play. Charlie dies young as did the real Brendan Behan, and I believe the first audience of the adaptation was mourning their folk hero as BEHAN mourns his Cockney friend. In this connection, BRENDAN's and BEHAN's return to Dublin at the ending is like a returning of the recently deceased Brendan Behan to his home city. But BEHAN's triumph over untimely death is brief, because once he has sung the verse, the curtain falls. So, while BEHAN sings to Charlie (and perhaps to BRENDAN, too) the verse "Walk my love, walk surely," the audience were singing it to their Brendan Behan who succumbed to alcoholism when he was still young.

An Adaptation of Love and a Bottle

The basic scenario in Love and a Bottle is "An Irish writer comes to London," which describes the careers of nearly all Irish writers before independence as well as many after. (Today, even writers are called Irish who, because their emigrant parents saved them the trip, have been abroad all their lives.) The scenario is so familiar that I suspect that

both George Farquhar's Love and a Bottle and Declan Hughes's Love and a Bottle parody the Irish writer's way to success in London.

This alone is good reason to interpret how Hughes adapts one of Ireland's first plays to take the London stage. This adaptation intensifies its model, not only by so re-shaping and re-ordering the action sequence that a subplot becomes a framing action phase, but also by freeing the main figure Roebuck from social norms, moral codes, and literary conventions. The result is a Love and a Bottle that says and does what Farquhar's play only began to say and do. For the reasons I laid out in my interpretation of Borstal Boy, this adaptation deserves far more than a conservative assessment after the Farquhar model; but it also deserves more than a radical critique as an original work because it derives its structural complexity and accompanying intensity precisely from the ways it adapts its model.

Since my interpretation depends on close analysis of the play's structure, I must first define three terms: (1) the minor action phase is the fragmentary opening scene about Sir and Lady Shrivel; (2) the major action phase is the plots of Lovewell testing Lucinda and Leathe avenging herself on Roebuck (i.e., the play Lyrick is composing called "Love and a Bottle"); and (3) the framing action phase is Lyrick's composition of "Love and a Bottle" and Roebuck's part in that composition.

At the ending of the major action phase, the playwright Lyrick begins an embittered argument with his figures and despairs: "Oh for God's sake, no one in their right senses will pay money to put this on the stage" (286). The joke is not on Lyrick, the failed Irish playwright in London, nor on the producers and performers of Hughes's adaptation (though they would have had to chuckle not to seem insulted), but on the type of the Irish writer coming to London to make it big and, as a consequence, following only box office returns, critical approval, and public opinion. Lyrick says his play is a failure, but the action phases in which he is a dramatic figure not only have shown his failure, but continue showing him struggling with debt and with the setbacks a writer must face. We are led to believe that he may well still succeed. The framing action phase ends when Lyrick's landlady has waived collecting the rent. Alone, Lyrick says,

Well—that was easy enough. And tomorrow—no promises, mind—but tomorrow morning, we'll see about this new play of mine.

Tomorrow morning, first thing.

Slow fade to black. (289)

The play ends on the prospect of another play, but neither Lyrick nor any other figure can know of a tomorrow outside of the play they are in. For this reason I see the ending implying still one further frame to the play: the indeterminate frame surrounding any single staging of any

dramatic piece. But since Hughes's adaptation makes explicit this outermost frame, its structural layering doesn't stop here but perpetuates itself indefinitely. This reflexivity of structure I find the play's most Stage Irish feature, after the figure Roebuck.

In the introduction to the Methuen edition of his plays, Hughes describes how he projects George Farquhar's desires on the figure George Lyrick projecting his desires on the figure George Roebuck: "This gave me the play-within-a-play structure [. . .] and enabled me self-consciously to dramatise both George Lyrick's 'creation' of 'Love and a Bottle' and my rewriting of George Farquhar's Love and a Bottle" (xi). So the second frame I discover in the ending lies at some uncertain position between the real playwrights and their literary creations or, in other words, at some uncertain position between reality and fiction.

I recall my analysis of the writer figure and the Stage Irish in order to cite their importance to the involved structure of Hughes's adaptation which works like the Matryoshka doll, any one figure of which not only encloses others or is enclosed by others, but also re-appears each time in the same shape, only larger or smaller. This is a useful image for understanding adaptations because it shows the similarity between model and imitation (even that the imitation can be taken for the model), while illustrating the metonymical relation between them.

In the ways "Love and a Bottle" and the different frames cross one another, Hughes's adaptation reflects the relations I have described between the real writer, the writer figure, and the Stage Irish. So an understanding of this crossover amongst the play's action phases as well as of the ways the adaptation crosses its model, will show how Hughes's adaptation crosses real writers with dramatic figures, and so gives form to the often indeterminate writer figure. In the scenario "An Irish writer comes to London," the writer figure becomes the type of the Irish writer, and so reveals the Irish aspects of the writer and his work, of the writer and his public, and of the lines supposed to separate all three. For example, the Irish writer's self-parodying, yet self-confident attitude is expressed by the interrupted minor action phase, by the failure of "Love and a Bottle," and by the open ending to the first frame.

In Farquhar's Love and a Bottle, Lyrick and Roebuck also function on at least two levels: on the first level of significance, they participate in the action of Leante, Lovewell, and Lucinda and, on the second level of significance, they represent positions in a textual commentary of the theater. On this second level other figures, especially Leante, function in their roles as intriguers, or, from the perspective of this textual commentary, as dramatic figures who shape the course of the action sequence by plotting their own and others' parts. One either plots well or one is duped,

or, in the language of Farquhar's day, one is either Wit or Fool. The verb to plot recalls the playwright writing, through the figures and scenes of his play, a story. This meta-commentary of theater casts the intriguers as dramatic figures who act like playwrights either succeeding or failing in their roles. Very many dramatic figures of Restoration Drama act like the playwrights of those same plays because they try to construct a seamless plot of unexpected reversals expressed in the best poetic diction. This aspect of Hughes's Lovewell manifests itself when he praises himself for cleverly planning for all events: "So, I'll employ my friend to try my mistress, while his ex-whore tries his friend, myself. I say, that's really rather well-expressed. A fellow could develop a taste for all this intrigue" (234). The equivalent passage in Farquhar's play opens itself to the same interpretation:

'Tis said, one can't be a Friend and a Lover.

But opposite to that, this Plot shall

prove;

I'll serve my Friend by what assists my

Love. (2.2.398-400)

Hughes's Lovewell thinks he can intrigue, but really he is unimaginative and incapable of thinking on his feet, unlike the Irishman Roebuck (225). Lovewell's relationship to Trudge, the typical Irish serving woman, reinforces the stereotype of the unimaginative Englishman because especially her Irish charm numbs his brain and shows him the fool. He can neither

speak, so she must finish his lines, nor think for himself, so she tells him what he's to do (227, 259). Because he proves an incompetent intriguer, Brush leaves his master and follows Roebuck who, by the ending of "Love and a Bottle," thwarts everyone including, as it seems, Lyrick.

The self-consciousness with which Hughes has adapted a three hundred-year-old play becomes most evident in how the figures relish their archaic turns of phrase and exaggerate their diction. Lucinda's "la, la, la" and Leathe's excited "Because I must return. And go back also" are only two examples (264). Roebuck tells Leathe (as Lucinda's page) that the romances women read are nonsense, "'tis all turnips, boy, ay, and parsnips too" (237). Roebuck's vegetable references combine with others in the scene to form a euphemistic textual discourse on the penis. When Lucinda devours the carrot Leathe has used to trick Roebuck, the ensuing farce characterizes Lucinda as sexually hungry. The Stage Irish convention of the bedazzled Englishman falling in love with the colleen is made obvious by the way Lovewell (standing in a line of Stage Englishmen from Tom Broadbent through D'Alton's Roger Crispin to Lieutenant Yolland) adores the Irishwoman Trudge. And Hughes's Lovewell displays his awareness of both his own and Farquhar's Lovewell's lines when he comments, in the above quotation, on the diction of his own expression and (indirectly) of the respective couplet spoken by his model figure.

Hughes's figures' explicit connections to other levels of significance disclose in Farquhar's play a more veiled expression that nonetheless sustains the same interpretation. Because the adaptation interprets the model in this way, the critic can approach the model from another angle, like from the playwright's biography. This, in turn, invites a re-reading of the adaptation from the playwright's biography, and so the ways the two reflect on one another multiply. In my interpretation I will be following another such relation: how the two plays reflect on one another with respect to the history of the Stage Irishman from earliest times, through the nineteenth century, to today.

My interpretation of Hughes's Love and a Bottle will proceed in three steps. First, I will analyze the major action phase focusing on how it anticipates and influences the frames. Second, I will explicate how the first frame is meaningful to the play as an adaptation and also as a performance of the writer's vocation, especially the Irish writer's. Third, I will relate the structurally subordinate action phases to the second frame. Playing on the line between reality and fiction, the second frame epitomizes the kind of theater that through self-conscious, self-parodying performance achieves new clarity because it achieves new form. In short, Hughes's adaptation shows how being Stage Irish means one knows one is being Irish, or in the case of Love and a Bottle, being the Stage Irishman.

First, the adaptation subordinates to its frame the action sequence of Farquhar's Love and a Bottle, or all the intrigues leading to Mockmode marrying Trudge; Lovewell, Lucinda; and Roebuck, Leanthe. The structure of the adaptation is significant for the way Lyrick and Roebuck reverse the relation between the model's plot and subplot. Since adaptations show new aspects of their models by interpreting them, this structural inversion opens in the frames new space to realize potentialities that Farquhar's play only suggests.

The most important potentiality Hughes's Love and a Bottle releases is the figures' roles as intriguers or, as the model calls them, Wits. In Farquhar's Love and a Bottle, the mastermind behind every successful plot is Lovewell's sister Leanthe. The adaptation not only relegates her to the lowest structural level where she must succumb to Roebuck's upper hand in "Love and a Bottle," but, like Lovewell, she is also aware of her role as intriguer in Hughes's play about writing plays. In her first lines, Leanthe uses the vocabulary of drama and talks about her predicament as the playwright talks about dramatic figures and actions:

Faith, I could laugh. 'Tis quite the plot for a comedy. The sweet young virgin, plucked of her innocence by her ardent suitor, who then reveals himself a faithless and consummate rogue; then—she hates him hard and plots her revenge; or she loves him still and would be reconciled; or her belly

heaves and her flesh crawls to think of how he loved her so sweetly, and then left her so cruel, and the gall she tastes at the memory breaks her sleep into fits, bitter gall at dawn to make her head spin and her heart sick. Faith, I could laugh right enough.

She cries.

[. . .]

She takes out a dagger.

Terrible gleam! Why daggers are not the stuff of comedy, Madam, they betoken the tragic mode! And what style then should my drama take? Will it end in marriage or murder? And shall I act a part in it, or remain in the wings, weeping? (235)

A prime example of how Hughes's play intensifies its model, the above passage expands Farquhar's Leathe's talk of nightmares. Unlike Farquhar's Leathe, Hughes's must succumb to Roebuck because he is superior to all the other figures of "Love and a Bottle" since he stands closest to its playwright. Leathe neither knows enough nor can act determinedly enough to say how "Love and a Bottle" will end or even what part she will play in it.

Leathe's intrigue to castrate Roebuck twice fails not only because she is obsessed by a final solution to her troubles, but also because Roebuck is the better Wit. Hurt in love, she would obliterate sexuality, but she is blind to her

untenable position (an important motif also of Farquhar's play). For example, she hates Roebuck because, although sex with him was so wonderful, he could abandon her so coldheartedly; so she sees Roebuck the man as Roebuck the penis. After a carrot hidden in her pants convinces him she is a boy, she reasons the penis is "not the mark of your sex, Roebuck, but its very essence, you stand one part for the whole" (243). Leante can never achieve Roebuck's success because she misinterprets her role as intriguer and as woman. The metonymy she uses to define man is only one perspective on the sex, just as the adaptation, which stands in metonymical relation to its model, is only one perspective on that model. But Leante thinks the part represents the whole, and so mistakenly applies metaphorical reasoning where metonymical is required. She doesn't see that being male can also mean dressing, speaking, and walking like a boy, as she does to acquire the job as Lucinda's page. That her act convinces neither Roebuck well nor Brush at all, is immaterial since she thinks she knows how to play the part of a boy. Leante herself seems to be aware of her own bad acting because, when Pindress (convinced she is a boy) forces herself on her, Leante calls the action "a cheap farce" (252). Although her word choice makes her seem aware of the stage, Leante overestimates the effects of her actions. While Hughes's Love and a Bottle ends on the prospect of a new morning (i.e., a

new beginning), Leathe thinks castrating Roebuck will be "a new dawn tomorrow—an end to family, to love, to growth" (273).

Leathe's and her brother's pathetic attempts to avenge her honor and her broken heart as well as Roebuck's apathy for the others' troubles lead to his closing lines:

Good my friends, one word more—

If you will talk of love and dream,

You'll wind up grieving at the end;

But just hold love in lowest esteem,

And she'll reward you like a friend. (285)

Having brought every relationship to disaster and ruined the play's chances on the London stage, Roebuck formally concludes "Love and a Bottle" in verse. The sardonic humor of his address "my friends" shows his unconcern for anyone having suffered at his hands and shatters any "reward" they might expect from Love no matter how they act toward her. The others doubt whether he is human at all or whether his speaking name doesn't tell his animal nature. Lovewell and Trudge take him for a devil and wonder how he escapes damnation, especially when he has defied his maker. Roebuck, though, is better informed because he is aware of Lyrick's play and knows they all are neither human nor animal, but dramatic figures.

Both Roebuck's and Lyrick's unusual figural statuses argue for the second frame which onstage remains unseen. In the printed form, the second frame is the text and its structural connections to text in general as well as its post-

structural complications of the authority of the writer. It is in this connection that one can best understand Roebuck's life philosophy "Love and a Bottle, boys, and more where that came from" (213, 285). I think Hughes's title comes not only from the model, but also from Roebuck's statement, which in this form is new to the adaptation; therefore, it is very important to understanding Roebuck's role in "Love and a Bottle."

Hughes's Roebuck first speaks not the quotation from Dryden's Tyrannick Love (1.1), but "his philosophy, his joy, his motto and his cri de coeur" (213): "Love and a Bottle, boys, and more where that came from." To live according to his philosophy, Roebuck needs money, and so must prostitute himself. Lyrick, too, must prostitute himself to meet expenses in London so that he can write that first success which will free him from penury and anonymity:

One play, and a fine one, and I'd have the means to
court a wealthy woman or two, and the fame among men
for her to desire me, and the love of fine pleasures
such that only a rich she could afford me, and then,
London, with riches and regard, and a mistress or
two behind me, then, George Lyrick, your

Playwright's life could begin in earnest... (210)

In "your Playwright's life" seems to be little time for writing plays. It resembles the freedom from inhibitions and social norms that Roebuck has in Lyrick's play. The two Irishmen invade English society from opposite directions.

While Roebuck preaches to Lyrick the sanctity of immortal literature, he uses "Love and a Bottle" to have fun; and Lyrick wants to become a popular playwright in town so that he can have the same sort of fun Roebuck has in his play.

So the writer and his dramatic figure cross in ways that make it impossible to decipher who is who and, more importantly, to assign either one's speech or actions to the reality of any frame or to the fiction of any frame. Neither narrator's voice nor director's hand interposes itself between Lyrick the playwright and his creations so that the immediacy and simultaneity of the performance shows figures, performers, and playwright on a level. This action phase comes to a head in 1.4 when Roebuck crosses the line between literature and reality to face his maker and change the course of the play.

The involved structure of Hughes's adaptation is reflected in my very discussion of this and related scenes because without clear division I am led to the second step of my interpretation, in which I explicate the significance and performative aspects of the first frame.

Hughes's play begins with the minor action phase of Sir and Lady Shrivel, a brief parody of Farquhar's subplot of Mockmode. After several surprising reversals, the minor action phase ends abruptly because Lyrick has been outdone by his own work and knows not how to continue it: "[. . .] I have reversed me into a dark corner, and discovered myself a jackass. To mend the plot without losing the play, there's my

task—And on current showing, it's one to which I'm far from equal" (210). Being unequal to his task means that to succeed Lyrick must either change himself or his play. Since he doesn't want to lose the play, he must change himself, and this leads to the creation of Roebuck, or the playwright's "wished-for character" (Hughes's play 245). When Lyrick hears that the critic Mr. Well-Made has been calling his work "witless, plotless and at best a pale imitation of Mr Vanbrugh'" (212), he wants revenge on London, especially on London women because they are his key to the life he would lead, but even to talk to them he must first succeed in the theater. His avenger, Roebuck, is out of place in the Restoration Comedy Lyrick would write; a Mephistopheles or a wish-fulfillment like Miss Hilda Wangel of The Master Builder, Roebuck is an intensification of Farquhar's Roebuck.

Adaptations always raise the question whether a change can be located in the model. Usually one thinks of an imitation as slavishly or, for that matter, poorly copying its model. But I argue that Hughes's play imitates by intensifying Farquhar's Love and a Bottle in two ways. First, it reduces five acts to two and twelve scenes to seven so that with fewer curtains and set changes the figures appear onstage longer. Second, it taps unseen or unrealized potentialities of the model to give it more energy: for example, the reduction of scenes makes more weighty the fewer remaining scene endings. So Hughes's play is no "pale imitation," because it expands

the figures who show greater potential than the model gives them space to realize and it multiplies the levels of action to realize the dormant potential in the structure of Farquhar's Love and a Bottle.

Hughes's Lyrick and Roebuck are both the same as and different from Farquhar's Lyrick and Roebuck: Hughes's figures play again their parts from Farquhar's play (i.e., they play themselves), but, since they are only playing those parts, they are not themselves, but dramatic figures acting like actors. This figural relation shows how adaptations can be places of deconstruction, as the playing of a part is the deconstruction of identity, a commonplace of performance theory particularly since Jacques Derrida's essays on the Theater of Cruelty (Carlson 148-151). And it is in this way that the adaptation can show us how literature outdoes the writer by becoming, in structuralist terminology, text. The relations between writer and writing are the relations most interesting to the questions of identity I find central to much Irish drama and theater.

The empty stage between 1.3 and 1.4 marks Roebuck's adoption of his role outside "Love and a Bottle":

Enter Lyrick and Roebuck severally; Roebuck watches Lyrick.

LYRICK. This is well, this is well, all is in the ether now, and 'tis set fair to open the

catastrophe shortly. What a creation is Roebuck!

Were it a tragedy, he could get away with murder.

ROEBUCK. 'Twould certainly liven things up apace.

LYRICK. What? But you're...but how...?

ROEBUCK. For a Mr Lyrick, you're not the most smooth-tongued, are ye? I assume your bout of convulsive inarticulacy derives from the shock of one of your own characters talkin' back to ye.

LYRICK. Ay, that'd be about right. Jesus!

ROEBUCK. Perhaps it is his agency, I cannot say; perhaps your art increases in potency, (though that I doubt); most likely 'tis the vigour, aplomb and vital juice of my own raw vividness that has given me this curious new dimension. Who knows? You, clearly, are at a loss.

LYRICK. I-I-I-

ROEBUCK. Don't tell me, you feed it all into the work and have nothing left for the life, is that it? Got a bottle?

LYRICK. Ay.

He pours a couple of glasses.

ROEBUCK. You see, I'd like a break from the rigours of the plot. You haven't written me many rests, so I'll have one here. D'ye mind?

LYRICK. No, no, I, I...

ROEBUCK. Oh dear. (244-245)

Roebuck aptly describes his figural status as "this curious new dimension" because, at least within the structural limits of Hughes's play, he crosses from the work to the life and back again. In requesting a break from "the rigours of the plot," a break he has already taken, Roebuck's sarcasm emphasizes how boring Lyrick's life must be if his dramatic figure steps into it for a rest. When, later, Roebuck again uses the phrase "pale imitation" to describe Lyrick's work, Lyrick assures him he is against imitation and writes only of what he knows. "And how frightfully amusing that must be!" jeers Roebuck (245).

Lyrick's work and personal life Roebuck mocks because in neither does he find his own "vigour" and "vital juice," or as I've called it, the energy of this same adaptation by Hughes. In such speeches I hear Hughes himself praising the play he's written—and it is this aspect of the figure Roebuck, before all others, that makes him Stage Irish. To Farquhar's Lyrick's "the hero in comedy is always the Playwright's Character" (4.2.47-48) Hughes's Roebuck adds in aside "Or wished-for character" (245). Lyrick's line, more than anything else in Farquhar's play, shows this playwright's hand, and the aside in the adaptation, more than anything else in Hughes's play, shows this playwright's hand. Hughes's adaptation intensifies the line by following the model and also by showing how itself and the model implicate real playwrights in the dramatic figures. Discussing the imitation process, they perform that

same process: Roebuck is what Lyrick wishes he could be, and so he is the imitation of displaced wishes. They perform the fact that creative work has no direct relation to reality. And so the relationship between playwright and figure as well as the crossing of frame with subordinate action phases give theatrical form to central processes of literary imitation.

Although it may seem surprising that I focus on the originality of an adaptation, only avowed imitations, like Hughes's, expose the processes of imitation at work in all literature by utilizing their own interconnectedness to a textual net. I've argued that the process of adaptation is comparable to Verdichtung in dreams. The adaptation can work in the direction of the model; in the direction of the cuts and additions; in the direction of genre; in the direction of the writer of the model, the writer of the adaptation, or the writer figure; and so on. Likewise, the literary critic can approach the adaptation from all these directions, only to turn back to the model and re-interpret it through the adaptation by reversing these same interpretive moves.

Roebuck proves himself independent of his creator by persuading, "by my own design," Mrs. Bullfinch (248). At the same time, Lyrick seems more and more dependent on Roebuck since he knows not even how his play will end: "Let the Action roll this way, and let it fall out as it may!" (249). When one re-contextualizes Roebuck's closing lines to act 1, which are

direct citation from the model, one sees the figure scoffing at his playwright:

Well, let my sober thinking friend plot on, and
lay traps to catch futurity; I'm for holding fast
the present. I have got about twenty guineas in my
pocket, and while they last, the Devil take George
if he think of futurity. I'll go hand in hand with
fortune.

She is an honest, giddy, reeling Punk,
My head, her wheel, turn round, and so we
both are drunk.

Exit reeling. (249)

In place of Lovewell (the immediate referent in both plays) Roebuck now also means Lyrick, especially in his role as playwright of "Love and a Bottle." George, for instance, can refer both to Roebuck himself and to Lyrick—not to mention George Farquhar, who Hughes characterizes through his adaptation.

In his Methuen introduction, Hughes writes, "Sometimes the best way to respect the author is to ignore his 'intentions' completely" (xi). Hughes is not just granting himself the kind of license any adaptor would wish for, but is also referring to the problem with raising authorial intention to the standard of literary practice and criticism. One can ask whether literature born of personal obsessions is good, whether it will be read in centuries to come. And this raises

the question how one can interpret something that was meant only in one way. I believe that one can interpret anything any way one wishes, as long as the object really sustains the interpretation. In other words, does the work remain interesting after inspection under this perspective or does one's reading have more to say about oneself than the object at hand? "As semiotic interpreters we are not free to make meaning," writes Robert Scholes, "but we are free to find it by following the various semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic paths that lead away from the words of the text'" (qtd. in O'Sullivan 60).

If one reads Lyrick into the above passage, then the playwright thinks of "futurity" while his figure is for the present. Although this seems to confirm the priority usually granted the playwright's text, in performance the passage overrides both this and any other priority in interpretation. Roebuck becomes drunk by playing drunk, and so shows that drunk can mean more than intoxication (anyway unlikely on the real stage). A Stage Irishman becomes a Stage Irish by showing that the drunken Irish are not always what they seem. This performs the power of the stereotype to change reality through perception when, for example, the spectator concludes a drunken Irishman must be the drunken Irishman.

I am less interested, though, in what writers make of their intentions than in what literary critics make of these intentions. The critic looking for the solution to the puzzle

tries to reduce the irreducible; if one sees the end of literary criticism in finding authorial intention, one will find a bland, shallow meaning to any work. But interpretation can be more if it finds how literary form generates and re-generates meaning through the relations so created. I have argued for seeing the adaptation as one interpretation of a piece. Hughes's adaptation multiplies and vitalizes the formal relations of its model and performs this openly by stressing the parallels between George Farquhar, George Lyrick, and George Roebuck. The failure of "Love and a Bottle" performs the inadequacy of critical interpretation that views literature too narrowly because, although it is subordinated by at least two frames, Lyrick's play does succeed as the play at the center of Love and a Bottle. Hughes's adaptation generates meaning, on the one hand, through its own structural complexity and, on the other hand, through the complex relations this establishes between itself and real writers, its model, and the Stage Irishman.

Third, I will now relate my interpretation so far to the second frame and the writer figure functioning at this level. Hughes's adaptation dramatizes the relations between the writer figure and the real writer I described in Borstal Boy. That these relations are given form in Hughes's adaptation of Farquhar's well-known play as well as in Lyrick's creation of Roebuck's part make of a structural complexity something yet more complex, and so something seemingly closer to reality.

Paradoxically, it is no form of realism that comes close to reality, but a play that proclaims its unconventionality and its unfitness for the stage. This is self-praise in self-deprecation and it is a characteristic move of the Irish writer's.

Love and a Bottle by George Farquhar is adapted as Love and a Bottle (with George Farquhar). Like the two playwrights' figures Lyrick and Roebuck, the adaptation is both the same as and different from the model, as the writer figure (or here the Stage Irish) is both the same as and different from the real writer. So Farquhar becomes part of the play and, whether intentionally or unintentionally, Hughes too. The with can mean, on the one hand, that Farquhar stars in the play, that he appears (as critics have often presumed of the model) in some aspects of both Lyrick and Roebuck. On the other hand, the with can mean that Farquhar is co-writer. In the following, I will pursue the latter reading because Farquhar's role as co-writer situates him precisely at the level of the second frame where literature, performance, and reality inextricably mix.

As the figures Lyrick and Roebuck stand in greater and greater relief until nearly stepping off the stage in 1.3, the real writers become more and more implicated. As an intensifying imitation, Hughes's play wears its literariness like a badge. Hughes's adaptation, like its main figure Roebuck, has a "raw vividness" so that it appears more real

the further it pursues its own fictiveness and more fictive the more reality enters into it. The play uses precisely this crossing of the relations between reality and fiction, between the real writer and the writer figure, as well as between the dramatic figures and the actors in order to adapt its model and address the ambiguous relation Irish playwrights have had to the Irish and the stage. What Hughes intentionally or unintentionally says about himself as a successful theater practitioner in Ireland can only be supposed. His latest work, The Wrong Kind of Blood, for example, reflects this same ambiguity (although in a new medium for Hughes) in the Irish writer's stance to serious literature and popularity. The novel either transfers the American Private Eye novel to Dublin or it self-consciously narrates this very interpretation of itself through the story of Edward Loy—an Irish Irish last name—digging to find the facts about his father's murderer and finding an imposter, an actor, behind it all. The latter reading I find supported in the motif of the struggling writer in Hughes's oeuvre.

Hughes's figures' comments on the theater reveal a textual commentary of the theater at a level of significance above the major action phase. The second frame relates to the action sequence as the theater relates to the play. Through its many-layered structure of crossing action phases as well as the connections to its model and, more generally, the intertextuality of literature, Hughes's adaptation is a self-

conscious performance of the playboy Roebuck performing a playboy and the playwright Lyrick, newly arrived in London, performing an Irish playwright newly arrived in London. This Stage Irish duo of novel proportions stands in a line of Stage Irishmen who live outside society but whose speech and outlooks might be described as artistic.

In this textual commentary of the theater, Hughes's adaptation is following its model, but again by intensifying it. For example, although the Lyrick of the model makes the same complaints about the predictability of tragedy and comedy, the "emergent" aspects—in R. Williams's definition—of Farquhar's play are contained by the comedic solution of marriage. I do not argue that Farquhar's ending is artificial. According to generic form and audience expectations it seems far more natural than Hughes's. Rather I mean that Farquhar's play could have concluded otherwise and, also, that the text shows signs to this effect. Like the Leathe of the adaptation, Farquhar's Lyrick must laugh at tragedy while comedy bores him for its predictable ending in marriage, so he prefers the real comedy in the seats. That marriage is called more tragic an ending than death reverses the effects of the two genres, and so robs them of their meaningfulness.

Both Farquhar's play and Hughes's adaptation are self-consciously undecided on the head of genre because the texts' meta-generic commentaries of form and meaning extracts the plays from comedic convention. Again the adaptation

intensifies this aspect of its model by having Roebuck break every social, moral, and literary rule. When his part, though, is viewed from the level of the second frame, Roebuck is contained by the rules and conventions of the real theater. The real theater enters the action phases, for example, when Lyrick shouts, "Enough, no more! Jesus, this is truly a catastrophe! What kind of an ending is this?" (285). Actually, it isn't any kind of ending because the ending of the play is yet to come. But it also isn't any kind (i.e., type) of ending because it represents something entirely new: neither comedic nor tragic, but also not devoid of either. Catastrophe is significant because in this word intersect the different levels of the action sequence as well as the influences of the live performance and the real playhouse. Catastrophe means denouement for the major action phase (244), as in Farquhar's play when Lovewell jokes that the poet has brought the intrigue to an premature catastrophe (5.2.52). When he believes that Lyrick has changed sides in their intrigue against Mockmode, the catastrophe is a catastrophe for Lovewell and his Lucinda.

Hughes's Lyrick means by catastrophe much the same as Farquhar's Lovewell and this nonliterary use of the literary term also introduces a nonliterary aspect to these figures. Usually one imagines the writer knows what he writes. With Lyrick, though, this is not the case because of the Frankenstein's monster he has created in Roebuck. Lyrick's and

Roebuck's relationship, a seeming anomaly to the writing profession, represents the norm between writer and writing as well as the likely relationship between any struggling playwright and his creations. And since writer and writing relate to an audience or a reader, all together three positions participate in literary creation. Each of the three positions has a picture of itself and the other two, so that, for example, the writer who the audience reads into a piece needn't be the person who actually wrote it. Farquhar's Lyrick argues this when he assures Mockmode that the poet of heroic verse isn't a hero: "Sir, we stick to what we write as little as Divines to what they preach" (3.2.207-208). In the Irish context, audiences have often imagined a real writer, like Brendan Behan, to be the Roebuck he has written.

In both plays, Roebuck outwits Lyrick. But in the adaptation his victory is short-lived because the loss of "Love and a Bottle," only a setback for Lyrick, spells Roebuck's end since for the dramatic figure there is nowhere outside the play. In this way, the playhouse and the action sequence delimit Roebuck's riotous career, as they eventually do Lyrick's hopes for a better play. Only the real playwright can "begin anew in the morning" (288) because only he can write a new play. So the text makes explicit the connection the audience has been led to make between the real playwright and his figures. Hughes as playwright is working with audience expectations and with Stage-Irish conventions when he has the

Irish playwright (i.e., Lyrick) fail, but lets his dramatic creation (i.e., Roebuck) succeed wonderfully.

Lyrick's and Roebuck's final confrontation leaves the matter of their figural statuses unresolved, as the suggestion that either resembles Farquhar or Hughes is left unresolved because suggesting, or for that matter stating, something in literature doesn't make it true:

ROEBUCK. [. . .] Gad it's ripe down here. Is this what you do all day? Tie yourself up in knots, wearing last week's clothes and dreaming of next year's glory?

LYRICK. Better than destroying lives all around me like you.

ROEBUCK. Morality begod! And to your own wished-for character. What a mixed-up Little Lyrick you are.

LYRICK. Stop calling me Little Lyrick! You're not my superior. You're not even real, you don't have a life, you're a jest, a wish, a phantasm. You're my prisoner!

ROEBUCK. So why are you behaving like you're mine? You don't look particularly real to me. There's more to life than you and your play, you know.

(287)

This suggestion of the real writer in the level of the writer figure is emphasized by Hughes's own motif of "the new morning." Two years after Love and a Bottle, Rough Magic

produced in London and in Dublin his New Morning, which like Digging for Fire and Halloween Night, ends on the morning following some catastrophe. Writer and figure, reality and fiction, can finally be kept apart because the audience, like the actors and actresses, can keep performance and reality apart. This certainty about the performance of Love and a Bottle cannot, however, dispel the possibility suggested by the play that reality as we know it is a performance. After all, the very condition of theater is such that the real people who come to see a play must assume their parts as the audience, making believe as they're made to believe what they hear and see. After complaining about the "ill-natur'd" critics who begrudge the playwright every deserved success and the ignorant spectators who use the occasion of the performance for a performance of their own vanity (4.2.92), Farquhar's Lyrick concedes:

The Wit lies in their hands; and if you would tell a Poet his Fortune, you must gather it from the Palmistry of the Audience; for as nothing's ill said, but what's ill taken; so nothing's well said, but what's well taken. And between you and I, Mr. Lovewell, Poetry without these laughing Fools, were a Bell without a Clapper; an empty sounding bus'ness, good for nothing; and all we Professors might go hang our selves in the Bell-ropes. (4.2.96-103)

What Lovewell and Lyrick say just between themselves reaches also precisely those people who shouldn't hear it: the audience. This is no oversight, but a joke between playwright and audience, at the one's expense as much as at the other's. It is a celebration of theater: "We are performing to you here. Isn't it great!" Hughes's adaptation tells the same joke when Roebuck says he is Manly Hamwell of the Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin and Mrs. Bullfinch is happy finally to have met him. "'Tis well to know a reputation in the theatre," says Roebuck, "may still be made in the time it takes to coin a swift lie" (247).

When Mrs. Bullfinch believes she is out of her rent, she tells Lyrick that the critics have been condemning his work. But at the ending, flattered at being his "inspiration," she tells him how the critics have been praising his work (248). Lyrick's consternation she answers, "you can't be up to these critics now, can you?" (288). He may have taken revenge for no reason, and he's none the wiser as to how to write his first success. No, one can't be up to these critics because they only judge after the performance, so one can never know what will influence their opinion on any given production. Furthermore, they often use a hyperbolic vocabulary so that there seems to be nothing else between the sixth grade play and Shakespeare. Although Roebuck preaches a theater that doesn't heed audience and genre expectations, he does it only for selfish reasons, and so ruins the play for the stage. But

Hughes's adaptation as a whole saves Lyrick's unfinished play by embedding it in other action phases so that the writer, in disregard of the critics, can have his cake and eat it too.

Chapter 3: Entertainers

The entertainer and the turncoat are the two masks the Stage-Irish performer wears. Although I have drawn these names from Irish prominence in English comedy and from English fear of Irish renegades concealing treachery like darts in the folds of their coats, the entertainer and the turncoat also are fundamental positions the performer takes up transacting with his audience.

A concept central to this chapter and the next is Read's ethics of performance. Adhering to Richard Kearney's broad definition of ethics as a personal and social responsibility to others, Read rediscovers the audience as the performer's counterpart, equally constitutive of the theater moment. The spectators' senses, always searching out the earliest performer even before he arrives, might be said to initiate the performance since these are the principal condition of that performance (95). Again in adherence to Kearney, Read grants the audience of the fundamental act of theater numerical majority because ethics concerns, minimally, three persons: oneself, the performer, and another, who introduces the political into an otherwise dyadic, simultaneous relationship:

This entry into the political and ethical through the power of three is the privilege of theatre. There is, in the act of theatre, the performer, the audience and you, and it is this tripartite,

dialectical nature that demands distinct responses from the ensuing event. That event is quite different when undertaken between a performer and 'you' alone, entering the religious, the ritual and the therapeutic. (94)

Returning the term ethics to the Greek *ἦθος*, "disposition," Kearney refocuses ethical questions to the relations between oneself and others; that is, not to one's position, but to one's disposition. "Indeed the thinking being is no longer pre-emptive of existence, I think therefore I am, but rather I think of you therefore I might be," writes Read, and he proceeds citing Kearney:

'the ethical rapport with the face is asymmetrical in that it subordinates my existence to the other [. . .] Ethics is against nature because it forbids the murderousness of my natural will to put my existence first.' Here is distilled the dialectic of the performer's ethic: the constant interplay between the 'egological' of the individual and the 'cosmological' of the world as audience. The urge to be seen as separate but dependent upon the will of the other, the recognition of the observing eye and its relation to the 'I' of being human, the listening ear and the 'here' of the place of performance. (94)

Read finds that ethics is centered in just such a face-to-face relation as theater. "From within theatre the first ethical system to be addressed is the one it inaugurates itself—the actor's ethical relation to the space in which theatre takes its place" (96). That space is the distance separating performer from audience and audience from performer, making both what they are. Kearney's concept of ethics as disposition makes the most important question not "Who are you?" but "Where are you?" Likewise, concludes Read, most relevant to any performance is the question to the relationship between the performer and his audience. From this fundamental relationship of the act of theater arise the two diverging yet interrelated positions of the Stage Irish as a performer acting before and reacting to, in particular, an English audience: the entertainer and the turncoat.

Heavenly Bodies

Stewart Parker's Heavenly Bodies was the play for interpretation I chose most easily, but its relevance to my study goes beyond the appearances of two famous Stage Irishmen (Myles-Na-Coppaleen and Conn) and their creator Dion Boucicault. As with the other plays in my study, the dramatic form and the style of performance are necessary for any understanding of Heavenly Bodies. I will argue that these aspects are to a great extent the meaning of the play, that before plot or even dramatic figure the most important side of Heavenly Bodies is its show.

This reading influences my interpretation of the two central figures Dion Boucicault and Johnny Patterson, who both pride themselves on their entertainment careers but will not concede their irrelevancy to literature or the Irish cause. I do not argue that they were so irrelevant, rather I am illustrating how these dramatic figures, how the play, and how history cannot finally decide their places in posterity. Key to understanding their uncertain footings in the records of literature and politics are their roles as entertainers, as wearers of the clown's motley, as the privileged of the fool's license. The paradox I will be following in this chapter and the next hinges on the two masks entertainer and turncoat. In short, these apparently opposite positions, which I have associated, respectively, with the genial servant and the sinister kern, not only resemble one another but also become interchangeable when the clown lowers and the spy turns the laughing stock of his new masters. The license afforded the clown earns the audience's amused approval, but can also awake their wrath. The turncoat's intentions and actions might be of the gravest kind, but neither side takes him seriously: his own degrades him to subhuman (in the Irish context, to informer) and the other won't fund his projects nor follow his advice for fear he's a double agent.

My interpretation will proceed as follows: first, I will show how dramatic form and style of performance in Heavenly Bodies create meaning by affirming the play's own

theatricality and, second, I will take these findings into my analysis of Boucicault's and Patterson's roles as entertainers.

The triple tiered structure of the action sequence can best be compared to the narrative structure of "A Christmas Carol." First, there is the present of Boucicault's and Ebenezer Scrooge's lives. Second, come the visits of Patterson and the spirits. The visits constitute a separate level because neither Boucicault nor Scrooge can simply go back to the present the way it was and because during the visits, as that of *The Ghost of Christmas Present* demonstrates, they stand outside their present lives which continue without them. Third, there is this same level outside of which they stand: their lives in flashback or flash-forward.

Heavenly Bodies deviates importantly from this basic structure by incorporating scenes from Boucicault's plays into the flashback of his life, so that a new, fourth level opens within the third. In this way Heavenly Bodies is more comparable to the cinematic adaptation of "A Christmas Carol," Scrooged (1988; dir. Richard Donner and starring Bill Murray). Parker calls his "strategy" in Heavenly Bodies "collage" (10), an apt description of this apparent hodgepodge of scenes from Boucicault's plays, moments in his life, snippets from songs, special effects, one-liners, and dances. Because Boucicault's present, too, includes a rehearsed scene from his Faust and Marguerite, his present, past, and even his future fuse, and

so rupture the basic dramatic structure described above. The figures also contribute to this rupture when they express real-life concerns through the figures and the dialogue of the scenes. A good example occurs when Agnes (as Moya) tells Boucicault (as Conn) that her intense love could smother him as it smothered the flowers she carried in her bosom: "Won't the life go out of your love? Hadn't I better leave you where you are?" (135). Since Boucicault's and Agnes's divorce follows these lines, assigning figural intention, lines, and actions to any particular level of the action phase becomes impossible. So the basic dramatic structure ruptures under the pressure of subordinate levels of the action sequence subsuming superordinate ones, like bubbles bursting through the surface.

When Agnes accuses Boucicault of having sacrificed everyone he's ever met on the altar of his work, one significance of the convolutions in the structure becomes apparent: an entertainer's work is his life and his life will be judged by his work. Parker was fascinated by the dramatic quality of the real Boucicault's life and closely associates historical fact with dramatic scenes (Richtarik 407, 411, 418). Boucicault's identity, or better identities, are defined through his figures. His figures form the basis of his theatrical career, but he, too, is a figure who plays other figures, a metadramatic as well as metatheatrical convention effecting equivocalness of identity. Where does Boucicault

stop being Conn and start being himself? When is the farce of Boucicault's plays part of the show and when is it real life? The figure Boucicault exists in a permanent crisis of identity that reflects on the entertainer's identity on or off stage.

In this stage adaptation of Boucicault's life, role playing and masking fade the line between actor and figure to indistinctness. The levels of the flashback and Patterson's visit cross not because Boucicault plays in both, but because he plays in the scenes from his plays and because he plays himself playing himself. For example, he plays himself as a young adult playing himself as a boy (90). The performance complicates the dramatic structure because, unlike in narrative, if one actor is to play a figure, the stage cannot show simultaneously two moments in that figure's life. The play openly uses this medial difference to further stratify and complicate the figure Boucicault. His complexity is heightened again during the short action phase on Boucicault's future—he has only three days left to live—when he mistakes it for his final judgment:

BOUCICAULT. [Starting up feverishly] NO! I will not
go under!

[LOUISE THORNDYKE comes running on]

LOUISE. Dion, dearest, it's all right...

BOUCICAULT. I am not yet ready to go!

LOUISE. There's no need, you're not well, they're
not expecting you to go.

BOUCICAULT. [Looking at her amazed] What are you talking about?

LOUISE. The theatre school, of course.

[BOUCICAULT gives vent to a harsh laugh] (140)

When he recognizes his error, he mocks his own silly cowardice. Boucicault commends, even envies, moments in his life that exhibit good dramatic qualities (94, 96, 110, 115, 116, 128) and, at the ending, more shocking to him than the hole in the roof are the changes made to The Wake Scene (143). The structure and performance of Faith Healer also make impossible clear divisions between the artist's life and his work, between the actor's parts and his true self, and Frank Hardy, like Boucicault, is at odds with his public and with his art.

Although the ruptured dramatic structure takes on shape through Patterson playing Mephistopheles to Boucicault's Faust, through the formalities of a trial, and through the trappings of the game show This Is Your Life, these same three elements pull it in different directions and change its significance. What holds the collage-like dramatic structure together is the play's show. I see the show bits of the performance as preponderant over figure, plot, structure, or any other aspect; therefore, I read the play as an exercise in theatricality and, more specifically, as Boucicault's and his students' rehearsal continued from the opening as if it were the play billed Heavenly Bodies. The performative style of a

rehearsal places Heavenly Bodies in a long line of plays (such as The Rehearsal or Six Characters in Search of an Author) about producing a play.

What convinces me most of this interpretation is the frankness with which the stage is stage, the props props, and the show bits show bits. Heavenly Bodies opens, and the curtains are already up, only a worklight is switched on, and "The stage is bare except for random bits and pieces of scenery and furniture, which the drama students attached to the theatre have commandeered, for use in particular scenes and speeches on which they have been working" (79). The first exchange comprises the lines a student rehearses from Faust and Marguerite and Boucicault's censure of the student's acting. Because the diction both of the lines and Boucicault's censure are histrionic, the first exchange as well as the first scene cross the line between show and the play's reality.

Boucicault is always onstage, as he repeatedly makes clear by referring to "this" theater no matter where it might be (Madison Square, Covent Garden, or Sydney's Theatre Royal). His life was the theater, as testifies the play's recurrence to theater business and theater politics, to production and post-production, and to rehearsing and performing (107, 125-126; 100-103; 79-83, 103, 142-143). Boucicault plays himself as only an entertainer can: self-consciously dramatic. Standing on the Madison Square stage, for example, he plays

himself before an audience in that theater (83). He never misses an opportunity to declaim the roaring speech, to make the striking pose, or to stage the spectacle for all it's worth. He conquers the stage, exclaiming "This spot is mine!" (104). The sentence's unmistakable deixis locates Boucicault the actor and—if one accepts the action sequence as a rehearsal—the actor playing Boucicault as well as the real actor in Heavenly Bodies. No matter how many sides the figure may exhibit, they all come together on the stage. "To all actors, however small their roles, [Boucicault] advised: 'Always put your foot down as if to say, "This spot is mine!'"'" (Krause 47). And this is what the figure, and everyone implicated in him, does in Heavenly Bodies.

The duo Boucicault and Patterson, whose parts comprise the main action phase, are supported conspicuously by the same students from the opening now finding their dresses in "a costume trunk which is part of the stage furniture," now "simply adopting" new roles as the show demands (88, 92). Doubling is a fact of the theater, and if it is not significant in itself, it gains significance when the performance makes it an explicit aspect of the figures. Since the cast from the opening returns to play the other parts in Boucicault's life and plays and since these parts are likely those the students have been rehearsing, the action phase of Boucicault and Patterson becomes punctuated and unsettled just

as the dramatic structure is ruptured by the scenes played at its different levels.

In this way, the uppermost level of the play, namely the show Heavenly Bodies itself, structures and directs all the pieces in the collage. On the stage of Heavenly Bodies perform all the actors and all the figures in all their roles, so that the only things escaping this stage would be the previous and following productions. But even from these one cannot wholly exclude the performance of Heavenly Bodies because, first, the performative style of a rehearsal points towards future productions and, second, as it plays in a dark house where there is "No performance" (80), it actually situates itself between performances. Although Heavenly Bodies is set on a stage, like Conor McPherson's staged narrations, its stage is, in my opinion, more complex than the real stages of any of its respective performances.

The show is also more important than any other structuring device because Boucicault is more concerned about keeping it going than about evidence for his defense against the charges Patterson raises. His defense comprises scenes from his plays or moments in his life that play like scenes; in other words, it consists of keeping the show on. This explains why he's incensed at Patterson for rehearsing his songs:

BOUCICAULT. What do you mean plaguing the stage with
all that?

PATTERSON. Just practising me act. I got tired of watching yours.

BOUCICAULT. My life is the one in the balance! Yours is already consigned to limbo and you're more than welcome to return to it.

PATTERSON. Will we go, then?

BOUCICAULT. As it happens, I'm only just getting started. (103)

Throughout the play Boucicault tries to keep Patterson (and the audience) entertained, so that, toward the ending when he requests *The Wake Scene*, Patterson shouts impatiently,

Ah, merciful jaysus, not another scene from a play...

BOUCICAULT. All the accoutrements are in place, it won't detain you more than a minute. (141)

Boucicault sounds like his students when he cancels class: "I have a speech by heart! We have a scene prepared!" (80). He also recalls the stage and props that, with him and the other figures/actors, are the conditions of performance. In short, he tells Patterson that the stage is set and we are ready, so let's give it a go.

When one views the concluding fiasco from this aspect, one accepts for insignificant the technical failure that brings it to a crashing end as one would accept the same in a real production. Notwithstanding, a rehearsal is always experimental and if the stage machinery should break down, it

might well mean that a technical limit has been reached, as the real Boucicault had pushed his stage productions to heights that only the new medium of film would be capable of attaining (Gibbons 220-221).

Performing a real production as if it were a rehearsal declares, "This is theater," just as Boucicault (or the actor playing this figure) claims the London stage, "This spot is mine." Taken literally, the deixis points to the stage of the particular performance. This stage, and not the pages of history or the agendas of political factions, is Boucicault's spot and, as I presently will argue, it is a place outside of politics and history, where Ireland's conflicts might finally be laid to rest. Beforehand, I must explicate the role of entertainer and how Boucicault plays this role.

A self-proclaimed show about staging sensation, melodrama, comedy, and spectacle, Heavenly Bodies presents Boucicault as he was, not because it is about him, but because it is theater and, thus, it is him. No matter what verdict the ending reads, Boucicault has already been consigned to that "little limbo" Patterson speaks of because, apart from the odd exception, an audience today on seeing Heavenly Bodies either learns of him or remembers about him, but either way he is no longer famous. Again, if we accept the performance as a rehearsal, the actors/figures practicing on a stage capture the contradictions and inconsistencies of Boucicault's career,

and so they perform the unenviable, yet captivating role of the entertainer.

Although the founders of the Abbey Theatre took his Irish figures to be the epitome "of buffoonery and of easy sentiment," Boucicault actually saw himself in a fight against the derogatory image of the Stage Irishman. Literary critics have begun re-assessing Boucicault's social engagement in a more positive light (Watt; Cave; Richtarik 406; Duncan), while playwrights like Sean O'Casey, Brian Friel, and Frank McGuinness have paid their tributes to this man of the theater (Winkler 70-73; Edwards 111; Richtarik 405-406). For the 1986 production of Heavenly Bodies, Parker wrote,

[Boucicault] was a fervent Irish nationalist who was Queen Victoria's favorite playwright. He was a flagrant plagiarist who pioneered the law of copyright. He was a showman and shaman, a conman and craftsman, a charlatan and champion. Or what we now call—a star. (Richtarik 407)

In the play, Boucicault's name is perched between two opposing positions. On the one side, his productions on the stages of the world have won him international fame. On the other side, with each success he takes one step further from his home Ireland because celebrity with the Anglo-American public means betrayal of the country who suffered from the colonial mismanagement that was the Great Hunger. Boucicault's is a lose-lose situation, but he strives for unbroken success

while asserting his integrity through "his fidelity to his native country" (Richtarik 412). This point I will be taking as the focus of my examination of the two figures Boucicault and Patterson, but first I will explicate two ways that form and the style of performance give expression to the warring dichotomies within the role of the entertainer.

First, I begin with the title. The word stars is avoided through the periphrasis heavenly bodies, repeated once in reverse as "earthly stars" (115). These two-word phrases for the one person (i.e., the star) capture the pull rending Boucicault, the one part aspiring upward to fame, the other weighing him down in obscurity. The plural of the title indicates that Boucicault's case is not unique, but that the entertainer, or for that matter the artist, must have an audience for his work to have any meaning. This dichotomy between heaven and earth repeats in the proxemics and kinesics of scenography and figures.

Through act 1 Boucicault's successes and failures are reflected in the actor's positioning and movements. Seated in a wheelchair, the aging Boucicault makes ends meet by giving acting lessons. He stands, only to stumble and fall in the throes of the heart attack that will lead to his death. After initial success on the London stage, he flees to New York to escape a hostile father-in-law and to rise again out of the slump he has been bridging by plagiarizing French melodramas.

At a low point of his career he faints and is taken down the trap to close the act.

His re-ascension on the trap at the opening of act 2 marks his success The Poor of New York, while the failures of his late career are signaled when he kneels and lies down. He even thinks in terms of up and down, as, for instance, when he hears the lyric

There is a certain spot of ground
It makes a dawning hill,
And from below the voice comes out
I cannot keep it still...

and starts up shouting "NO! I will not go under!" (140). In this way the positioning and movements of the actor combine into the crests and troughs of Boucicault's successes and failures until the ending.

Boucicault's catafalque is being lifted when suddenly rain pours through the roof and everything flickers, crackles, and stops. The confused state of the props and the erratic movements of actors and machinery reflect the ambivalence of Boucicault's name. The performance makes the most of the show bits in Boucicault's ascension and, like Conn asking the audience to go bail for him once more, calculates the applause after the production as well as the actors' re-appearance onstage. In this way the avowed show bits achieve a final upward movement to mark Boucicault's last success: his own spectacular funeral, or to use Joyce's neologism, his

"funferal." If the ending really is just a show and if it really is fun for all, then the audience is left laughing not at but with Boucicault, who remains the crowd-pleaser right up to the bitter end.

The dichotomies "heaven/earth," "star/nobody," and "up/down" that the language and the performance express open the way to another dichotomy couched in the play's religious motifs: "soul/body."

The most important thing Boucicault has to teach his prize student Jessie McDermot is that in show business power and fame demand not just sacrifice of her body, but "possession of your immortal soul" (82). This re-visits the Faust motif introduced at the opening when a student plays Boucicault's Faust conjuring Satan to his aid. The Faust motif structures the action sequence that is largely comprised of the dialogues between Boucicault and "the infernal ringmaster," Patterson (87; cf. Richtarik 408). On "PATTERSON's bent back" Boucicault signs the contract that, as he puts it, sells him "into perdition" (108), a stark scene not without sarcasm because it recalls the businessmen of Wall Street and the City signing away millions between meetings and luncheons. Like Faust after gaining the knowledge of this world, Boucicault aspires to immortality: "a place in posterity" (85). But also like Faust, the earth and the body check his efforts so that he transcends neither natural death nor death to the entertainer, obscurity.

A second, related religious motif crystalizes around the allusive comparisons of Boucicault to Jesus. On the day he will survive a heart attack and perform The Wake Scene, in which Conn seems to rise from the dead, Boucicault complains that it has been raining "for three godforsaken days now" (80). The secondary text indicates, though, the exact time of the action: "September 16th, 1890. Morning," or the third day before his death. In similar fashion the rest of the comparisons make rather a running gag than an important parallel in character between the two. For example, Boucicault reviles the critics:

[. . .] They crucified me!

PATTERSON. Excuse me, but that would have put you in a different league altogether. (106)

The word transfiguration, used twice in the text, carries religious overtones made explicit when Patterson tells Boucicault that he's being buried from the Church of the Transfiguration. This too becomes a joke as Boucicault asks about the "turnout" at his own funeral and Patterson calls the service a "matinee" (144). The figures tell the audience that the funeral is a show and that this place is not a church or a courtroom or a game show studio, but all three and none, as only a stage can be. The word transfiguration becomes mere verbal wit, even in reference to the Transfiguration when Jesus's "face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light" (Matt. 17.1-9), or as we might say today, when

he became a superstar. In the hope that legitimacy of birth might also give legitimacy to his artistic aspirations, Boucicault is supplicant for his chosen father's blessing. With his back to Boucicault, Patterson wears Samuel's dress when he suddenly turns a skull mask to the terrified son and roars God's blessing on Jesus at the Transfiguration: "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased—HEAR YE HIM!" (112; Matt. 17.5). The words of God and the symbol of theater (i.e., the mask) become in Patterson's hands a practical joke good for speeding up the show. This is the clown's irreverent humor.

Because of the play's reflexive show character, a second meaning of transfiguration comes to bear: change in outward appearance, as opposed to real change. This sense of transfiguration describes the illusion of theater where the actor appears differently from who he is, just as an entertainer like Boucicault takes on the character of his own dramatic creations or, what in his case amounts to much the same thing, his dramatic creations adopt his personality. Like the structural ruptures I've described, the mistakes made over Boucicault's pseudonym and his real name demonstrate the tenuous line dividing life from the entertainer's work. After getting a hearing at Covent Garden because the doorman mistakes Lee Moreton for the real playwright Maddison Morton, Boucicault tells his real name to the actor Charles Matthews, who replies, "Aha, you have adopted a fancy stage name, isn't

it rather a mouthful, though? never mind, dear boy, it certainly sounds more theatrical than Charles Matthews, what?" (99). Like the comparisons to Jesus, this incident parodies the ways life and work have crossed in Boucicault's career.

Boucicault's name proves to be a real show-stopper when Patterson can't begin the flashback until it has been explained. He is amused by its relevance to Boucicault's stage career and personality and he interprets it as if it were a speaking name: "You're half a god and half a goat, by the sound of it" (86). Patterson's own name, by the way, is similarly relevant since his glib, rapid speech and his one-liners or, in a word, his patter comprise the greater part of his speech. Like Sandra's standup, his are the clown's jokes which hinge on stereotypes.

Second, I turn to two idioms whose forms contribute to my understanding of the ending: to be as right as rain and to leave someone high and dry.

Following his cruel practical joke, Patterson tries to make good with Boucicault by protesting he meant no harm and, anyway, "You're as right as rain again" (115). Boucicault sulkily retorts, "I do not consider rain to be the epitome of rightness" (115). Their repartee underscores the rain hitting the New York theater's roof and recurring as a topic of the conversation. The rain preoccupies Boucicault during drama class so that he employs his most theatrical-or biblical-diction to refer to the pealing thunder, the godforsaken days,

and the rising flood before saying, "Listen to it. A flood coming on the land, what does it portend?" (80). The action phase comes full circle when at the ending he is again preoccupied by the steady rain, and his question above echoes in his question to Molineux's announcement at the end of Conn's wake, "What did he mean?" (143). Seen in this connection, one might almost have predicted the fiasco caused by the stage machinery ripping a hole in the roof so that the rain pours in. But more important is the significance the idiom to be as right as rain develops when combined with the other in discussion.

Boucicault repeats the idiom to leave someone high and dry in two parallel constructed action phases in which he praises his innovation of cutting the exit line and leaving the actor at the audience's mercy. Without this exit line, actors of the older generation were lost or, like the stranded vessels of the idiom Boucicault is using, were left high and dry. Since he is playing to a dark house and any real audience of Heavenly Bodies will not know of him, this innovation comes back to haunt him. Again the ending might have been foreseen if one had calculated that Boucicault's Conn just wouldn't win the audience like he used to, but I turn rather to my interpretation of the two idioms in combination.

If one views the alliteration in right as rain together with the rhyme in high and dry, one has a poetic impossibility because for the beginnings and endings of two words to sound

alike they would have to be identical, thus making them not two words, but one. As to the meaning of these idioms, Boucicault demands his rights by requesting an appeal to his case and he is convinced that his "star" has been kept from "its rightful ascendancy" (125). But since he refuses to see rain as right and since "high and dry" would leave him stranded in front of an audience who doesn't know of him, Boucicault must regain his stardom some other way than wet, dry, low, or high. In other words, if Boucicault is to achieve with posterity the fame he enjoyed during his lifetime, then the ending will have to combine what neither words nor sense can, and this, I argue, it does by borrowing from the circus clown act where anything goes, where solemnity and laughter, wet and dry, up and down can co-exist.

As I've stressed, the ending is best understood as a show bit, either a rehearsal gone wrong or the performance of a botched rehearsal, because only the illusion of the stage can combine the starry heavens with a three days' rain and package it as raucous entertainment. And only the stage can capture the whole entertainer because he is whole only on the stage. Patterson asks whether entertainers like Boucicault have homes, "Apart from centre stage with the bright light on you?" (139) and Heavenly Bodies answers no. With theatricality the play celebrates the theatricality of Boucicault's life and work and it shows the stage for what it is: the stage. Like the fool's motley that I will presently discuss, the stage is

the location of show, of illusion, of the unreal world, which in the theater takes up a position between fiction and reality. In "The Truth of Masks," Wilde discriminates the two when he writes that theater "can combine in one exquisite presentation the illusion of actual life with the wonder of the unreal world" (1068).

Although the stage of Heavenly Bodies pretends to be a courtroom, no verdict is read; although it pretends to be a church, no judgment on right or wrong is passed; therefore, the stage is the place for factions to meet and reconcile their differences. It is in this spirit, I believe, that Parker entitles the edition of Northern Star, Heavenly Bodies, and Pentecost Three Plays for Ireland because these plays should help the North and the South to move from the past of their conflict to make their way "onto the stage of history and from thence into the future tense" (10). The "stage of history" is the stage of history plays, as Parker labels all three in the edition, and (as the excerpt from Parker's introduction attests) it is a leg of Ireland's journey to a peaceful future. So Heavenly Bodies celebrates the stage not only to show the entertainer as he must be shown, but also to identify the one place where everyone can agree that Ireland has nothing to fight about.

The cumulative effect of Heavenly Bodies is to demonstrate that the theater qua theater stands on the threshold of the normal, of the realities of economics and

politics, of the everyday. But the threshold is not outside of these, rather it is situated at a crossing whose liminality gives to the theater privileged status in the matters of the world and to the performer a place of limitless possibilities: the stage.

Now I turn to my analysis of the figures Boucicault and Patterson by which I aim to support my argument that Heavenly Bodies positions itself outside the politics of divided Ireland in order to give the factions a place to settle their differences and move on.

An affinity applies for "Paddy the Clown" (as Patterson calls himself), "a licensed song and dance man for the British Empire" (as Boucicault calls himself), the fool, the jester, the trickster, or any other names the type goes by. Alan Harrison's The Irish Trickster pays testimony to this affinity:

The fool in his various manifestations from primitive society, through medieval literature and popular customs to modern slapstick comedy is sometimes nearly divine, sometimes positively sub-human. He can be the one who emphasizes wrongs through his satire of the social order and he can be the scapegoat who is sacrificed on behalf of that same social order. Like others, I have often been frustrated by the quicksilver quality of the fool and by his tendency to move in and out past the

boundaries of accepted behaviour. He exists in human society but also in the unknown world outside and by his passage between the two he can help to establish the boundaries between them and increase the area of human knowledge and behaviour. This quality has been called 'liminality' (from the Latin limen = threshold) by scholars and its application to the fool/trickster can help us to understand the universal phenomenon that he embodies. (21)

Since the trickster does not always win in contests nor profit from his tricks, the fool's motley might allow him to stand outside societal norms but only in the ways his predetermined role permits, like the gendered subject in Butler's concept of performativity. And since he has not the rights of a normal citizen, the license granted him can swiftly be revoked. Highest privilege and utter dependency characterize his place in society. The turncoat's place is similarly precarious because his act of treason is worthy of the other side's highest respect, but at the same time it is a betrayal of his own side and so begs the question "Is he just fooling us, too?" The clown, on the other hand, may be the epitome of funniness, but society is taking him seriously when his acts must be sanctioned or when they provoke violence, as in Patterson's, Maureen's (Clowns), and Frank Hardy's cases. Sometimes the clown's part deviates so obviously from the usual imitation of his type that the audience begins to wonder

if they understand his intentions, and precisely this doubt makes the delinquent clown sinister.

Patterson tells how he first performed his best remembered song "The Garden Where the Praties Grow" in Liverpool during the 1860s. The refugees from the Famine, many still speaking only Irish, had not long been in England and this Irish Singing Clown takes the stage to sing about the girl he met in the garden where the praties grow. A tough act. "I sang on to the end," recalls Patterson, "and I heard neither laughter nor jeers, but a long low moan—the keen of grief for the phantom generations with us there in the tent—and I felt the humility and privilege of my clown's motley, and was proud" (114). Then, the band resumes the tune and, as the secondary text indicates, Patterson goes into "Full performance" of the song (114).

His career ended, with his life, at the first performance of his song "Do Your Best for One Another," meaning the most plausible end to Ireland's troubles lay in the factions reconciling their differences by doing their best for one another. "You have to be a real clown," sneers Boucicault, "to believe in that" (81). This I read as Parker's self-laughter and, perhaps, self-criticism because "Do Your Best for One Another" is his, not the real Patterson's, and this first performance of it in Heavenly Bodies is a wry invitation to the audience to decide for themselves how they will react. Parker is playing the fool with his audience through his own

figure, and so, before any figure or actor in Heavenly Bodies, he adopts the part of Paddy the Clown. And this is about as Stage Irish as it comes!

I think that Parker is similarly free with his figure Boucicault's "royal licence" from the Queen (125). Boucicault's strong resentment of Victorian tastes in theater, reflected in his epithet "the beast" for the theater-going public, drives him to seek revenge on England who has "made a mockery of all my aspirations" and "denied my star its rightful ascendancy" (125). He avenges himself by that same mockery, so he plays the fool with the public and, following the scenes from The Colleen Bawn, even with Queen Victoria. As I argued with Hughes's Love and a Bottle, authorial intention, an indeterminable factor in its own right, is never a key to understanding the larger significance of a piece of literature. Notwithstanding, I find that Parker here is doing a piece of revisionist criticism by showing how those who place Boucicault's work in the service of the Republican cause (as The Field Day Anthology does by placing an excerpt from Arrah-Na-Pogue in the section "Political Writings and Speeches 1850-1918") reduce art to a political tool. Whether that art is good or bad, lasting or transient, is immaterial because on one level all art is art, and Boucicault's oeuvre is art.

Parker does exploit the satirical potential of the exchange between Boucicault/Conn and the Queen to criticize the Tories of his day. Although Parker's idea for Heavenly

Bodies stems from 1976, it was not till the mid-eighties that he saw a connection between the materialism, sentimentality, and brutality of his own age and that of Boucicault's, "which continues to haunt and meddle with our own world, having enjoyed a whole new resurgence of its values in the course of the Thatcherite eighties" (qtd. in Richtarik 412). Through Queen Victoria, Parker caricatures Margaret Thatcher as an insensate, pompous monarch commending her favorite poet of the stage: "You show us our Irish subjects in the manner that renders them the most beloved to us" (124). Even more biting are Boucicault's/Conn's indecencies towards the royal couple and, after being adroitly maneuvered into the part of Eily, the Queen's/Thatcher's lines beginning "I'm only a poor simple girl" (124).

But Heavenly Bodies is no satire, rather it is self-proclaimed theater, theatrical theater. As such Heavenly Bodies resembles Boucicault's plays, which anyway comprise much of its performance time. Boucicault and his plays are not the means to stating some message but are staged so that one sees all the sides to his life and work and so that these, in turn, appear in a form and a place most congenial to what they are: theater.

Boucicault is on trial over the integrity of his career and his life's work; his life, as he says using a legal metaphor, hangs in the balance (103). Between the play scenes, the moments in his life, and the show bits, he and Patterson

argue in stichomythic fashion about his case. The charges Patterson hurls at him are many and serious: he is an adulterer's son and, like Lardner, "a wizard of applied science" as well as a womanizer (120); his "dubious paternity" and that of his plays are reflected in his ruthless business side, "a walking testimonial to those values which have made our Victorian Age a golden one—plunder, greed, hypocrisy, cynicism, pious self-righteousness..." (132-133); he charms and flatters the public he resents for loving the melodramatic sensations he turns out and for not recognizing the Shakespeare he would aspire to be; and—most damning of all—he sells Ireland to buy his international success:

PATTERSON. [. . .] you conjured up a never-never emerald island, fake heroics and mettlesome beauties and villains made of pasteboard, outwitted through eternity by the bogus grinning peasant rogue as only you could play him—with the blather and codology and the gaslight moonshine.

BOUCICAULT. People need laughter and lyricism, reassurances, why not?—a sweet dream to drive out the nightmares, who the blazes are you to talk, you offered them the same thing!

[PATTERSON slowly smiles]

PATTERSON. There you are, now. You and me both.

Paddy the Clown. Will we call it a day?

BOUCICAULT. NO!

[He falls to his knees] (134)

Immediately after Boucicault lets slip this self-accusation, its full weight and significance become clear in his and Agnes's parting words. Betrayed countless times by her husband and dedicated before all others to his work, Agnes stops loving him. Boucicault then wants them to separate, to be free to run their own lives, and she bursts,

Free...you're not free, never can be free, Dion.

You've spent your whole career pitting yourself against the Age, fulminating against it...when all the time the savagery of the Age was concentrated in you, every life you have ever touched has been a victim of it, sacrificed on the altar of your work...but surely [you] know your plays will amount to little more than breaking wind in a stiff breeze, at the end of all, that your last and worst victim is you yourself, Dion? Because the truth is, you are the Age. It's all there is to you. (136)

She exposes Boucicault's conflicts with the public, with the critics, with the meanness of the age for the projections that they are. Her accusation "you are the Age" splits the figure Boucicault in two, so that his whole case has been a fulminating against himself.

As we have seen in Borstal Boy and Love and a Bottle and will see in the plays of this and following chapters, as one sees in so many plays from Philadelphia, Here I Come! to Donal

O'Kelly's one-person shows, the split personality recurs on the Irish stage. One reason for the prevalence of this performative technique in Irish theater is that the Stage Irish habitually use it since it epitomizes the state of the performing self trying desperately to perform itself. For me, this captures what over one hundred years of Irish theater has been trying to do: put the Irish onstage.

Boucicault's case seems at this point lost, but the open ending because of the dramatic structure, the word choice, and the performance disallows a clear decision for or against him. The very motif of the trial comes into question when one examines the choice and usage of legal words.

The action phase immediately preceding the concluding show bit is with small deviation a citation of Conn's wake from The Shaughraun. On entering, Captain Molineux announces to the baffled mourners,

If any words could put life into him, I came here to speak them. A reprieve has been granted! A heavenly abode is prepared for him in spite of all!

[A moment's silence, then they all burst out cheering and carry MOLINEUX off on their shoulders]

BOUCICAULT. [Sitting up] I never wrote that. What did he mean?

PATTERSON. I assume you're still hell-bent on being counted amongst the angels?

BOUCICAULT. Appeal dismissed was the verdict, as I understood it.

PATTERSON. Ah, I'm prepared to stretch a point. It was a tidy little scene all right, that wake, I'll grant you that. (143-144)

The key lines here are Boucicault's perplexed "I never wrote that. What did he mean?" Boucicault actually didn't write Molineux's closing lines, which in The Shaughraun run as follows: "If any words could put life into him, I came here to speak them. (Music.) Robert Ffolliott has been pardoned and has returned home a free man" (Boucicault 229). But in Heavenly Bodies, Molineux's words and the others' reaction raise many questions. Why the silent pause if it's good news Molineux brings? Have the actors missed their cues? If Molineux is speaking about Boucicault, why do they carry Molineux off instead of staying to cheer Boucicault? All in all, one might argue that the action phase has the appearance of a rehearsal, but more important is Boucicault's own reaction to Molineux's words.

This is the first time Boucicault is at a complete loss as to what will happen next because the action phase stems neither from his life nor his plays. Not only does Patterson's practical joke at the ending of act 1, for example, turn out to be harmless fun, but even then Boucicault wakes and knows he is being taken down by the trap. And his question "What does this rain portend?" is best read, like the entire opening

action phase leading up to his heart attack, as self-important histrionics. At the ending, though, he asks clearly and succinctly "What did he mean?" and it's an impossible question for him, Patterson, and probably even the other figures, as it certainly is for the real performers and audience.

Molineux's words in the original have a straightforward meaning: Robert Ffolliot has been pardoned. But in Heavenly Bodies he uses "reprieve," which is, at best, the postponement of judgment, but usually the postponement of a death sentence. Patterson taunts Boucicault with the prospect of a reprieve when he emphasizes that they will reprise not reprieve his case. Since he answers Boucicault's "What did he mean?" with his own question, Patterson, too, is uncertain what to make of Molineux's use of the word, and in the end he concedes Boucicault's defense in the case and grants him what is tantamount to an acquittal. Boucicault himself interprets the verdict as "appeal dismissed," which may be understood as either rejection or discontinuance of the appeal, but either way the charges against him still stand.

If I seem to be belaboring a point, one must remember the important place words have in Boucicault's life, in his career, in his work, and especially in this final judgment on him. Molineux comes to speak words that will raise Conn from the dead. Patterson suggests that Boucicault's life "was all just words and pieces of paper" (138), an apt description of a man who wrote nigh on two hundred plays, battled the press,

went through the courts, and pioneered playwrights' copyright. It is also an apt description of the actor's work because the script is his part and the lines get him on and off the stage. Just such an exit line Boucicault desperately seeks, but the words won't come. This explains his final request to play Conn at his wake because he hopes then that something will happen. But as I've demonstrated, nothing does happen because the words for something to happen (i.e., a clear verdict) are missing; he hasn't the words to get him off the charges raised against him or even off the stage.

Words also expose Patterson as an inept and unworthy judge of Boucicault's case. With the same expressions, Boucicault describes the dark house ("Stench. Dank. The sweet, sickly breath of a dark house," 80) and Patterson the potato blight ("Growing up with the same stench. Sweet sickly breath on the land," 103). So the text deflates Patterson's pretensions, and Boucicault is right when he calls him a "peasant snob" because he thinks that small success means loyalty to the Irish (104). Patterson, his friend from the side show act *The Living Skeleton*, and Boucicault profited from Ireland by using the sufferings of the Irish for their shows. Here to make the distinction between true clown and false clown, as Patterson tries (104), is as unhelpful as the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate theaters, not to mention as incomprehensible considering the fare of sensation, spectacle, and song in the legitimate theaters of

the nineteenth century. Likewise, Sandra's standup meets others' disapproval because it, too, profits from poverty, violence, and death in Ireland.

Besides, the verdict in court is always the matter of one small word: guilty or not guilty. This clarity missing in the verdict on Boucicault's case challenges the audience and critics to interpret the play. "What does it mean?" we should ask, all the while knowing that there is no answer.

These details of word choice and usage as well as the performative style of the ending demonstrate the irreducibility of art. More than a stance on the political issues of Northern Ireland, Parker's Three Plays for Ireland are defenses against the simple politicization of theater while staking ground beyond the two factions' territories so that people can meet, think, feel, and, not least, laugh. For this reason the plays are for instead of about Ireland, because Parker is giving Ireland the plays as a gift, not as a lesson or an agenda. After the fiasco of Boucicault's ascension, Patterson's expletive "Ah, holy God, isn't that just typical?" (144) is best understood as a rhetoric question. Yes, that is just typical of comedy to end such weighty matters on song and a show.

Clowns

"All the greatest influences on my life were women—" Christina Reid, one-time writer-in-residence at the Lyric Theatre (Belfast), has said in interview, "women talking,

telling stories and jokes, all the sort of uninhibited humour that happens where there are no men about" (qtd. in McDonough 300). It is plain to see that Reid has brought to the often patriarchal business of the theater a woman's perspective on the patriarchal society of Protestant Northern Ireland. While Carla J. McDonough rightly criticizes the dearth of studies on Reid's plays (306), I believe such studies would be better left undone if they only established her name as representative of Protestant Northern Irish women's drama. This label will never fit her plays. The "bevy of strong-minded young women" who McDonough sees Reid giving Northern Irish drama (306) is just one single point in her broad and deep art of theater.

If her renowned Joyriders has been praised for its unflinching social realism, this praise is qualified by its sequel Clowns which compels us to reconsider both plays' merits. Although the action sequence coincides with the IRA's and the Loyalists' cease-fires of 1994, Clowns is not a veiled sociopolitical statement, nor is it escapism since violence and suffering not only make the figures' backgrounds but also motivate their actions. The figures' personal histories, the reversals in plot, and the jokes about the Troubles change the play from tragedy to comedy, back to tragedy, and so on, until the positions and very foundations of conflict become utterly disoriented.

The real events of the mid-1990s, though, do resonate in the text's opposition of the cease-fires to true change in the Northern Irish conflict. A cease-fire means a stop to an ongoing conflict, and so is a compound noun that tries to bring together dissonant concepts. But either substituting a cessation of the violence for a continuance or making an end of something already beginning again, changes nothing because the two factions remain irreconcilably opposed to one another. The emphatic prolepsis of Maureen's death in Joyriders demonstrates how beginnings contain their own endings and how the cease-fires announced in the sequel will have their own sequels in the re-emergence of violence. But, in Clowns, the endings of act 1 and 2.1 with Arthur's and Iris's quarrel, Sandra's and Maureen's shouting, the gunfire in the street, and Sandra's self-discovery build a quick succession of climaxes in the action sequence that make the beginning of the cease-fire an anticlimax. When Sandra exits before they can celebrate, the scene changes and the cease-fire begins unnoticed by the figures who have already seen so much. The bullet holes in the shopping center symbolize the broken promises of the cease-fire, just as drug dealers, like Johnnie, or those paying tributes to the terrorists, like Arthur, are proof that this is "an unperfect peace" (cf. Bittner and Knoll).

Sandra is correct in viewing the Loyalists' cease-fire as aggression rather than as an honest attempt at changing

things: "You see freedom fighters? They're all the same. They couldn't see green cheese but they'd want a bit" (343).

Freedom fighters, as all fanatics, appear so inhuman because they speak and act not according to what they want, but what they don't want. Since they formulate their goals negatively, fanatics will give not only anything, but everything to achieve them. Irish nationalists have always seen in England's difficulty, Ireland's opportunity; in England's enemy, Ireland's ally.

At the ending of Joyriders, shortly before emigrating, Sandra thinks the same way: "You know what the big trick in this life is? It's knowin' what ye don't want, an' I don't want to be a back-seat joyrider, content to sit and giggle behind the fellas who do the stealin' an' the drivin'" (175). Just as joyriding "stopped bein' funny the day the Brits stopped shoutin' halt an' opened fire" (156), so does Sandra's new joyriding as a stand-up comedian stop being funny when she dangerously approaches insanity. She learns that "this life," (i.e., life in Belfast) is not all there is and that—also as yet something unfamiliar to her—life is not just about joyriding, but can be more meaningful and serious.

To read in Clowns a message on the politics and economics of the Northern Irish conflict or, in other words, to read it as political theater would be to miss the fact that it is a play. "I think labels diminish good art," Reid has said, "I don't make political statements, I present words and images

that are open to interpretation" (qtd. in McDonough 302). As art, Clowns is neither political nor anything else but artistic; and like artistic form in general, it is the location of change, or as Wilde writes in "The Truth of Masks," "A Truth in art is that whose contradictory is also true" (1078). At the opening of Clowns, Sandra returns to Belfast the same person as the day she left, but by midnight she has changed. This drastic, yet complex development of figure is the point at which the real events of the Troubles and the two plays most directly connect.

In my interpretation, I will be analyzing the figure Sandra in order to demonstrate how theater resources and conventions bring about her change, on the one hand, by distancing the play from the real events of the 1990s and, on the other hand, by providing Northern Ireland with a model of the development necessary to resolve the conflict. Sandra's job as comedian makes her an exemplary entertainer, and it is through the role of entertainer that one can best understand the complications in the structure, in the figures, and in the performance of Clowns as well as the play's relation to the prequel Joyriders.

Before pursuing this line of argument, I will consider two action phases that do imply a real event of the 1990s: the devastation of London's Docklands on 9 February 1996, by which the IRA returned to their violent campaign to win the North. One month before opening night, the premise of Clowns seemed

to be removed, and one might even posit that some of the exchanges as well as the concluding action phase in London had been added to make amends. But this would mean reading the play too literally, as if our appreciation of it depended on the latest reports and findings of journalists. Whether the two action phases are later additions or not, the time of their first production influences how the actors would have played them, how the audience would have received them, and how even someone at my remove from the production should read them.

The first action phase under consideration is when Sandra explains why a terrorist attack in London is always more effective than anything either side could do in the Republic or Northern Ireland:

TOMMY. And you used to laugh at me when I talked politics.

SANDRA. You talked shite.

ARTHUR. Yer both talkin' history. It ends at midnight.

TOMMY. Says one side only. A cease-fire is only a cease-fire if both sides stop firin'.

ARTHUR. It's all over, bar the shoutin'...

TOMMY. It started with shoutin'...

SANDRA. If it ends...if, after twenty-five years the British government stop mouthin' and start talkin', it won't be because more than three

thousand people have died here. It won't even be because a handful of their own have died over there. It'll be because the IRA have shattered a lot of glass in the City of London and interrupted business on the Stock Exchange. (308-309)

The IRA attack Sandra hypothesizes sounds like the Docklands attack which may not have been the bloodiest, but was one of the costliest. More than an anachronistic reference to events surrounding the first production, Sandra's view of the cease-fire is consistent with how the text handles the Northern Irish conflict. The factions' political and military aims concern people only in so far as it is permissible to kill to achieve those aims. So neither side accounts for people's lives, never mind their needs and wishes, and never mind at all changes in their needs and wishes. The factious violence of the Northern Irish conflict admits no change in any real sense of the word, so that the periodic starts and stops of either side's campaign are like the attacks and retreats of two armies stuck in the trenches. Because their aims are negative, their efforts must result in stagnancy.

The conversation reflects this result when Tommy interrupts Arthur; Sandra, Tommy; and she, herself. When Tommy tries to define cease-fire, the text calls attention to its own attempts at defining it and, since the play provides no definitive answer, challenges us to try the same. A cease-fire, separately or mutually, contributes nothing to a

resolution to the conflict because there will still be shouting and since it all began with shouting, this is just another beginning and not the end.

The second action phase under consideration is tagged onto 2.1. It is Sandra's only stand-up bit that Maureen doesn't play for her, but what might seem a new beginning both to her stand-up career and the peace process in Northern Ireland, Sandra uses as an opportunity to voice the complaints of those recently unemployed by the cease-fires: the builders, the glaziers, the security guards, and the funeral directors. And as an Irish comedian who has always ridiculed the factions of Northern Ireland and laughed at the violence, she complains,

They think they have problems? What about us? What about the comedians? The day them clowns in the IRA declared their cease-fire, they killed off half the Irish jokes. Not so much lost, as gone before. And then I thought, 'Well, there's still the other half. The Loyalists. They're always good for a laugh.['] And I'm no sooner back in London, than they declare a cease-fire as well. You see freedom fighters? They're all the same. They couldn't see green cheese but they'd want a bit. I was gutted. I thought, that's it, the end of a beautiful career. Time to sign on the dotted dole line, Columbine. I thought wrong. You can't keep the Irish down. We're a nation

of comedians. The best ones are offstage. On the day the Loyalists declared their own cease-fire, two wee Belfast women were standing at a bus stop. And one turns to the other, and she says, 'Bloody typical, isn't it? You wait twenty-five friggin' years for a cease-fire and then two come along one after the other.'

Ulster says Ho! Ho! Ho!

Sandra raises her glass.

Happy Birthday, Jesus Mahoney. (343)

Sandra joking that the cease-fire will end her career sounds a lot like Reid herself joking—seriously or not?—that the end of conflict in Northern Ireland means the end of the Northern Irish play. All her major plays have been about the Troubles and probably every playwright working in Northern Ireland since the 1970s has adapted the conflict to the stage. Also Brian Friel has had to answer to the suspicion whether he and other Irish writers, as he puts it, aren't "looting the shop when it's burning" (Brian Friel 115). Not only does Reid voice this bold opinion about her own work and others', but she does so through the figure of a comedian pretending to show concern about the exact same thing. This is, mutatis mutandis, Oscar Wilde playing Oscar Wilde or Brendan Behan Brendan Behan. Such reflexive performance of dramatic figure, simultaneously implicating the writer and bestowing lifelike character on the figure, is Stage Irish.

Clowns addresses the Northern Irish conflict through the performance and stand-up bits which create an artistic form in which the conflict might be resolved, in which the factions might meet, talk, and laugh so that they can finally move from the past to the future. In Heavenly Bodies that form is the stage making a spectacle out of everything, but in Clowns it is the figure of the entertainer that conjures the factions out of existence by extending her role to all of Ireland: "We're a nation of comedians. The best ones are offstage." Even the terrorists are "clowns," are "good for a laugh," because fanaticism, like the joke, requires stereotypes and stock situations in order to work. There is an uncanny resemblance between the stern, bigoted nationalist and his counterpart in jokes about the Troubles. Such irreverent mixing of the tragic in the comic and the comic in the tragic distills the connections between the entertainer and the turncoat as well between the laughter and the self-laughter of the Stage Irish.

In his article "Nine Circles of Hell, or the Freeing of Comedy," Kristof Jacek Kozak connects tragedy and comedy as he believes Socrates meant to when, in the closing lines of Plato's Symposium, he said "that the genius of comedy was the same with that of tragedy, and that the true artist in tragedy was an artist in comedy also" (41). Since the beginnings of literary criticism in Aristotle's Poetics, tragedy and comedy have been locked in "a tight yet, unjust and prejudiced

embrace," tragedy the highest form of theater, comedy the lowest:

This juxtaposition brought the one to become the exact opposite, that is, the flip side of the other. They have become inseparable yet, at the same time, absolutely converse, as can be best illustrated by the symbol of Janus' mask: two faces of the same head expressing, by facing the opposite directions, their utmost contrariness. Moreover, a discussion about one is not complete without taking into account the other. (41-42)

For Attic theater this opposition held. The hero of ancient tragedy identified himself with his pathos, so that the individual and the internal coincided with the universal and the external; in other words, the tragic hero, never skeptical, knew no relativism. Ancient comedy, on the other hand, was only relative, as its role playing, frequent asides, and topicality demonstrate. But tragedy and, necessarily, comedy, too, were changed by the modern subject's coming into being.

What once was the exact opposition of the two genres became their interdependence because the modern subject no longer knew circumstances only tragic or only comic:

After the postmodern intervention subjectivity needs to take into account its own polyvalent existence. There are no conditions for a totally self-enclosed

monadic subject who could, even only in drama, disregard his/her essential conditionality. (Kozak 49)

When we suffer at another's hands or, better, at our own, maybe we smirk because we see what is happening to us as if we had become the spectator to our own tragedy. The inheritance of modern subjectivity is this distance-to-self which fractures every experience so that the comic infiltrates the tragic and vice versa. The lasting effect, though, resides in the subject's fractured self, in a self-awareness that is always again seeing itself (again). And so, with Beckett's Murphy, we are capable of "the highest laugh, the mirthless laugh, the laugh laughing at the laugh, the risus purus" (qtd. in Kozak 50).

The risus purus is the laugh of the Stage Irish, too. Compelled to entertain, yet confined in his role as entertainer, the Stage Irish faces an impossible and incoherent part. So, in Helmuth Plessner's view of the comic as "Gegensinnigkeit, die gleichwohl als Einheit sich vorstellt und hingenommen werden will" (qtd. in Matzke 371), the Stage Irish are funny for their very contradictoriness. This puts a new perspective on just what is laughable about Irish bulls and blunders. Like Butler's feminist subject facing her part in the compulsory heterosexuality of society, the Stage Irish also can laugh at himself as a mere part, as a relentless parody of the idea of Irish (cf. Butler 155, 176).

With wry humor Sandra faces the deadly seriousness of her past so that conflict and terrorism show themselves from comically ridiculous aspects. Both good and bad jokes may be coarse and offensive because taste is not a judge of jokes. A joke that makes people laugh is good because it's funny, while a joke people should laugh at but don't is bad because it's serious. (This definition I write after Ingrid Hentschel's important reminder that Freud saw the opposite of play not in reality, but in seriousness (225).) The Troubles are a joke gone wrong, but even the wickedest jokes of Joyriders (147-148), Clowns (325-326), or Did You Hear the One about the Irishman...? (whose joke material Reid staged to best advantage in Clowns) are good, as are many of the jokes told by Jews interred during the Second World War. Arthur recalls Sandra's parting words on leaving Belfast the first time: "'See you when the war's over, Arthur!' She laughed like it was a joke that wasn't funny" (296). A cease-fire that doesn't stop the fighting is never funny.

As Sandra's conceding the name comedian to all the Irish deconstructs the dichotomy "flippant/serious" and so crumbles the foundations of conflict in Northern Ireland, the stand-up bits overlaid on the serious events at the Lagan Mill Shopping Centre perform this deconstruction at a structural level. When in Sandra's last joke the woman complains, "Bloody typical, isn't it?" typical signifies more than just the timing of the cease-fires and refers to the joke-like structure of Clowns.

The play resembles the structure of the joke because it holds in tension the two opposing positions in the Troubles and tries to resolve the opposition with a punch line. This may be a false resolution, but still the joke's basic form progresses from contrariety to reconciliation (cf. O'Sullivan 58-59), as a change in the Northern Irish conflict would have to progress from hostility to good will. Contrarities in figure and in setting not only reflect stasis in the Northern Irish conflict, but also set up the opposing positions whose collapse is necessary to change. The titles Joyriders and Clowns are based on contrarities since they are euphemisms referring, respectively, to petty criminals who are punished by death and to comedians who joke about terrorism. Although the two titles speak of joy and fun, the figures' circumstances are distressing and their reasons for doing these things are boredom and unhappiness.

The figure pairs of Arthur and Tommy and of Sandra and Maureen are based on contrary outlooks on life in Belfast; nonetheless, each member of a pair is such an integral part that the other needs his or her partner. This opposite attraction keeps the bourgeois chef Arthur together with the leftist activist Tommy and it is one explanation for Sandra's schizophrenia after Maureen's death: "the experience and behaviour that gets labelled schizophrenia is a special strategy that a person invents in order to live in an unlivable situation" (R.D. Laing qtd. in Pine 29).

The setting contributes to the structuring contrariety of Clowns since the modern-day shopping center is located in the former Lagan Linen Mill. And before the place becomes a shopping center it has been, in Joyriders, the Youth Training Programme where the walls bore such graffiti as "Is there a life before death" and "Joyriders live. Joyriders die" (100). Life and death are separated by an unnamed third zone, represented in the second graffiti by the omission of any grammatical or meaningful connection between the sentences. The same contrariety arises when Sandra mischievously alters the closing words of "Somewhere over the Rainbow" from "bluebirds fly" to "bluebirds die" (175, 290) or when Tommy speaks about the rainbow arrangement of flowers Sandra believes are in memory of Maureen:

Flowers come an' flowers go. There should be somethin' more permanent there to mark the spot where Maureen was shot. She worked here, an' she died here. This buildin' has a bad history.

ARTHUR. An' a great future. (290)

Coming and going, working and dying, and the past and the future multiply the contrarities inherent in this place. It takes Arthur's reminiscing, for example, to make "good times" out of the "shite times" they really had working at the Youth Training Programme (298).

In discussing the passing of the Gaelic tradition, Declan Kiberd writes in Irish Classics, "People have often welcomed

death as a clarification, something that ends the intolerable ambiguity of being caught between the living and the dead, that zone of uncertainty in which so many painful questions may be raised" (64). But he adds in qualification, "The Irish have always derived a sense of their own vitality from the very prospect of death" (65). Likewise, in a revision of Vivien Mercier's conception of the comic in Irish writing as the outgrowth of a conservative Gaelic culture, Adrienne Janus considers "the functional capacities of laughter as psychosomatic release and social regulation" (122). Laughter is a disruption of normal living and thought so that, even if only for the briefest moment, it becomes a way of going on when, as Beckett has it, there is no reasonable way of going on. These ideas on the contrariety between life and death increase our understanding of the humor of Clowns.

The "Belfast Street Song," in which the second singer repeats the first's lines, epitomizes the plays' movements through contrarities toward a resolution. Asked where they come from, the singers answer "Belfast":

FIRST VOICE. And if they can't hear us

SECOND VOICE. And if they can't hear us

FIRST VOICE. We shout a little louder

SECOND VOICE. We shout a little louder (103)

Taking it once more from the top, they sing with louder, higher pitched voices and end in unison, "And if they can't hear us, they must be deaf" (103). So the song at the

beginning of this two-play action sequence introduces the structure of the joke and unites in its punch line the two voices, which might represent anything or anyone, but in the performance, at least, they are two physically opposing positions.

Not every Irish who Sandra titles comedian is funny for the same reasons. Some of the Irish offstage, like the terrorists, are comedians only because they are laughable. They serve as material for those, like Sandra and the two Belfast women of her joke, who are funny because they see this and can make others see it too, and so laugh at it. They are funny either because they mock what they find laughable or because, taking a more expansive view of things, they cannot help but laugh at what they see. The mockers despise the conditions in the North, so they laugh not so much for fun as for derision and the laugh isn't good, it's sinister. This is laughter as a defense mechanism and laughter in wild abandon, and it is an example for how the clown can, in an instant, go from bright and smiling to dark and glowering. The others who can't help but laugh at the world rise above the immediate situation and gain the uplifting perspective of the fool. This is the laughter of a genial humor; this laughter is a vital energy promoting life and growth.

As the entertainer, Sandra plays both the satirist and the fool when she, or Maureen in her, steps to the microphone where she tells her offensive, yet funny jokes about the

Northern Irish conflict. I stress again the distinguishing formal aspect between Heavenly Bodies and Clowns because it clarifies the significance of Sandra's stand-up bits. Whereas Heavenly Bodies is theatrical because the performance orients itself towards the spectacles of the stage, Clowns has a strong narrative vein because the many stand-up bits speak through one voice and relegate all dialogue to the sentences of a story.

This structural weighting towards narrative is typical of the joke, an oral narrative form Patrick O'Sullivan analyzes structurally and interprets as carefully as one would literature. O'Sullivan classifies the Irish joke generically as a "stupid person joke" in order to improve on analyses of racist humor that focus on specific social and cultural aspects to the detriment of universal, structuralist concerns. O'Sullivan summarizes the structuralist approach to jokes in the term "semiotic matrix," or "an interweave of signs, meanings and narrative devices," which explains how one can refer to as the same figure the Pole of Polish jokes in the USA, the Irish of Irish jokes, Howleglas, Nasrudin, the "Holy Fool," and others (73).

O'Sullivan analyzes the joke into two important parts. First, they are neither national characters nor real people who inhabit jokes, but personae or masks. With this move he connects the figures of plays and narrative to those of the joke. Second, he emphasizes the figures' relationships to one

another, which in the "stupid person joke" are expressed in the dichotomies "stupidity/cleverness" and "power/powerlessness." Arranged symmetrically in a quadrant, the dichotomies illustrate that the more powerful one is, the more clever one is and that the weaker one is, the stupider one is. These relationships require the simple figures and situations typical of many jokes.

Behind the Irish joke lies the Irish-English relationship which invented Ireland's geographic marginality, introduced the conflict between natives and settlers, established the colonial hierarchy of master and servant, and advantaged English literate culture (civilized, intelligent, and peaceful) over Gaelic oral culture (primitive, stupid, and violent). "But 'stupid person' jokes are a very unstable form of power," writes O'Sullivan. "Though the jokes can be used with ideological intent, the jokes themselves explore every part of the quadrant" (68). So the stupid Irish misunderstand their English betters, but in so doing open alternative versions of reality and disrupt the power relationship by which the joke and, also, British imperialism function.

But arguing over the accuracy or—I hope more commonly—the inaccuracy of racist jokes not only credits racist stereotypes in the first place, but also misses the joke's formal affinities with literature. People cull truths from literature by reading meaning into a form that, in large, relates neutrally to its own potential significance. Literature never

tells us anything directly, even when it purports to do just that, because the telling always gets in the way. Whereas journalism, for example, is about the message, literature has no message apart from its transmission of the same.

(Literature and journalism do compare in this respect when one considers the reporting slant, which just proves that the lines dividing one kind of writing from the next serve only our perception of the world and aren't in themselves real.)

The problem is a recurrent one when talking about stereotypes: people mistake their own beliefs and perspectives for the iniquitous kernel of truth in the stereotype. For example, nationalists take offense at the stereotype of the belligerent Irish, but inadvertently credit it in taking offense, not to mention proving it by getting angry over nothing. All the while, they miss the fact that this stereotype is really evidence of the power relation established through English oppression in Ireland or, in other words, a mere situation (O'Sullivan 70). And as Pfister rightly states, drama is not, as conventionally presumed, about conflict, but about situation, and a situation can remain the same, can change, or can be unchangeable (Das Drama 271-273). Regardless, though, what situation a particular play presents, it is itself, qua performance, a situation and thus a location of effective change to real life situations.

Because many jokes offer new, difficult perspectives on the world, they can lead to change. The circumstances

surrounding Sandra's irreverent, sometimes offensive jokes about "the tragedy of the relationship" between Ireland and England (O'Sullivan 68) call attention to something O'Sullivan's structural approach de-emphasizes: the performer of the joke, or the entertainer. Jokes in performance are more complex than jokes on the page, and usually funnier. Isn't a joke all about the delivery? Doesn't explanation kill any good joke? Clowns answers yes when Sandra and Maureen talk about their act and Sandra criticizes Maureen for spoiling the punch line (315). When one considers such important performative aspects of joke telling as the performer, the place and time of performance, the audience, and the immediate context (for example, whether it's improvised or part of a show), one finds these things can make a poorly constructed joke take and a skillfully constructed joke flop.

How would an audience react to Sandra's stand-up bits during the violence or after a credible peace had been made? The answer to this question exceeds the scope of my interpretation, but I do want to remark that the actress playing the figure Sandra plays not just a dramatic figure but a dramatic figure playing the part of entertainer. This metatheatrical aspect of the stand-up bits makes an actress doubly aware of the jokes she tells and how she tells them. An actress could use this to good effect if, for example, she told the offensive jokes directly to the real audience, as if she were stepping back from her part in the play and saying,

"Would you listen to this!" For example, Maureen concludes her joke about the gunman who kills in the name of Jesus Christ by saying, "People have died for less" (320). "For less than nothing?" the actress could imply in her delivery, because dying in the crossfire is dying for less than nothing. "Life's a geg isn't it?" says Sandra (121). It's death that's no fun.

As the entertainer, the comedian is dependent entirely on his audience. As I've shown with the figure Dion Boucicault and as I will show with Frank Hardy, the entertainer's liminal position with relation to his actions on some stage and his audience reveal the strong resemblance between himself and the artist figure, between his work and art. Both Joyriders and Clowns reflexively handle their own artistry and stagecraft, just as Sandra addresses her career as a comedian. The plays imitate, refer to, and even criticize other plays as well as painting, sculpture, song, poetry, dance, and film. Art's plentitude of meaning and the act of interpretation are performed in the action phases at the Belfast theater where Shadow of a Gunman plays (Joyriders 1.1), at the Belfast Arts Council Gallery where a Russian artist exhibits his work (Joyriders 2.4), on the concourse where stands a statue of a female mill worker and child (Clowns), and again on the concourse where Arthur and Sandra dance to the Furies singing "Sweet Sixteen" in front of the illuminated statue (Clowns 2.2). Sandra's new self-awareness at the ending is that of the performer and the artist; it is the self-awareness of the

entertainer who can create of tragedy, comedy and who can darken comedy with tragedy.

The scenario of Sandra's last joke resembles, in miniature, that of Waiting for Godot because the women have been waiting for a cease-fire that has come, they are waiting for a bus yet to come, and they will be waiting for another cease-fire to come after those of 1994 have ended. One might understand waiting as a paradigm for art's liminal position in the world of politics and economics, because, since one does nothing, waiting is an action that is no action. Clowns ends waiting for the cease-fires to end and the fighting to begin again, as it had done by opening night. So the resumption of hostilities in February 1996 is subsumed into the context of the play, into the limitless context of artistic textuality.

What I call the punch line of the play are the closing lines, which follow Sandra's last joke:

Ulster says Ho! Ho! Ho!

Sandra raises her glass.

Happy Birthday, Jesus Mahoney.

Unlike the punch line of a normal joke, these lines try to resolve something much greater: the play Clowns and everything within its scope, which includes the Northern Irish conflict.

The line "Ulster says Ho! Ho! Ho!" refers back to Sandra's joke in the same stand-up performance about how they have supposedly changed the banner on Belfast City Hall from "Ulster says no!" to this. But Sandra repeats the punch line

of her joke only by reading the new banner, so that it is now certain that they have changed the banner. Sandra declares that, in the holiday season, Ulster is wishing well and, more importantly, laughing "Ho! Ho! Ho!" at their "No!" or, in other words, laughing at themselves.

When Sandra toasts the audience and speaks her birthday wish, her actions and her words have significant antecedents at critical structural points throughout the play. At the ending of act 1, Maureen toasts the audience before speaking the punch line to her joke about the gunman who kills in the name of Jesus Christ, from which comes her joke about Jesus Mahoney to open act 2: Happy Christmas becomes Happy Birthday and the expletive Jesus Mahoney is taken from Jesus Christ. The line coheres structurally with the play and mimics the punch line of a joke by combining the sacred with the profane. In this way, Clowns deconstructs itself by occupying both sides of the lines dividing serious from flippant, literature from entertainment, and tragedy from comedy—and this position is the position of the Stage Irish.

I turn now to my explication of the development in the figure Sandra.

Sandra develops from sinister laughter into clown as her caustic humor develops into the genial laughter of her last and only stand-up performance in the play. Changing against a background of permanent conflict, this dramatic figure exposes the insufficient will or lack of self-awareness in both

Northern Irish factions by giving them an example of how change occurs. The completion of her development is expressed in the idiom of performance when she stops taking her cues from Maureen and starts playing her own part herself. Besides always haunting Sandra and, thus, constraining her freedom, Maureen twice even cues Sandra's lines, once by mouthing them (320) and again by speaking them (332).

In Joyriders and Clowns, identity is reduced to a matter of origins, be they geographic, social, or personal. In the "Belfast Street Song," prologue to Joyriders and the common action sequence of both plays, the singers give the questions "Who are you?" and "Where do you come from?" only one answer, "We're from Belfast" (103). For Sandra and most of the other figures of the two plays, being from Belfast means living the frustration, boredom, and ignorance that accompany poverty and conflict. But alone the fact that Sandra encompasses two figures, the one realistic and the second a ghost, reveals the mercurial character of the clown. Sandra stands apart from the other figures because she is an odd occurrence for their neighborhood. She likes working on cars, has no boyfriend, and makes her coarse, obscene jokes at times when even these lower-class youths of Belfast take offense. Tommy summarizes people's attitude towards her as well as, in general, people's attitude towards the clown, when exasperated he says, "I don't understand you, Sandra" (148). Frank Hardy evokes the same

reaction in Grace who, despite her diligent effort, never understands his healing power or, consequently, him.

As in the many examples in Irish drama of plays about returning emigrants, Sandra's emigration already marks her as a figure that is more uncertain about her identity and more likely to change. Sandra leaves Belfast and Ireland for London, while Kate, for instance, moves only between different parts of the one city. Ever working to help the poor of Belfast, as if doing so would improve her gutted plans for her own future, Kate is, like all the other figures except Sandra, constant. Arthur and Tommy may have changed outwardly but they really are the same, and as they have had each other as "friends/sparring partners since childhood," they can carry on as if nothing had ever happened (Reid 283). At their awkward meeting, Sandra and Iris confess, both intending an insult, that neither has changed a bit (305); and Johnnie we witness, to everyone's misfortune, to be the same evil person he has always been. Even Molly must have long been preparing for the life she's now leading because her husband's death triggered the deliberate response of burying him in style and from then on heeding only her own needs and wishes.

Sandra cannot answer the question "Who are you?" simply by stating she is from Belfast. She has traveled too much, read too much, seen too much of the world outside Belfast to be able to say or do anything with Arthur's or Tommy's surety. When the three talk about English people's knowledge of the

Irish, Tommy complains, "They know nuthin' about us, and they care even less" (309); but Sandra asks what the Irish know about the English and calls into question the grounds for animosities between the two as well as the grounds for any knowledge one pretends to have about others.

Lacking a partnership like Arthur's and Tommy's that would protect her sanity when the past revisits, Sandra creates the ideal partner in her lost friend Maureen. Not only does she gain the partnership she needs to cope, but she also returns things to the way they were by resurrecting Maureen to obliterate her friend's death and her own loss. That Maureen is a figment of Sandra's imagination comes through most noticeably in her clothes. She dresses like the "romantic servant girl" Sandra calls Columbine of pantomime fame and wears the trouser-suit and high-heels that are so big for her that she looks like "a deranged ballet dancer" (285, 324).

As both the name Columbine and Sandra's description of her imply, Maureen looks like a clown, or at least like "a clown's girlfriend," and, as such, she possesses the self-awareness and self-knowledge that Sandra is trying to suppress (286). Again and again Maureen reminds Sandra that she is dressing her, just as she is imagining her existence. Wearing the trouser-suit she shoplifted the day she died, Maureen rebukes Sandra, "The way you've made me, the way you dress me. How would you know what I might have become?" (323). Sandra

can only answer that she is losing control over Maureen as she is over her own mind, so Maureen cruelly recites the verse:

Dilly Daydream's dead and gone

And you're the fool for carryin' on... (323)

Even though it is a plural, the title Clowns refers to Sandra and only to the other figures as they are reflected in Sandra's complex character. Because of her job as a performer, Sandra possesses the self-awareness that separates her from all the other figures while, at the same time, making them a part of her dominating role: she is injured like Arthur, critical like Tommy, romantic like Maureen, and bold, yet insecure like both Kate and Molly. Like the multiple stages on which Boucicault's life and work are played, Sandra comprises in one figure the multiple personalities and viewpoints of the people living in the midst of the Northern Irish conflict.

The pervasiveness of this figure is reflected in scenography, because she alone occupies all three places on the stage of Clowns. First, there is the concourse of the shopping center where are located Arthur's Harlequin Café-Bar and his wife's Iris Garden Centre. The names of both businesses signal the unusual, carnivalesque events that will occur here. Second, there is the spot around the microphone at the edge of the stage and, third, "A shadowy area where Maureen appears and disappears" (279). The stage-on-stage construction of the playing area underlines the performance which Clowns is, while overlaying a realistic setting—for the

concourse Reid even suggests a working escalator!—with the comedian's stage of the second place makes possible Sandra's development.

The multiple positions of the stage itself comprise one of the prerequisites for performance: a play is made out of conversation, for which at least two actors are needed, and for them to be anywhere there must be some other place they can go to, even if that is just offstage. Clowns makes Sandra's interlocutor another side of herself, even if her other side resembles the Maureen of Joyriders. Although Maureen appears to be occupying the spot with the microphone and her bits are always triggered by the conversation or actions at the shopping center, Maureen performs before a London audience, so she is never really there in Belfast because her performances are Sandra's memories. But when Sandra stands at the microphone before a London audience (2.2), she really is in London and she really is herself again because she has recognized the other places on the stage for the figments they are.

But the "Belfast Street Song" clearly states that identity is where one comes from and coming from Belfast means not accommodating those different from oneself nor conducting change. This is the place where time stands still, where "nuthin' will be no different" (163), and where arriving airplane passengers hear the announcement, "We are now approaching Belfast airport. Please set your watches back

three hundred years" (a joke often heard and also used in both Ron Hutchinson's Rat in the Skull, 34, and Reid's own Did You Hear the One about the Irishman...? 69). Because it's Belfast, no matter how hard she tries to connect with the poor, troubled youth, Kate will always be to them upper class. Arthur admits that he, too, sees her this way, but commends her straightforwardness. When she becomes self-conscious about her accent, he objects,

You speak dead nice. You wouldn't wanta be like one of them pain-in-the-arse social workers what put the Belfast accent on, would ye? Ye can spot them a mile off. All training shoes an' black leather jackets. They think rollin' their own fegs and wearin' dirty jeans makes them one of the people. They're a joke. Nobody takes them serious. You're all right Kate. You don't try to be what yer not. (132)

Arthur speaks the maxim of his neighborhood and neighborhoods like his: don't try to be what you're not. But how should one react to a person who doesn't know what he is not, never mind what he is. In her response to Arthur, Kate twice repeats the line "You know what I am, Arthur?" before she answers, "A shadow of a socialist. The only difference between me and Donal Davoren is that I'm bluffing nobody but myself" (132). But for one in Kate's situation, she is being true to herself and to the youths she works with because her job requires that

she make compromises with the powerful and the powerless and that she enact a moderate agenda that will work.

To staunch Belfast Irish, bluffing is pretension and falsehood, but this opinion on the matter misses its potential for truth. The motif bluffing is taken up in the figure Molly, who at fifty-six has begun a degree in literature. Molly is convinced that the examiners have been giving her essays outstanding grades because they're terrified by a middle-aged woman not caring about critical opinion and writing what she really feels. Although the university has become Molly's new lease on life, it still intimidates her, as she admits, "I'm shit-scared that somebody's gonna call my bluff" (318). Like Kate moving in the opposite direction, Molly enters academia from the wrong side of Belfast and for her to succeed she must be bold to the point of provocation. So again bluffing is re-evaluated as a survival tactic and, paradoxically, as a way of being true to oneself and one's background.

Bluffing also characterizes the figure Sandra. When Arthur turns her insults back at her, Maureen speaks up: "Call her bluff, Arthur. Just for once..." (299). But he apologizes, hearing neither what Maureen has said nor Sandra's unconscious desire (expressed by Maureen) to tell him about her suffering. Arthur may not know that Sandra is bluffing everyone about her fortitude and her sexuality, but his lines signalize this fact when he tells her, "I like you the way you are. The way you always were" (341). That the figures speak dialectically

colored, colloquial language does not detract from this significant juxtaposition of the present tense are and the past tense were. From this aspect, the always becomes a false attempt at equating Sandra's past with her present, which I read as Arthur's unconscious desire to disavow her change. In their first exchange he similarly betrays his disavowal when he says, "You're the same, only different..." (287). But his prejudice against bluffing, against trying to be what you're not, is exploded not only by the change in the figure Sandra, but also by the means that achieve this: stagecraft. After all, what is acting and what are dramatic figures—like Arthur—but bluffing? And isn't it Arthur who initiates Sandra's development through the ironic circumstances that he orders her act, but gets her and that Sandra comes to perform her act, but leaves not having performed it, but performing herself?

The major reversal of the play is set in motion when, seeing now again the blood of her nightmares and tormented waking hours, Sandra regrets coming to Belfast:

I should never have come back...

MOLLY. You should never have blocked it out.

SANDRA. I had to, or go crazy. Frig, I went crazy anyway.

MOLLY. You're not crazy. You were caught in a war.

There's a fancy name these days for what happened to you. In my day, it was called shellshock. You

carried your best friend in from a battlefield.
 Don't lock it away no more. You can't go on all
 your life bein' sixteen and mad with shock and
 grief and anger...

SANDRA. I missed her...I missed her just bein'
 around...talkin' daft...makin' daydreams. I was
 always putting her down, making fun of her. She
 was stupid and romantic, and sometimes she got on
 my nerves that much, all I wanted was for her to
 go away and give my head peace. And then she did
 go away, and it was like there was only half of me
 left. I started to imagine her as she might be if
 she hadn't...I began to see her...It was only
 glimpses at first...out of the corner of my eye.
 She'd be getting on a bus, or crossing a road...or
 I'd look in the mirror and for a second I'd see
 her face instead of mine...It wasn't scary, like
 the dreams. It was nice. She looked happy. I was
 happy. (337)

The exchange begins in stichomythia, each new line expressing
 the counter position to the previous one. And as in classical
 and baroque dramas, the stichomythia resolves the matter when
 Molly speaks the discovery of the play by correctly diagnosing
 Sandra as a case of shell shock. Sandra sees that since
 Maureen's death not two, but only one person has been with her
 and that that person has been herself alone. Because she has

occupied Maureen's position, because she has seen herself from the other's perspective, she has gained new knowledge of herself. This is captured in the striking image of Sandra looking in the mirror and seeing Maureen. Sandra has been bluffing everyone, including herself, but only through bluffing can one change because only this way can one gain new and different insights into oneself. This is the Stage Irish and this is Wilde's philosophy of the anti-self: the intensification of personality through the multiplication of selves, personae, or masks (cf. Kiberd, Classics 630). In the search for an Irish identity, the entertainer is one such mask.

Combined with the performance of Maureen's final exit, the motif of witchcraft completes the change in the figure Sandra. When Sandra learns how people claim to have seen Maureen's ghost and how Mad Mary freed her soul still trapped at the spot where she died, Maureen says,

There's a wise witch.

SANDRA. Her soul flew to England...and me...

ARTHUR. Sandra?

SANDRA. It's the living who are trapped...

ARTHUR. Sandra?

SANDRA. Would you do something for me?

ARTHUR. What?

SANDRA. Would you just sit still beside me and hold
my hand...

ARTHUR. ...what's wrong?

SANDRA. ...and don't ask for why...

He takes her hand. She places her other hand over his. (312-313)

Arthur's twice repeated question "Sandra?" is asking not only what she means, but also who she is. Arthur's every line is a question, but Sandra is yet incapable of answering, so she seeks physical contact to still her nerves. Viewed together with Arthur's failed attempts to touch Sandra in both plays (151, 170, 288, 338), their holding hands stands out as a memorable stage picture. Maureen, inspired by the witchcraft motif of the preceding exchange, deflates the seriousness of Sandra's revelation by telling a joke about Ian Paisley and Count Dracula. But a smile between her and Sandra shows that this humor pleases Sandra because it helps her survive.

Interrupting her husband's intimate moment with Sandra, Iris bursts in screaming her car has been stolen by joyriders. The word joyriders resonates in this play and in these figures because, as Sandra says, they've all been joyriders, only some of them have never got caught (151, 298). Everyone is a suspect, guilty until proven innocent. Anyway, between the government discriminating against a section of the people and the terrorists killing one another and anyone who gets in the way, the whole province is on a joyride: "It's a friggin' Government joyride" (163). Sandra's new joyriding is called stand-up and hers has been a double act alone on the amateur

stages of London. Because her terrible past continues in terms of her stage acts, in these same terms must it end, so that she can become a new person.

Even after admitting to seeing Maureen, Sandra is incapable of letting her go. After the gunfire outside the shopping center when Johnnie enters, Sandra believes he has died and now inhabits the same place as Maureen in her imagination. Maureen feeds on Sandra's distress, welcomes her new partner saying "...the darlin' boy is dead and gone, but him and me will carry on," and "launches a very fast, vicious, ugly joke routine at Sandra" (325). To free herself of Maureen's ghost and to send her to the good place she belongs, Sandra will have to separate Maureen from her brother.

Maureen, like anyone, hopes to meet a God with a sense of humor because only such a God forgives (334); therefore, Sandra mustn't grudge Johnnie his life or seek revenge if she wants to expel this "fallen angel" (281). She has wanted revenge so badly that (as Maureen tells us) "it done your head in" (322). On first meeting Johnnie in Clowns, Sandra mock shoots him:

She produces a gun. Points it at Johnnie. Pulls the trigger. The gun squeaks and a white flag with the words 'bang, bang' drops from the barrel. Sandra laughs. It is not a funny laugh. Nobody else is laughing. (319)

Her gag is not funny because her desire for revenge is serious. But when Johnnie is shown to be standing not in Maureen's other-worldly place but on the concourse with the other figures, Sandra realizes he is alive and she is able to exonerate him. Like the Oresteia, the structure of sequel that connects Joyriders and Clowns reflects the circle of bloody revenge on bloody revenge. As Orestes, having beheaded "these two snakes" Aegisthus and Clytaemestra and seeing now the Furies "wreathed in a tangle of snakes" (Eum. 1046-1050), Sandra cries, "I don't want...no more...no more blood...not even his...no more..." (327).

Sandra's change becomes complete when she reverses Maureen's influence over her by cueing the final exit. Not only does Sandra give Maureen back the challenge that started her career as a stand-up comedian, but she also gives the third cue to Maureen, thereby reversing the two I have mentioned (i.e., 320, 332):

And suddenly Maureen was standing right beside me,
large as life, laughing out loud, and she said,
'Put your money where your mouth is, partner.'

Maureen also says these words.

She smiles, gestures for Sandra to join her at the microphone. Sandra walks towards her. We see them both onstage together, as Sandra has imagined it all these years.

SANDRA. We walked up to the microphone. She was real. Alive and laughing. There was no stoppin' us. We were magic. We got invited back. The next time we did our double-act, it was her twenty-first birthday.

Sandra looks at Maureen. The shadows are lengthening around her. A look/gesture of farewell between them. Maureen walks away into the darkness.

It was never a double act. It was only ever me bouncin' off the walls, all by myself...Dilly Daydream's dead and gone...it's over... (337-338)

Maureen is gone when the third stage place has disappeared and, again for the third time, Sandra repeats the verse "Dilly Daydream's dead and gone" (323, 325), breaking its incantatory rhyme with "it's over."

Sandra has freed herself from the ghost of her past when the clock chimes midnight and the cease-fire begins. But more than a political message to the effect of "Ireland, too, must rid herself of the ghost of the past," Clowns demonstrates how to do this through theater.

Faith Healer

My passing over such likely candidates for this study as Public Gar and Private Gar (Philadelphia, Here I Come!) or Hugh and Jimmy (Translations) for Frank Hardy will surprise some, especially since these two plays are milestones of Friel's oeuvre and of Irish theater. Too long, though, has

Translations overshadowed Faith Healer, so that I find it imperative to show how, more than any other of Friel's plays, Faith Healer innovates theater.

The monologic form is precedent from the ancient Greek models of Western theater (cf. Coult 70), but tradition collapses in a play that upturns convention in the theater and exposes prejudice in the audience. Staged the year before Field Day's first production, Faith Healer anticipates the theater company's enterprise to break "a congealed idea of theatre" because

Almost everything which we believe to be nature or native is in fact historical; more precisely, is an historical fiction. If Field Day can breed a new fiction of theatre, or of any other area, which is sufficiently successful to be believed in as though it were natural and an outgrowth of the past, then it will have succeeded. (qtd. in Kearney 53)

Anthony Roche explains how Faith Healer, with Thomas Murphy plays like The Sanctuary Lamp and The Gigli Concert, changed Irish theater "by helping to create an audience for spare, demanding plays of spiritual and emotional crisis where, indeed, a great deal of endurance was demanded from that audience" (106). If Beckett prepared the way for so much innovative theater since the 1960s, Brian Friel and Thomas Murphy are the immediate forerunners of such 1990s playwrights as Sebastian Barry and Conor McPherson.

So while I take for granted that Faith Healer is one of Ireland's most important plays, I do realize that Frank's place next to the master of Victorian melodrama and an amateur Belfast stand-up needs explaining. Seamus Deane (introduction 20), Declan Kiberd ("Brian Friel's Faith Healer"), Ulf Dantanus (174-177), Richard Pine (122), Elmer Andrews (46-47), Desmond Maxwell (59), Robert Welch (143-144), and others have interpreted Frank as a metaphor of the artist or, more specifically, of the playwright, from which supposition they easily make the connection to Brian Friel. Although I agree that Frank is an artist, I think it a jump from traveling showman to playwright to author of the piece; in other words, I think one needn't resort to metaphor in order to understand the figure's significance.

I argue that the faith healer performs in a show and that Frank is an entertainer, and so he finds himself in the same predicament as Boucicault and Sandra playing clown to the audiences whose judgments of their performances are judgments of themselves. "I did it..." Frank weighs his words, "because I could do it" (333). Faith healing, then, is a doing, a performative art. Although neither melodrama nor standup, Frank's faith healing, qua show, is not better than these because more serious. "Yes;" admits Frank, "we were always balanced somewhere between the absurd and the momentous" (336). Faith healing is subject to those same contingencies

that balance any show between the absurd and the momentous; and even the best show needs audiences to play to.

For a play that leaves many questions unanswered, Faith Healer does make one thing clear: Frank's faith healings are very seldom good. The three-person production and acting team are all but debilitated by internal strife, personal problems, and financial worries, while the average performance, always in the shabbiest of venues, fails to deliver to minimum audiences. Why, then, stage a play (i.e., Faith Healer) about a show (i.e., Frank's faith healing) that is a failure? To stage performance in all its variety. Viewed from the most comprehensive perspective, from the act of narration to the relational complexities between playwright, dramatic figure, director, actor, and audience, Faith Healer is a performance that not only contains other performances but also is about performance.

My commentary and interpretation of Faith Healer runs against the literary critical approach to theater that interprets the dramatic text without reference to performer or performance. Representative for the opinion that a production confuses textual meaning rather than means in its own way, Richard Pine calls stagecraft "contrivances" and "traps" (138). Although the dramatic text of Faith Healer sustains literary explication, it is not a short story and critics who stop at the written word are interpreting a mere paraphrase of its performance and so miss the verity to Frank McGuinness's

assertion "Friel bows to the theatre's demands in Faith Healer" (qtd. in Roche 107).

Although my detailed discussion of the performative aspects of Faith Healer will make plain what the literary approach to theater misses, the dramatic text even has passages whose meaning depend on their performance. I find a simple example in Teddy's list of attributes that make great artists great: "Number one: they've got ambition this size. Okay?" (355). Without the accompanying gesture, a line like this has lost its stage and so its performative context; the gesture brings these words into the theater or, taking the dramatic text as starting point, the prose becomes theatrical when accompanied by images.

In sum, lost on many a literary critic are the possibilities of significance when performance, as an act onstage and as an aspect of the play, varies our perspective. Because of something so obvious as the dramatic text's appearance on the page, critics have unduly focused on Frank's, Grace's, and Teddy's narratives, on the agreements and disagreements one finds when comparing their three stories about Kinlochbervie, Llanbethian, and Ballybeg. But if the narratives don't give decisive evidence for one or the other reading, the performance does because it is the play, it is everything. Seamus Deane, for example, claims the play "provides no action, only four monologues" (Celtic 173). Another critic ignores the settings, the props, and the

proxemics and kinesics to claim "All events are distanced by the narrative form from the direct experience of the audience" (DeVinney 114-115). When Richard Pine writes "nothing happens four times" and "nothing keeps on happening" (135-136), I am sure that a catchy phrase has got the better of this critic. (Anyway, Faith Healer bears closer comparison to Play or, on account of Part Three, to Krapp's Last Tape than to Waiting for Godot.) When Pine claims that Faith Healer "returns to the condition of radio drama" (137), he exposes a poor understanding of the media theater and radio. I will be addressing radio in my discussion of Cries from Casement As His Bones Are Brought to Dublin, but it is plain to see that, produced elsewhere than in the theater, Faith Healer lacks the stage performance it is and is about.

"By replacing action with narration," contends Karen DeVinney in "Monologue as Dramatic Action in Brian Friel's Faith Healer and Molly Sweeney,"

Friel not only critiques the Irish penchant for oratory, but he also dramatizes his contention that events are meaningful mainly insofar as they become stories, fictions told by their participants. Their meaning resides not in what actually happens but in how they are narrated by and to the people who participated in them. (111)

I agree that the figures' narratives are more significant in the telling than in the content. For this reason I examine how

the figures stand and walk and sit while speaking, how and when they pause, where on the set they tell one story and where another. Since DeVinney never turns her critical attention to these aspects of the play, I must conclude that by the above she means a narratological reading of the dramatic text and not a view to its performance.

Faith Healer is so "unexpected" (Deane, introduction 19) that many have been similarly misled into reading it as prose fiction. But whereas prose fiction is about something, the performance makes a dramatic text also be something, by providing the place, the time, the objects, and the people necessary to its realization. I will first emphasize the play's performative aspects and the stage where it belongs in order to educe its contributions to the Stage-Irish entertainer.

The condition of the narrative of Faith Healer is the performance. Roche compares the action of Faith Healer to the communal art of storytelling in Ireland in order to counter mistaken notions that the play's three figures are merely displaced narrators from fiction (115-116). The play is not just a story or storytelling; the figures are not just storytellers. The play is a performance of storytelling and the figures are just that, dramatic figures. Specifically, Frank, Grace, and Teddy are storytellers in character; they play roles (i.e., themselves) as certain narrators (i.e., also themselves) have created these. Their figural statuses

resemble BEHAN's, the theatrical incarnation of Brendan Behan as the fictional narrator both of his novel Borstal Boy and of his years of notoriety. The three figures are in their own settings and have their own way of inhabiting them. A new focus on each monologist's performance re-appraises what each says by examining how he or she says it. Because both the narratives and their tellers first gain significance when entered in a dialectic with the performance, the particular theatricality of a Faith Healer production is the only perspective from which one comprehends the whole play.

This dialectic I will now illustrate through the example of the ending. I don't want now to interpret the ending, rather I annotate it in view of the interplay between narrative and performance. My interpretation of the ending will close the chapter.

The ending proper is signaled when Frank stops speaking, walks upstage, and stays there. Except for the chair across which lie his overcoat and hat, the stage is bare. Without further deviation until the final blackout, he brings his story about the Ballybeg farmers to a close.

When he reaches Donal's entrance he says,

'Coming,' I said.

(He puts on the hat and overcoat and buttons it slowly. When that is done he goes on.) (374)

Although Frank is quoting himself then to Donal, he means also what he says now because shortly he will be returning

downstage, coming closer to the audience. By dressing, he spares himself having to narrate it and indicates that he will exit from the stage, which, in the narrative, signifies his death.

Beforehand, though, he must pass the yard, so he delivers the curious line, "I would like to describe that yard to you" (375). Since description lacks structurally a temporal dimension (Pfister 196-197), the stasis of Frank's ensuing text would threaten his performance if he didn't recover his position in the onstage story by saying and, therefore, acting "I."

The performance reflects the liminality of his encounter with the farmers; or, from a perspective on the performance itself, the story reflects Frank's acting as well as the acting that is creating Frank onstage (i.e., the actor's):

(He takes off his hat as if he were entering a church and holds it at his chest. He is both awed and elated. As he speaks the remaining lines he moves very slowly down stage.)

And as I moved across that yard towards them and offered myself to them, then for the first time I had a simple and genuine sense of home-coming. Then for the first time there was no atrophying terror; and the maddening questions were silent.

At long last I was renouncing chance.

(Pause for about four seconds. Then quick black.)

(376)

His narrative persona moves toward the farmers simultaneously as he (i.e., the dramatic figure onstage) moves toward the audience. In these closing moments of Faith Healer the audience sees the teller doing in earnest what he tells, so that both actions and words interfere like sound waves whose pitch rise or fall how they meet. This is the dialectic between narrative and performance whose effect is to modify every term or action of the one side with a corresponding term or action from the opposing side.

For example, the deixis in the above quotation corresponds with the past tense and with the non-performative character of the narrative text: "And as I moved across that yard towards them," and so on. But Frank is moving across the stage towards the audience, so that the deictic signifiers then, there, and them are re-interpreted to mean now, here, and you. Only this comprehensive perspective on the ending deals with the discrepancies between word and act, between what Frank says and does as a character in narrative, as a dramatic figure, and as a dramatic figure played by an actor. By openly relating the narrative character to the dramatic figure and the dramatic figure to the actor, the ending performs the performing of a play; and the play achieves this so effectively because all three positions move out from a single point: the performer.

One mustn't forget what Frank hopes from his encounter with the farmers. He needs them to cure him of the "atrophying terror," the "maddening questions"; that is, the healer needs the sick so that he can be healed. The role-reversals of healer for sick and sick for healers finds its counterpart on the stage when Frank removes his hat "as if he were entering a church." As faith healer and, more generally, as performer, Frank's place in a church would be onstage, as it has been in the kirks and churches where he has performed his healing. His reverential gesture shows him now a member of the audience. As he approaches the farmers framed in the arched entrance to the yard, he also approaches the audience likewise framed in the proscenium arch, so that the metaphorical and actual reversals of location occur at the same time and in the same way.

Frank finds peace because he no longer must perform, no longer must expose himself to the chance that has always governed his show, and can watch the auditorium as if it were the stage. Before blackout he does so for four seconds, long enough for the audience to realize the performance is over when they will start asking, "What is he still doing here?" The performance is not what they had anticipated nor are they feeling as they had expected because this is not how things should end. I am not referring to the narrative so much as to the meeting of performer and audience staged in these final seconds.

Before all the details of the narratives, what troubles us is that the ending makes present the power relationship existing between performer and audience. If the performer needs an audience to entertain, the audience, even to be an audience, need the performer to entertain them. Especially when made explicit, this mutual dependency between performer and audience can easily make of an entertaining situation a threatening one.

In this connection, McGuinness's phrasing "Friel bows to the theatre's demands in Faith Healer" warrants closer attention. Yielding to some authority, one may bow figuratively, but the unmistakably theatrical idiom allows me to read it as bowing literally to the audience, that authority on entertainment. Read argues that the bow, as typical gesture of the theater, is the performer's defining gesture of existence, and, applying Emmanuel Levinas's ethics, he takes the bow for the performer's way of excusing himself to the audience for his own existence, "the right being garnered from the other" (95). In his playwright persona, Friel bows to his audience; in other words, the very composing of Faith Healer is a performance one needs to account for in interpretation because, as Edwards says, "a playwright in composition is in a condition of stage Irishry." Kiberd contrasts artist and performer, arguing "The artist always keeps his eye remorselessly on his subject, whereas the performer is always watching his audience" (113). But when the artist's subject is

his audience, whatever he does and whatever he writes is a performance.

Specifically, though, Friel bows to the theater's demands. But what is necessity in the theater? Theater cannot happen without performer and audience, so the necessity of the theater is the relationship between performer and audience. "The presence of an audience is a defining characteristic of the person, becoming performer" (Read 93, cf. 154). And the same holds true for the audience. Katharine Worth explains Friel's switch from the short story to theater even by citing the live audience and argues that "The need for each other of story-tellers and audience is at the core of Friel's drama" (75). The position performer being the audience's condition of existence, and vice versa, when Frank and the farmers exist "only in the need we had for each other" (376), the theatrical is distilled as the performer's need for the audience (since performers see themselves as others see them) and the audience's need for entertainment (since otherwise they are no audience).

Having exemplified through the ending the dialectic between the narrative and the performance, I now turn to three further performative aspects that unbalance a simple, literary reading of the play: (1) lyrical passages, (2) props, and (3) lighting. Because Friel notes that "Stage directions have been kept to a minimum" (331), the secondary text of Faith Healer

has been an especially invaluable resource to my imaginative staging of the play.

First, intermittent lyrical passages, such as Frank's and Grace's incantations and Teddy's song, dot the narrative text and, like interludes, often function as transitions to other stories. For example, Grace follows her third incantation, beginning "Kinlochbervie, Inverbervie," with her version of the stillbirth. From the aspect of figural psychology, the lyrics appear as defense mechanisms against bad memories or, since these are the place names of where these things happened, as mnemonic devices. That both Frank and Grace close their eyes while reciting and open them again when they continue speaking might be taken to prove either case.

More pertinent than these findings from a functional viewpoint is the lyrics' position as performances interrupting the narrative voices of the three figures. First in darkness, then gradually brightening around Frank standing downstage, "feet together, his face tilted upwards, his eyes shut tight, his hands in his overcoat pockets, his shoulders hunched," the play opens,

Aberarder, Aberayron,

Llangranog, Langurig,

Abergorlech, Abergynolwyn,

Llandefeilog, Llanerchymedd,

Aberhosan, Aberporth...

All those dying Welsh villages. (Eyes open.) I'd get so tense before a performance, d'you know what I used to do? As we drove along those narrow, winding roads I'd recite the names to myself just for the mesmerism, the sedation, of the incantation—

Kinlochbervie, Inverbervie,
 Inverdrue, Invergordon,
 Badachroo, Kinlochewe,
 Ballantrae, Inverkeithing,
 Cawdor, Kirkconnel,
 Plaidy, Kirkinner... (331-332)

The incantations are not there to sedate and mesmerize the audience, rather they are the performer's way of easing tension before going onstage. Since the figures recite when already onstage, it must be for some other performance that they are nervous. Because Frank recites the last time before narrating his encounter with the Ballybeg farmers, I argue that the ending is the performance toward which the whole play moves. Alternatively or additionally, one may view the incantations as the figures' recurrent preparations for their following speeches. This view recognizes the narrative texts for the performances they are. Although the figures remain onstage during the incantations, their closed eyes briefly isolate them and exclude the audience from their thoughts and memories.

The incantations progress from Frank's long, complex lyrics using alliteration and internal rhyme (like the one quoted above), through Grace's near repetitions of Frank's lyrics, finally to the short, dissonant,

Aberarder, Kinlochbervie,

Aberayron, Kinlochbervie,

Invergordon, Kinlochbervie... (353, 370, 372)

whose impure rhyme reiterates the site of trauma. So both the forms of the separate incantations and their distribution imply that a performance of a different kind will end the play.

Second, the distribution of the few props throughout, like the incantations as mnemonic devices, motivate the narratives as when each figure indicates the banner before continuing speaking (332, 349, 365). Again, more pertinent to my purposes than the functional perspective is to interpret the props as elements of the stage performance. I argue, with Anthony Roche, that taken together the props "indicate the extent to which the faith-healing performance described by all three characters is being re-enacted before us" (108). While from Part One through Part Three the banner hangs, the other props increase from three rows of chairs, to just one chair but now with table, to one comfortable chair, the table, a record-player, a locker, and a dog-basket. Here ends, though, the faith-healing performance as Roche describes it. After Teddy's relative luxury, the set of Part Four, just one chair,

shocks the audience into recognizing what the division of three speakers into four parts already indicates: a new phase of the play, another performance, is beginning. The paring of the stage (especially the missing banner) and the slight change in Frank's emotional state (370) signify the paring of the performance down to the encounter with the audience, be it the Ballybeg farmers or an ideal theater audience or the actual audience of the production.

Third, when considering the lighting at the endings to the four parts, most conspicuous is the similarity between the endings to Frank's and Teddy's parts. Both figures first look at the audience before Frank disappears and before Teddy sees them no more and fades from view. From this, one begins recognizing significant correspondences between Frank and Teddy. As at the endings to their parts, they act similarly at the openings when both either recite or sing, both have their eyes closed and their faces upwards, and both start by asking questions that, as Roche argues for Frank, have "an element of the professional Stage Irishman's opening line: 'D'you know what it is I'm going to tell you?'" (110). And it is precisely on this head that the two are best compared. Whereas Teddy's "bow-tie, checked shirt, smoking jacket/dressing gown (short)," not to mention his Cockney accent, make him the epitome of the musical-hall MC, Frank's appearance and dress are apparently more somber, until one notices the "Vivid green socks" showing from under pant legs too short for him. Their

showmen appearances suit Frank's "slight bow" as way of introducing himself as well as Teddy's "Brief pause" as way of introducing the act he formerly promoted, Rob Roy, The Piping Dog (332, 355). Whether the brooding, mysterious Celt or the happy-go-lucky London promoter, they are leveled in their differences because they are both showmen who are used to appearing before audiences. They are both entertainers.

Frank and Teddy also compare in that, like Grace, too, they are dead. Although critics agree that Frank and Grace have died before the action sequence of Faith Healer, only Roche believes Teddy also has, but thinks he must argue that obscurity has killed this born showman (114). But alone the grammar of Frank's references to him (such as "Teddy and Gracie were English" (332) and "Or as Teddy would have put it" (341)) prove he is dead, unless one wildly conjecture that the dead speak of the living as the living would of the dead. Besides, if Teddy weren't dead, what would he be doing on this stage?

Although the above three performative aspects are more obviously of the theater, I argue that the narratives as narration by onstage storytellers are also performances that one should interpret in like fashion. As the act of telling collapses the dichotomy "narrative/performance," the text, by addressing itself to the relations between reality, performance, and fiction, makes a theme of the very conditions of this collapse.

Writing about Friel's "language plays" Faith Healer, Translations, and The Communication Cord, Richard Kearney opposes what has traditionally been seen as the verbal character of Irish theater to work in the theater since the 1970s (which he labels "theatre of the senses"), such as that of playwright Tom MacIntyre or Coleman's, Fouere's, and Doyle's performance art group Operatic Theatre (20-24). This same opposition is at work between the narrative structure of Faith Healer and its appearance onstage, and so, as Kearney concludes for all three plays as well as the Field Day project, a dialectic between the word and the senses is set in motion because "Friel holds out the possibility of a new kind of story-telling" (54). This new storytelling combines both the story (i.e., the words) and the telling (i.e., the act) while at the same time noting the fiction of the story and the fiction of the telling of that story. The use of metatheater in Faith Healer, Kearney argues, shows how "the performer can never be released from his performance and his very existence as a player of roles depends on both author and audience keeping faith with his fiction. Theatre is an interpretative art whose very interpretation involves mediation" (31). In other words, we make sense of theater by entering into the dialogue not only between figures—the usual approach taken by literary critics—but also between playwright and audience, or, to extend Kearney's argumentation, between actor and audience, or even between figure and audience. The mediative art of

theater is to be neither on the side of the narrative nor, in a play like Faith Healer, on the side of the narrating, but to take up an intermediary position that collapses the priority both of the word and of the act while using them to present themselves.

Teddy's stories about being a promoter and his role onstage as a promoter emphasize the theatricality of Frank's faith healing act. And Grace, sitting at her table as she has done at many a show (350), tells her version of their years on the road while playing onstage the cashier. Lastly, Frank describes for us the faith healer who he is. As I've argued, Faith Healer differs from a mere storytelling session in that the narrators are in character, so that their stage personae become parts of their stories and their stories parts of their performances. Whether read or seen, the play is from every aspect a performance of performance because the dramatic figures present themselves as actors in offstage events while the fictional characters (i.e., these same offstage actors) return to the stage (as they return to life) to tell their own stories.

The binding element in these metonymical associations is the actor onstage. Fellow playwright, Thomas Kilroy, writes that there is more to Friel's storytellers than the words on the page, a fact many critics have missed:

Brian Friel is a superb creator of story-tellers.

They are not only expert in delivery, in all the

skills of an actor in full-flight, mimicry, timing, playing upon the audience as upon an instrument—even their body language is enlisted in the way Friel has written the parts. Story-telling in Friel's plays may offer succour, consolation, relief, renewal but it can just as easily offer deception of the self, of others. Like every substantial writer of fiction, Friel has a healthy scepticism about the nature of fiction itself or at least the uses to which it can be put. Frequently the virtuoso story-teller in a Friel play is an outsider, his or her gift a kind of scar or wound, a misfortunate or fatal gift. More subtly than any other Irish playwright Friel has transcribed this national skill into the theatrical medium. That is why we often have to enlist a literary or quasi-literary vocabulary in talking about some of the plays. ("Theatrical" 98)

Kilroy addresses precisely the three terms reality, fiction, and performance whose interaction effect the dialectic between narrative and performance. What Kilroy means by the reflexivity of the fiction and theatricality of Friel's plays is, in Faith Healer, epitomized by lying. A piece of literature and a performance lie in different ways because the audience of the performance witness and remember what has been said and what has happened. The narratives in monologic form seem to distance the audience of Faith Healer from the actions

onstage because they must listen to what another has witnessed and now remembers, so that the very processes of witnessing and remembering become themes. But since the audience is also called on to witness and remember the actions onstage, these themes are what comprise the very performance. In this way Faith Healer shows the audience how theater makes them lie to themselves.

One of our first sights onstage is the banner reading "The Fantastic Francis Hardy," an announcement of the fiction, or the "fantasy," of the figure. Frank acknowledges so much when he admits not only that Teddy probably has used fantastic here "with accuracy," but also that the old banner was anyway "a lie" (332-333). Frank recognizes his penchant for the fictitious and the fabulous, and he displays it again and again. Illustrating the convenience, as he calls it, for a faith healer of the initials F. H., Frank raises suspicion that he has given himself the stage name Francis Hardy for its very suitability. When he speculates, "Perhaps if my name had been Charles Potter I would have been...Cardinal Primate; or Patsy Muldoon, the Fantastic Prime Minister" (333), he is flaunting his propensity for creating names (as he does again in the names he gives Grace) as well as the likelihood of his own fictitious name. When he calls Teddy "a romantic man" for believing "all along and right up to the end that somewhere one day something 'fantastic' was going to happen to us," it is Frank who interprets fantastic as "fairy-tale" and the

"somewhere" and the "something" as a castle and the healing of a princess (334). Again, he acknowledges so much when he continues, "But [Teddy] was a man of many disguises. Perhaps he wasn't romantic. Perhaps he knew that's what I'd think. Perhaps he was a much more perceptive man than I knew" (335). He opens the possibility that when he talks about Teddy he is actually talking about himself, that the romantic here is not his manager, but himself.

As Grace tells us, it is Frank who is the man of disguises: "you could never be sure with him" (350). Since Grace has suffered most from Frank's incessant lying, she also tries hardest to describe it, and so gives the text an outlet to address itself to the relation between reality and fiction:

It wasn't that he was simply a liar—I never understood it—yes, I knew that he wanted to hurt me, but it was much more complex than that; it was some compulsion he had to adjust, to refashion, to re-create everything around him. Even the people who came to him—they weren't just sick people who were confused and frightened and wanted to be cured; no, no; to him they were...yes, they were real enough, but not real as persons, real as fictions, extensions of himself that came into being only because of him. And if he cured a man, that man became for him a successful fiction and therefore actually real, and he'd say to me afterwards, 'Quite

an interesting character that, wasn't he? I knew that would work.' But if he didn't cure him, the man was forgotten immediately, allowed to dissolve and vanish as if he had never existed. (345)

The sick are to Frank real people because they are the fictions of his creative faculty; and those he heals become "actually real" because he has succeeded in applying his creative power to them; and failures he forgets, expels from memory, so that they are real only in so far as a ghost might be said to be real. These contradictions of Grace's description can only be reconciled if one recognizes the situation in which these things occur: Frank's faith healing act. At some indistinguishable point between reality and fiction or, in Read's choice of expression (151-156), between nature and culture lies performance.

One must become aware again of the basics of performance in order to understand how it stands between reality and fiction. "Wer nach Wirklichkeit fragt," writes Robert Spaemann, "will immer etwas ausschließen. Wirklichkeit ist ja nicht ein Merkmal, das zu dem, was es gibt, noch etwas hinzufügt" (7). As much as reality excludes fiction, fiction excludes reality; they are contrapuntal discourses of human life. But a performance cannot be excluded from reality primarily because of the actors and what they do onstage, that is, because of theater's physicality; nor can a performance be excluded from fiction because, as Kearney argues, theater is

interpretive, that is, our perception of what the actors say and do makes them signify something else. (Even where this something else is the actors' own words and movements, the process of signification inscribes this reality with a fiction.) As a performance liminally related to the reality and the fiction encroaching on it from all sides, a faith healing combines the real and the fictional without becoming either. Perhaps it is this unsustainable situation that makes all performances come to an end sometime, even if that end is just the beginning of a new performance.

Nothing contradicts a reading of the play as being mere fabrication, something Frank is making up as he goes along. So Grace and Teddy, far more than being, as Roche argues, his fictions, are the audience he sustains with his performance. Frank admits to lying, sometimes we suspect he must be lying, and (because of the conflicting evidence of the narratives) we know someone is lying. McGuinness argues that Frank's constant lying gives "a contradictory quality even to his name":

Frank is neither candid nor honest. His destiny is to cheat and deceive. He does so because he must. This is the way he can keep the faith. The faith itself is a strange one. It is an act of worship, a statement of belief in a fickle god, the god of healing, a god that afflicts as quickly, indeed more quickly than he cures. It is not an unchanging god. Rather it is a god of chance, of change. Chance and

change are divine in the cosmology of Faith Healer.
 By reason of their holy power, their sacramental
 dominance, chance and change speak in a suitable
 language of worship, and the language they choose is
 the lie, the beautiful lie that Dante identified as
 the native tongue of the artist. ("Faith" 60)

In the final assessment, Faith Healer is the kind of
 fabrication that all art is: a beautiful lie.

From the evidence I've gathered from the ending, from
 three exemplary performative elements in the play, and from
 the dialectic between narrative and performance I conclude
 that the theatrical of Faith Healer lies in the
 metatheatrical. To the term metadrama I prefer metatheater. In
 this, I emphasize not Hornby's primary definition of metadrama
 as drama about drama, but his secondary definition as the
 actors', the producers', the directors', and the audience's
 experiences of what he calls the drama/culture complex; that
 is, their experiences of the ways theater, the arts, and
 literature refer both to themselves and broader areas of
 culture (31). In particular, my conception of Stage Irishry as
 Irish Performance values the variety of metadrama Hornby calls
 literary and real-life reference within the play, which is
 most important not in the dramatic text, but in performance:
 "In fact, if we consider performance as an art form in its own
 right, rather than just as a means of putting across a text,
 then literary reference and, even more important, real-life

reference, have often been major dramatic elements" (100). His example of Socrates standing up during a performance of The Clouds either to rebut Aristophanes's caricature or to add to the fun recalls Brendan Behan's performances in the auditorium and, more importantly, any Irish playwright's "performances" in his or her own writing. Furthermore, metatheater recalls the stage on which real people and real objects, by being in performance, enter the processes of signification.

So signification in the theater is one of the first conditions of the metatheatrical. Another condition, often overlooked, is the audience's part in the performance. By arguing that a faith healing is a show, I have emphasized the audience's role (in Friel's words) as those "300 diverse imaginations come together with no more serious intent than the casual wish to be 'entertained'" (qtd. in Pine 133). What is entertainment other than the vain attempt to drive away weariness, frustration, and pain, or (in the widest possible sense of the word) boredom? The key to the success of Waiting for Godot, Alec Reid has made the convincing argument, has been not the play being about ignorance or impotence or boredom:

Waiting for Godot is not about Godot or even about waiting. It is waiting, and ignorance, and impotence, and boredom, all made visible and audible on the stage before us, direct expression to which

we respond directly, if at all, because in it we recognize our own experience. (52)

In Faith Healer, Frank fails to exorcise the demon boredom because his show fails, and so the play becomes, like Waiting for Godot, a kind of boredom.

As the theatrical first stands in relief when theater reflexively presents theater, so too does entertainment become recognizable for what it is once it no longer just entertains. Metatheater is so theatrical because it focuses the performance by not claiming, like the well-made play, any reference to our conventional sense of reality; metatheater refers foremost to the reality of theater. Faith Healer is metatheater because it contains performances, is about performances, and has been already and will be staged again many times; and it is meta-entertainment because a failed show demonstrates just how a successful show works: by meeting audience demands. The play entertains also by not entertaining; that is, by showing the audience not only what entertainment is, but also the role they play in the act of entertainment.

More telling than structural comparison to Molly Sweeney is Giovanna Tallone's comparison of Frank Hardy to Fox Melarkey (Crystal and Fox). Both are fit-up men who have stopped believing in their shows and, consequently, in their audiences, "the other half that should provide strength or fuel the show" (Tallone 38). A show boring to the audience is

also boring to the performer. While Fox is "Weary of all this...this making-do, of conning people that know they're being conned" (40), Frank admits that what awaits them is not fantastic or fairy-tale, but "shabby, shabby, bleak, derelict" (372).

Before turning to my interpretation of the ending, I would like to give two examples of the theatrical as I've been describing it.

First, the ending of Part One is the most significant occurrence of the metatheatrical apart from the ending, to which it intimately relates. Having set the scene for his encounter with the farmers,

([Frank] comes right down, walking very slowly, until he is as close as he can be to the audience. Pause.)

The first Irish tour! The great home-coming! The new beginning! It was all going to be so fantastic! And there I am, pretending to subscribe to the charade.

(He laughs.) Yes; the restoration of Francis Hardy.

(Laughs again.)

But we'll come to that presently. Or as Teddy would have put it: Why don't we leave that until later, dear 'eart? Why don't we do that? Why not?

Indeed.

(He looks at the audience for about three seconds. Then quick black.) (340-341)

With sarcasm in his voice and mockery in his laugh, Frank puts his traveling faith healing show on exhibition, while he brings the stage right down to the auditorium so that the audience must see both performances for performances. "It is an unnerving confrontation," confesses one spectator (Worth 76). Both the deixis and the switch to the present tense in "And there I am" conflate narrative and stage as well as past and present (cf. Roche 108, 113; Tallone 40). That Frank next uses the future tense ("But we'll come to that presently") reflects, in speech, his omniscience, like the narrator of a novel come to life.

In its immediate context, "charade" refers to what he calls "the restoration of Francis Hardy," but, since murder will restore him, "charade" refers ironically to his futile attempt to heal McGarvey when he "knew, knew with cold certainty that nothing was going to happen. Nothing at all" (340). If Frank travesties his healing power by bringing it places he shouldn't go, the farmers' turn from jocular to violence travesties the guest's rights, so that, on both sides, charade is answered by charade and the roles performer and audience become interchangeable. When Frank speaks of his own "restoration" as "the restoration of Francis Hardy," the third person distances him from his part in the actions of the play and the narrative. And when he imitates Teddy's way of speaking, as he has done repeatedly through Part One (334-335,

336, 338, 339), the figures of Faith Healer become recognizable as figures, roles anyone can learn to play.

I've mentioned that for the meaning of certain passages of the dramatic text we must depend on their performance. For example, while we'll never know if at the lounge bar Grace sang either "Ilkley Moor" or Thomas Moore's "Believe me, if all those endearing young charms," we do know, because we hear Teddy playing it on his old record player, that Fred Astaire's "The Way You Look Tonight" was the song played at the faith healings. Whether Grace is Northern Irish or Northern English is also decided by the actress's accent, just as the secondary text informs us that Teddy must be a Londoner (354). Likewise, the intonation of Frank's final line in Part One, "Indeed," clinches any of the three most plausible interpretations. First, he may say it sarcastically, and so expose the figure Teddy as showman, as he has their faith healing act as show business. Second, he may say it reassuringly so that the audience trust him to know what he is talking about and so that they expect him to return to finish the story. Third, he may equally stress each syllable so as to activate the word's potential (and etymological) meaning "in the deed," that is, as will be performed. This last interpretation I find most appropriate because, although the dramatic text allows all three, any given performance, as far as I can imagine it, must choose one.

Second, Frank describes a faith healing as "eerie," as cause for unease, because both performer and audience are incessantly guessing at the other's thoughts and intentions. Frank thinks he knows these people, how they hate him, how they come "not to be cured but for the confirmation that they were incurable" (337), how they know that he knows all this. Whether correct or not about his audience, Frank sees himself as others see him, and precisely this makes him a performer.

For Joe Dowling, director of the first Abbey production of Faith Healer, the play is "about actors communicating with their audiences and understanding how to develop a relationship with an audience" (qtd. in Tallone 37). All three figures in Faith Healer speak about what others see when they see them. For example, Grace is the utter dependent, exclaiming, "O my God I'm one of [Frank's] 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" (353). The performer is performer as long as an audience are watching; his role, like the mask signifying it, is what the audience see him as.

Since Celtic times, McGuinness writes in "Masks" (his introduction to his selection of new Irish plays), the Irish have celebrated the rituals of Halloween by wearing masks, outward signs that they are participants in a performance (ix). For the duration of the performance, whether celebrant or actor, the wearer of the mask merges into his role and limits his existence to it. It makes little sense talking

about figures without actors or actors not acting. Having lost sight of these basics of performance, researchers into the Stage Irishman have written only typologies and histories of the figure. I look beyond the role of the Stage Irishman, behind the figure's mask, to find the interdependent conditions of its coming to being: the performer and the audience.

In real life, for the sake of comparison, we normally feel that our selves are not expended in the roles we play, but that somewhere behind the masks there resides a person. That person derives from the Latin for an actor's face mask suggests another reality. Neither the monologic form nor the metatheater makes Faith Healer "unexpected" as much as does the demonstration to the audience that the theater knows only performers, that the people on both sides of the stage divide see one another in their theatrical roles of actors or audience, respectively. Because for most people the theater is a leisure activity, an audience usually believe they are more themselves than everyday. But an audience's behavior, dress, and speech prove they have, on entering the theater, adopted a role. Faith Healer cites doctors, lawyers, and journalists not as contraries to the faith healer's life on the road, but as examples of how one can deny the performance at the base of one's being. But human existence as performance deconstructs our ideas of reality and of ourselves, and so destroys any possibility of identity. This same crisis plagues Frank every

time he questions his healing power, every time he asks whether he is a miracle worker or a con man:

And between those absurd exaggerations the possibilities were legion. 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 from 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?

(333-334)

Frank's ceaseless questioning leads, by way of his healing power, to his audience who are both object and condition of his performances. Perhaps the only thing definitive about his healing power is that without an audience it is nothing, and so again the play shows how it is and is about performance.

The figure Frank is best understood as a performer whose primary relationship is to his audience, from which relationship stem his skepticism (because his power is knowable only when it fails) and his "atrophying terror" (because the role that identifies him is, as McGuinness so vividly describes it, governed by the gods of chance and change). For this reason, although the play is about Frank Hardy, it carries his role, not his name, as title.

Comparing Faith Healer to Beckett's Play, Roche affirms that their theatricality comprises "the dialogue that is set up between the storyteller and the audience" (114). The relationship between performer and audience, he continues, is an Irish cultural and theatrical dimension that has for too long been overlooked. And it is the role demanded of the audience that I would most emphasise, the rupturing of a rigid separation between those onstage and those in the audience, and the subsequent act of mere empathy. Rather, in the breakdown which is encouraged, the audience is required to participate in the construction of the play's activity and meaning. (115)

Specifically, Roche is pleading that the origins of Irish theater lie "as much in the communal art of the seanchaí, the act of oral storytelling, as in a more formal written script performed on a proscenium stage in an urban centre" (115). I stress that, for Roche, audience participation means less the comparison of the figures' narratives for agreements and disagreements and far more the experience of their relationship to Frank as faith healer, as storyteller, as dramatic figure, and as actor.

The faith healer knows both that the sick only seem to hope for a cure when they really expect to be proven incurable and that he cannot fulfill audience expectations "Because occasionally, just occasionally, the miracle would happen"

(337). "But what creates the conditions in which the miracle is possible," remarks Roche,

is the presence of the audience and the raising of their hopes. The lengthy description by Frank in Part One has the double function of raising those hopes and showing the audience all the reasons why they should not do so, why they are foolish to be so wooed, an act of calculated theatrical defiance.

(109)

I disagree that Frank's defiance is so deliberate and imagine that before an audience his range of action is restricted to his role as faith healer.

In this Frank bears comparison to the Pardoner of The Canterbury Tales, also a mountebank. Not only the dialogue or the list of figures in "The General Prologue" indicates the dramatic tendencies of The Canterbury Tales, but, in specific comparison to Faith Healer, the poem's tales and narrator-cum-storyteller evince significant structural similarities to the play. The Pardoner's self-revealing prologue—itsself a verse performance of how he performs from sacristies and church portals—makes clear that he will tell a story treating his favorite subject "Radix malorum est cupiditas" (138). In the epilogue, the pilgrims are also prepared for when he will spread his phony relics and ask their money, so that right away the Host threatens him. Does the Pardoner expect his trick to work after he's told the pilgrims exactly how he

fools the gullible? I think the answer lies in the role he habitually plays before believers and other pilgrims. Called on to tell them a story, the Pardoner falls into his only routine (that which makes him a Pardoner) and unwittingly tries for the pilgrims' money. He has no answer to the Host's threats, "So wroth he was no word ne wolde he saye" (669), because his audiences wouldn't do this; in other words, he can't speak because he has no script that will accommodate this audience, and so he tells them no more tales.

Frank also has only the one routine, so that his part in the play Faith Healer is the faith healer, just as the performance of the play re-enacts a faith healing. In contrast to the Pardoner, Frank knows how a healing can become violent, because when he healed, the sick went "panic-panic-panic!" (337), conjuring the god Pan and threatening the Dionysian violence that awaits the impostor and the artist.

And this leads into my interpretation of the ending.

The ending is a confrontation between performer and audience as this seldom occurs in the theater. As Frank acts his part in his murder at a faith healing, I argue that the ending provokes the audience either to consider their part in this or, more drastically, to act the murderers. I say that the motif of ritual murder in Friel's oeuvre comes here to a head. In jest Roche asks where Faith Healer (like Synge on the Aran Islands or Friel's own Dancing at Lughnasa in Glenties) would find its cultural validation: "Ballybeg in County

Donegal, a place which doesn't exist, where the locals turn nasty and kill the leading actor?" (116). Why not? The action sequence fixes neither place nor time so that any performance of the play can be anywhere at any time. And Frank does script the audience's part when, narrating his approach to the farmers, he approaches the audience before pausing to wait for their reaction; "Then quick black."

I know that this interpretation will seem radical to many, but I believe it not only viable, but also necessary for the formation of honest opinions about the play. If interpretations like mine are not attempted, masterpieces like Faith Healer will sink into the molds of critical and public opinion, and so become mere examples of one or the other trend in drama or, what is worse, pieces of literature that everyone should read but nobody knows why.

I have suggested that one can interpret the figure Frank without recourse to metaphor, without reading the figure as a symbol for the artist, the playwright, or Friel himself. So I ask, what happens if we read the ending just as it appears? What if we believe Frank when he describes the evening at the lounge bar with the words "All irony was suspended" (339)? Finally, what if we believe him also when he predicts of the climactic event of the evening (which corresponds to the ending of the play) that "nothing was going to happen. Nothing at all"?

Projecting the stage action into the past keeps the spectator apart from what occurs onstage, while reading the ending as it appears makes the narrative secondary to the scenography and kinesics. An interpretation that reads the performance as a metaphor of the artist and his art disavows the text's own assertion that "All irony was suspended," so that it must otherwise account for this sentence. Irony, like metaphor, accepts appearances only in so far as they can be made operative on the ironist's chosen level of vraisemblance. This is Barthes's objection to irony; or in the words of Jonathan Culler:

At the moment when we propose that a text means something other than what it appears to say we introduce, as hermeneutic devices which are supposed to lead us to the truth of the text, models which are based on our expectations about the text and the world. Irony, the cynic might say, is the ultimate form of recuperation and naturalization, whereby we ensure that the text says only what we want to hear.

(157)

Culler's tone exhibits his favor of the opposite view of irony, according to which "What is set against appearance is not reality but the pure negativity of unarrested irony" (158). But such "pure negativity" exists only on paper, not on the stage. How does one separate an actor's appearance from his reality? On the stage, appearance is reality; every

element of a performance from the leading actor's fake moustache to the phony backdrop, from the real tea for the drawing-room scene to the four-year-old playing a four-year-old yelling "I want an Easter egg! I want an Easter egg!" is real if for no other reason than that it happens on the stage. The stage adds to the piece of literature a real dimension because the stage is not imaginary. Even when the empty stage is meant to represent some other place, the stage is always also real and never, in the true sense of the word, empty. (Against Peter Brook's empty space Alan Read sets "a populated space" to remind us that theater, as an institution run according to some view of reality, clears and occupies a place people already live in (13-19).) Besides, Culler's Structuralist Poetics considers the written word to the exclusion of performance. A structuralist study that can be applied to the stage, and so serve as a necessary supplement to Culler's book, is Manfred Pfister's The Theory and Analysis of Drama.

So the proper place of metaphor and irony is the written word, not the performance. Dramatic irony Pfister saves from terminological imprecision on account of long misuse and recalls that it depends not on appearances, but on a superior audience awareness that "adds an additional layer of meaning to either the verbal utterance or the non-verbal behaviour of a figure on stage in such a way as to contradict or undermine the meaning intended by that figure" (55-57). The only way to

interpret stage action is to read the set, the props, and the actors in their contiguous relationships to one another and to anything they might be thought to represent. First from here can a metaphoric interpretation gain a foothold from which to ascend.

When we take a performance for real life or the performer's role for himself, we are not so much symbolically interpreting the production or the actor as we are perceiving their proximity to what they present: the play and the dramatic figure. Kilroy illustrates this with Patrick Magee's Frank Hardy. Dying from the effects of alcoholism, the famous actor of Beckett "was displaying personal failure up on that stage and a chilling identity was forged between the role and the damaged man who was performing it." He admits, "I have never been so frightened in the theatre" (qtd. in Coult 67). Kilroy's assessment of Magee's performance comes as no surprise considering that, since the monologists take center stage as the performers they are, Faith Healer is an actor's piece.

If an audience of Faith Healer would escape the confrontation at the ending, they must ignore the actions onstage to be able to flee via the narrative. This, I argue, many have done. But to assume that the events in Ballybeg must have been as they appeared to Frank, Grace, and Teddy also seems an unusable approach to their speeches. The three accounts prove that to three people things appeared

differently because they remember things being different. In Faith Healer appearance is reality because reality is the product of our perceiving faculties, so the only possible reality of the past are the fictions of our present memories. The processes of perception and memory which the figures' speeches demonstrate are the same any audience will undergo while witnessing the play. To argue any point about Faith Healer requires one decide on some facts of the narratives, to clarify matters the play leaves open. (How true this is of all literature I leave to speculation.) Because the prime theme of the play is this same critical process, it is less about the artist and his art or the constitutive power of memory or even Irish cultural identity—all themes attained through metaphorical interpretation—than it is about the audience.

Instead of relating his murder in Ballybeg, Frank puts it in word and act. The question most pertinent to the actions onstage and to the narratives is how can the figures do now what they say they've already done, as when Frank here and now throws away the clipping he threw away that night in Ballybeg? Roche puts the question more basically when he asks how Frank is even here if he was murdered that night in Ballybeg (113). For Roche the answer lies in audience participation (113-115). Considering the dialogue between storyteller and audience, one understands that, like the discrepant narratives, the actions onstage are incomplete if the audience don't play their part in them. For instance, when Frank says, "I would like to

describe that yard to you," he desires to make present a location that lies elsewhere, to bring to the stage the place he was murdered. This is impossible without someone to hear him, without the you he addresses.

In figural narration, in speech, and in kinesics the ending repeats Frank's murder so immediately that the audience must decide how they will react. One might read Frank's near descent from the stage at the ending of Part One as a rehearsal for this confrontation with the audience, but there he at least tells them what will come. Hat at his chest, Frank walks toward the auditorium, and, after his closing line, pauses until blackout. An audience will ask what he is doing, before considering what they should do. All expectations are upset. The ending bares both stage and actor to offer them up at the hands of the audience. They may clap, but the scenario suggests they do something more.

The roles performer and audience confront one another as perpetrator and witness, as victim and murderer. If, as Frank implies, his murder is his cure, then he becomes, like the sick he has healed, "a successful fiction and therefore actually real." But whose successful fiction? The audience's, because by murdering him again they heal him again. And how real? Real as the actor physically meeting the audience. "At long last," claims Frank in his closing line, "I was renouncing chance." But his every performance in the play Faith Healer subjects him anew to the chance of the stage.

Frank's healing is undercut by the fact that, as Kilroy argues, the play occurs on a stage and its time is the artificial time of the stage ("Theatrical" 101-102). What critics have read as an epiphany of the artist turns out to be the performer's farewell...for tonight.

McGuinness notes how Frank takes the sickness of those he has healed on himself: "His acts of transformation are acts of transference" ("Faith" 62). When in death Frank releases his role as healer to those who have murdered him, at the ending he is releasing his role as performer to the audience. This truly "eerie" situation closes the gap between stage and auditorium and, as metatheater focuses the fiction of theater and is therefore real theater, an audience focus the fiction of performance and therefore are the real performers.

Through the plot element of the faith healing, through the figure of the faith healer, and through the scenography and kinesics at the ending the positions performer and audience become in their mutual dependency interchangeable. In this way, the audience see the role they were playing because they have switched to their counterpart. As the theatrical and the metatheatrical merge, so, too, do performer and audience merge to focus in each the other. The play does more than hold a mirror up to the audience, it brings the audience full swing so that they can see who they have been and who they are. Quiet, motionless, attentively watching the stage, most theater audiences are slaves to convention and, clapping and

cheering, they don't make their presence felt at the final curtain, rather they do the expected. But if a play arouses protest, the actors and production team know they're putting on a show because the audience come to life, and the audience know they're at a show because it has thwarted their wishes and expectations. The audience's performative potential or, in other words, the performer latent in every audience, threatens any performer and any performance. For example, an audience who riot reverse drastically the roles of a performance to make those passive who had been active and themselves active who had been passive. Because the riot seldom begins solely from a performance but is the explosion of such indirectly related issues as public opinion or xenophobia triggered somehow by the performance (Davis), it is a prime example of how audiences bring reality to a stage that may or may not refer to it. In his 1968 talk "The Theatre of Hope and Despair" (which Bruce Wyse calls an apposite subtitle to Faith Healer, 461), Friel cautioned playwrights on espousing revolutionary content in the theater because, although painters or writers may have such freedom of expression, theater people must always remain wary of the recourse to disturbance and even violence by audiences (Brian Friel 19). Frank, the Irishman onstage before an Irish audience, anticipates the response Irish performers have become accustomed to receiving: a riot (passim Morash). This anticipation is evident foremost in Frank's complicity in his

own murder and in his remark "God help them" to Grace's and Teddy's belief that "the Celtic temperament was more receptive to us" (332).

By confronting the theater audience, the figure Frank precipitates his own obliteration, and thus scripts their obliteration, too; the play does not conclude so much as theater ends. The actor/figure implicates the audience in the most "relentlessly and consciously debauched ritual" of the night (340): theater. Because the performer robs the audience of their familiar place, he forces them to relocate themselves with respect to the actor/figure onstage. If Beckett exploded theater by bringing it to its technical limits, Faith Healer shows theater imploding because the performer offers himself up at the hands of the audience and the audience, by sacrificing the performer, obliterate themselves as audience.

When Frank almost steps off the stage at the ending of Part One, Roche observes, the audience may for the first time notice his vivid green socks. An Irishman himself, Roche provides an Irish perspective on Frank's murder:

His story has become increasingly present to us as it homes in on Ireland, implicating the audience in his own fate and what is going to happen, the 'nothing' and the form it will take. What Friel represents is, to draw a term from Joyce's Finnegans Wake, the 'abnihilation' of the faith healer. He is not only the sacrificial scapegoat for a

community's inherited ills, as Christy Mahon was before him; but the play's closing act, which is both an act of destruction (annihilation) and re-creation from nothing, is one rife with possibilities for a new post-colonial identity and drama.

A post-colonial reading of the play might interpret the performer/audience relationship as parabolic of the slave/master relationship between the Stage Irishman and the English audience. "The master created the slave, observed Fanon in a sly parody of Hegel, and the slave in turn defined the master: for the master to abolish the native was to do away with the very grounds of his own being" (Kiberd, Writer 128). The approach is valid and does shed light on the nature of the entertainer as I understand the role.

But I prefer to view the play in its immediate (i.e., performative) context where erasing the difference either of the performer or of the audience results in the end of theater. The slave/master relationship is endemic of performance because every performer is a clown poised between the roles entertainer and turncoat. In most cases, the decision for entertainment or intrigue lies not in the person's hands, but in the dynamics of his relationship to those around him, that is, to his audience. For Faith Healer to carry theater from a point of maximum theatricality to erasure needs a performer both completely dependent on the

audience and capable of turning that dependency against the audience. This is Boucicault's licensed fool and Sandra's comic alter ego. This is also Frank's healing power. If both performer and audience become involved, the height of any performance is, potentially, its "abnihilisation." In the three plays interpreted in this chapter, show is exaggerated to the point where the entertainer confronts his audience so that they no longer can be sure if he is friend or foe.

Onstage, Faith Healer confronts its audience with violence and may just provoke the same. Surveying "the history of the theatre on fire," Read finds that in today's theater because we can take for granted our safety we also must take for granted everything else (230, 236). At the very least, a director of Faith Healer could refuse to bow to convention and, after the ending, leave the house lights off, keep the actors backstage, and make the people find their own way out, as if they were fleeing the scene of a crime.

Chapter 4: Turncoats

Cries from Casement As His Bones Are Brought to Dublin

"Making your farewell appearance, Shakespeare?" Roche is greeted on his final entrance in David Rudkin's Afore Night Come:

JUMBO. Likes the company. Kind of congenial.

TAFFY. Audience, more like. (124)

Ruthless as their humor is, the fruit pickers are correct in that Roche puts on an act for everyone at Hawkes's orchard because he, too, is a Stage Irish.

Not for any dishonesty or betrayal is Roche brutally murdered but for his indomitable performance of the Irish tramp even in the Black Country. Ian McDiarmid, who played the part in 1974 at *The Other Place*, has said:

Roche is like an actor of a style which has gone out of fashion: as soon as he appears, he creates a sense that he is doomed because his 'performance' smells of sham, though he plays it out to the final act with an admirable recklessness. [. . .] Roche self-consciously plays the stage Irishman, the role allotted to him, sometimes with commanding sweep, sometimes like a rank amateur. Rudkin is unusual in that he places the stage Irishman in the tragic centre of the stage, rather than on its comic peripheries, in order to provoke. (qtd. in Rabey 196)

Roche's end, like Frank's according to my interpretation, illustrates the hairline separating the entertainer from the turncoat or, for that matter, the comic from the tragic. Separation is too strong a word because the two roles are best illustrated by a mask one could wear either way, each face expressing the opposite to its flip side. Because Roche confronts his audience with a manner and being they will not accept, he is another entertainer either who provokes his audience or whose audience regard as a provocation. If this is entertainment, they say, then we'll have none. And that is the entertainer's death knell.

Where the entertainer leaves off, the turncoat begins. His relationship to his audience differs only in that he was or could have remained one of them, but somehow has become a threat. To the English in Rudkin's radio play Cries from Casement As His Bones Are Brought to Dublin the figure Roger Casement becomes such a threat. The changing, multifarious selves of the figure Casement comprise the action sequence, so that both structure and performance focus the question of identity. As simple as the opening "Who's who" makes Casement appear, so complex does it turn out that he is. The play cannot answer the question "Who is Casement?" (7), it can only show the figure who plays the Casements who Casement is.

Rudkin's demand that one actor play Casement gives theatrical form to the complicated character of this figure (83). To the one side a hero, to the other a traitor, the

psychology and actions of Casement match closely the personality of the Stage Irish: multiple and intense, changing and slippery. Trying to make sense of the conflicting personalities Casement has bequeathed posterity, the figure the Author calls the move from his strict condemnation of the traitor to his own act of treason "A turnabout" (11). The complexity of the figure Casement is hard to grasp, for the literary critic, for the Author, for the figure Casement himself, and, as I will argue, even for the structure of the play.

Casement's complexity arises from the duality of a figure who, on the one side, is British, a decorated official of the Foreign and Intelligence services, a socialite of the English upper class and who, on the other side, is Ulster Irish, an active member of the Gaelic League, a proponent of human rights in the colonies, a traitor to Great Britain in the First World War, a promiscuous homosexual. Casement is not a split personality, because as such his character would not be complex but merely separated in two. Instead his complexity lies in the further dualities that sprout off the first.

His anticolonial efforts in the Belgian Congo lead him to criticize British actions and policies in the Empire, which include the history of oppression in Ireland. This progression seems yet comprehensible, but his activism for the colonized of Africa arises not only from indignation at the atrocities he witnesses, but also from his libidinal desire. When a

Congolese imagines Casement can heal the wounds he's suffered to his genitalia, Casement wishes he could heal him so that the man will again be whole and beautiful. But Casement wants more than to heal him, he wants for himself the man's "milk." While the powerful of Europe are raping Africa, Casement cries, "Oh Africa rape me, I'll ransack your gorgeous nature's-treasures dry, of milk, in me.—Hush hush, rob's colony, cock's felony. English again" (15). Casement identifies with the colonized because he wishes for himself a passive role, like the rape victim. But his rape is not wholly passive because he cries out for it; moreover, his English socialization forces him, alternately, to repress and to release his homosexual desire, although he sees the double morality of this society: "rob's colony, cock's felony."

Casement continues his promiscuous lifestyle back in England and Ireland, right at the Empire's front door. And his sexual practices become a carnival-like celebration of his sexual being, "a sacred misrule" (Rudkin, Cries 44) at which he plays the King of Misrule ascending again each time after being deposed by a new sexual partner. Casement is a trickster, and the trickster has much in common with the Stage Irish. Casement's sexuality affects his nationality, his prestige, his career, and lastly his newly discovered ethnicity. But Casement's multiplying personality will not be slowed, and he has "now twee fancies of an antic Erin Gaelicly reborn, now prophetic designs for an Ireland dragged up on to

the world's wide stage" (45). So each new duality of his personality branches off, and, most important, Casement's selves are always in motion within and without the norms and laws of society. This is a figure always improvising, always performing. Casement recognizes his identity as performative when he demands his epitaph read, "Here Casement lies, an Ulster Prot who faced the petrifying Gorgon of his split national self, and lived; and chose; the white lily of whose patriotism grew out of his backside" (45). The key performative concept of choosing is syntactically isolated, without subject, only an action.

Radio is particularly suited to an in-depth exploration of personality like Cries from Casement because the medium governs other reception conditions to live theater and the spoken word is primary and the radio actor's differing skills can render such a "tissue-like," subtle text as this dramatic text (81). Intrinsic to radio is the voice, and Casement's voice or voices are intrinsic to the nature of his character as well as to the structure. Accent is far more than a formal aspect of the figures and it serves many more functions than allowing the listener quickly to identify who is speaking. Accent and tone of voice inhibit rather than facilitate comprehension when, for example, the figure Casement speaks in a plethora of accents and tones. It is an important side of the figure that the listener might take all these voices for different people and that, although he says he is "unvoiced"

(true death for a radiotelegraphic figure), the truth of Casement is that these are "Casement's voices, mine, all mine" (16).

Accent is, for example, one route to Casement's ethnic identity, as when he recognizes the difference between himself and the English, imagining an Englishman asking him,

'[. . .] Who wants to speak Seltic when he can speak like us, with such a charming breogue?' (sotto) They are not looking at me. But through me. The English have a God, an ancestral demon, tribal, to whom my racially inferior sense can never be attuned. To these, I am profane. Must I for ever creep back from the lands of the sun to serve such sniffling effigies of men? (Ulsterish) Ay, hat in hand. For bread. (20)

But Casement, traitor to the British nation, Irish rebel, homosexual, can, on the instigation of a hostile Irish Cardinal, speak "quite Paisley-like" (76). The one extreme raises the other, so that piqued (the secondary text before his closing words reads "climax") Casement screams, "I'd liefer be a traitor by their lights than a patriot by these!" (76).

The perspective this opens on the roles of traitor and patriot is that they are choices that depend on which camp one belongs to. At the peroration of his speech from the dock, Casement plays the exemplary Irishman and enlists the power of

choice against the entire legal and social conglomerate Great Britain:

May [the Irish] fight for Ireland? No. For then they are traitors, their deaths and their dreams dishonourable alike. Ireland, that has wronged no man, injured no land, sought no dominion over any, now is treated like a convict among the nations of the earth. If it be 'treason' to fight an unnatural condition such as that, then 'traitor' let me ever be. (66)

The theme "choice" repeats in the motif "road," which appears when Casement makes such weighty decisions as between the English way of life or the fight for Irish independence (sc. 6).

Although I have selected the three plays of this chapter for much different reasons, all three might be advantageously interpreted from their historical aspects. In his 1988 article "The History Play Today," Christopher Murray maintains that "the Irish playwrights of today can deal with history only in a tentative, ironic, or self-conscious way" (287) and so describes aptly the main figures of Cries from Casement, Double Cross, and Mutabilitie who are modeled after famous historical persons. Particularly relevant to the perspective on Ulster history which Cries from Casement takes is Stewart Parker's program note to Northern Star (Lyric Theatre,

Belfast, Nov. 1984), cited by Murray as evidence for his point:

So how to write an Ulster history play?—since our past refuses to express itself as a linear, orderly narrative, in a convincing tone of voice? Tune into any given moment from it, and the wavelength soon grows crowded with a babble of voices from all the other moments, up to and including the present one.

(286)

The stylistic pastiche and “babble of voices” that make up Northern Star lend this stage play to comparison with Rudkin’s similarly constructed radio play.

According to the Author’s assessment, Casement triumphs because he turns his incessant duality and the accompanying self-awareness into his own source of identity: “What is his triumph? This. Through horror, sickness, danger, sodomy, farce, he hacks out a new definition of himself. For that, is he a hero: and not for Ireland only” (24). The diction derives from the colonial project that, after passing through setbacks and defeat, will triumph; Casement, a child of colonialism, triumphs not in, but over colonialism. He is different because he is not of or for one nation alone, “But Casement has a relevance to all mankind. He recreates himself in terms of his own inner truth. That act, courageous, at times humiliating and absurd, transcending poetry and lust and death, makes Roger Casement a hero for the world—” (24-25). Casement’s

fidelity is not to the one or the other nation (thus making the play only indirectly political), but to his "inner truth." Casement, then, forms himself like the artist his work and, therefore, has the hands of an artist. Because he stylizes his life, Casement resembles an Oscar Wilde or, as I will demonstrate below, the figure William (Mutabilitie) or, more generally, the Stage Irish as writer figure. During his lecture, the Author insists on calling Casement, like the speaker of a poem, "the Diarist," and he argues that, as fiction, his writings would be a "masterpiece of Joycean virtuosity" (24).

Casement's re-creation of self has something intertextual to it because out of his old selves he creates new selves. This the Author calls an act (i.e., a performance) transcending "poetry and lust and death." This is why the listener hears from him after his death, because Casement is a part in a play. I am not explaining the figure according to some ultra-realism. Realism has, at best, a tiny part in the stylistic mixture Cries from Casement. I am trying to describe the logic of the performance that constitutes the figure Casement out of a multitude of voices (literally and figuratively) and out of the composite structure I will outline below. The subject who defines himself according to his "inner truth" decides himself between right and wrong. He becomes a critic in one of the original meanings of the word from Greek κρίνω, "to decide disputes," as a judge decides

cases. Both Casement and the Author play critic by deciding for Roger Casement's innocence in the treason trial. Before a figure like Casement, law and morality lose their power. In a figure like Casement, our defining roles in the family and in society and at work become mere improvisations. Casement's self-questioning leads to his question "What brief is that?" (14), which opens the possibility that authority lies in one's self, that right is subjective. He discovers this by attacking the Empire and by having taboo and, at that time, illegal sex.

Casement's self-definition, his self-recreation, is an ongoing act that exceeds lust and death and, most significantly, poetry. I argue that he exceeds poetry by exceeding the bounds of the play. It is important to note that a figure (i.e., the Author) is interpreting another figure during the action sequence. Not only does this anticipate what the audience and the critics will do, but it also recasts Casement's relevance for the play and for Ireland. Because Casement attends self-consciously to his relevance and because this play about Casement attends reflexively to the relevance of its main figure, the line between fact and fiction blurs so that the figure Casement takes on proportions that appear to exceed the bounds of the play.

This I will explicate in two steps. First, I will analyze the structure of Cries from Casement in order to show how it relates to the figure Casement and how it makes ambiguous the text's stance between fact and fiction. Second, I will examine

the central motif "burial/exhumation" in order to show how it completes the figure Casement in his capacities within and without the play; that is, as a radiotelegraphic figure and as a figure about this radio play.

Like the figure it portrays, the dramatic structure stratifies and multiplies. In the action sequence I identify five main action phases that are fundamentally significant to the structure and, consequently, to the main figure.

The first action phase is set in February 1965 and comprises the scenes 2, 4, 8, 10, and 11. The play's unwieldy title Cries from Casement As His Bones Are Brought to Dublin focuses the audience's attention in an otherwise bewildering assembly of voices and figures by describing this first action phase. In the stead of identical scenery for these five scenes, the airplane's engines punctuate the production to set each time again this action phase. Although the play does not permit sharp structural divisions, I find the beginning and the ending of the first action phase in Casement's exhumation (sc. 2) and burial (sc. 11), each action marked by his cry, so that the main figure's voice gives the play its ultimate structural cohesion.

We first encounter Casement when Dr. Crippen tells him they are bringing him to Ireland. He complains,

You have interrupted me again. A sauncy young
fella of a fusilier was openin his thighs for me.

CRIPPEN. Oy oy oy oy, oy, oy, oy; does that have to
be your first remark?

CASEMENT. I must die up to my black reputation.

CRIPPEN. Quiet; you'll upset your admirers.

CASEMENT. Ours will be no dialogue for admirers. (9)

That Casement knows that he is playing a part before an audience contributes to the play's complexity. What he himself calls his "paradoxical significance" (77) is evidenced not only by his alteration of the phrase to live up to one's reputation, but also by his survival of death itself. More complicated still is identifying any Casement beneath all his different appearances: he is bones crying from a coffin; he is the voice of the "Black Diaries"; he is a figure in the Author's projected play, in which he plays himself as he is, as he could have been, and as he will be; he acts the part of the traitor; he narrates his treason trial; and he haunts the Republic and the audience until the reunification of North and South.

A further aspect of this complex figure is his partner Dr. Crippen. An American doctor practicing in England, the historical Dr. Crippen was executed in 1910 for poisoning his wife and, interestingly for this radio play, was the first criminal to be apprehended by the use of radiotelegraphy. He fulfills a functional-structural necessity by providing the lone figure Casement with an interlocutor. I believe this functional-structural banality has been overlooked in the

research. It explains the many duos of theater, from Laurel and Hardy to Vladimir and Estragon, or in a more immediately Irish context from Public Gar and Private Gar to Charlie and Jake (Stones in His Pockets). At times, Dr. Crippen and Casement resemble a comedy act, Casement the straight man to his partner's "felon's jibes" (Rudkin, Cries 16). Although Dr. Crippen becomes silent on arrival in Dublin, some of his taints Casement's remains (8, 10, 69), so that even after re-burial the question "Who (or which) is Casement?" must perforce be left unanswered.

The second action phase relates meta-structurally to the first. It is set contemporaneously with the first broadcast in February 1973 and comprises the two scenes 1 and 7. The setting I deduce from the casting of two World-at-One commentators and Joan Bakewell and also from the meta-radiotelegraphic elements of the two scenes.

Both scenes are in documentary style. If one imagines hearing scene 1 in the normal sequence of radio programming, one can see how it could be mistaken for a documentary or, at least, for an introductory note on the following production. This illusion is broken, at the latest, by the crier's first line "Oyez, oyez!" and the first sound effects: crowd noises and the crier's bell. The Announcers who then speak provides throughout the play information on the respective settings, thus acting in her meta-radiotelegraphic capacity established in this scene. She is missing only in the two

scenes 10 (which Casement narrates) and 7 (which the World-at-One speakers commentate). In sum, this second action phase, besides providing cohesion to the discordant action sequence, introduces through its meta-structural form the dichotomy "fact/fiction" vital to the figure Casement.

The third action phase is set sometime during the 1970s and comprises the scenes 3, 5, and 6. These three scenes are about the Author's research into and interpretation of Roger Casement. This action phase ends with three scenes (in sc. 6) from the Author's unfinished play.

Cries from Casement anticipates the criticism of both audience and critics. Not only does the Author, after research and thought, reach his own opinion about Casement, but he also writes scenes for a play on him. The Casement of this action phase is the Casement of the "Black Diaries," whereas the Casement of the first action phase is Casement's bones, a fictional Casement from beyond the grave. But precisely these structural attributes call attention to the fictionality of the Casement of the "Black Diaries," of that construct the Author calls "the Diarist," as well as of any other Casement of the play. As I will argue below in connection with the epilogue, this ubiquitous fictionality and Casement's awareness of it make him Stage Irish.

Like Casement "the Diarist," the Author is just "the Author," although one thinks to be able to read David Rudkin into the figure. This sort of mischievous self-reference and

the inclusion of biographical tidbits is Stage Irishry, especially when the author covers his tracks in an obvious way. Since the figure Casement cannot even be called the author of the "Black Diaries," but must like the speaker of a poem remain anonymous, so must the Author remain anonymous and the question of his identity as a figure in the play is reinscribed onto the theme "fictionality." As we listen to the radio play, faint reverberations of David Rudkin sound and again are silent. Viewed together with this action phase, the play Cries from Casement lacks an author, even lacks the authority to portray the historical Casement, and so remains incomplete.

What will complete it lies outside its power: the course of history. Only the figure Casement is prominent in all the main action phases and only this figure can contain the fragmentary form of the play. Much like Roebuck to Lyrick, the figure becomes larger than the author. One of the features of the Stage Irish is that they are dramatic figures who intrude on the audience and take on dimensions larger than the plays they have their parts in. Viewing a Stage Irish, the audience often ask "Who is playing who, the actor the part or the part the actor?" When the part is strong enough—and it is historical biography that often provides the stuff that no fiction could invent—it will overpower actor, author, and audience alike.

The fourth action phase is set during Roger Casement's stay in Germany (1914-1916) and comprises the scene 9. This scene stands out amongst the others primarily through its realistic form. The scene is formally isolated because it has no immediate structural connection to the other action phases. Accent being constitutive of character in this play, even the Announceress is a different one speaking with a German accent (for which the first production cast an actual German announceress).

In many ways, the Casement we meet in scene 9 is different. For the first and only time he speaks in an effeminate voice (46), and he designs for the Irish Brigade a sissy uniform that gets the soldiers the ironic abuse "Here comes an Englishman'" (55). His jealousy for his intimate companion Adler, actually a spy for the English, blinds him to his betrayal. This Casement appears so differently because he really is a hollow shell, a mask already discarded; he is not the figure Casement who stands at the center of the play, but "A shadow, the man of me gone" (61). Casement narrates his capture, his trial, and his hanging in the following scene (sc. 10) and when he recounts the witnesses' statements and the Attorney-General's address, their depiction of him is alienating: "My speeches, gestures at the Limburg camp thrown back at me: mine, undeniable; mine, unrecognizable. What Casement these prisoners depict! poor, ridiculous, a scarecrow" (61). The Casement of scene 9 is a hollow image,

distorted like one's reflection in water, but still one's reflection. "[The Attorney-General] described my time in Germany: myself in a mirror again; but not the man shown there. The facts might be in this indictment; the truth was not" (62). Casement has a job to do in Germany, but one task of his and all the persons and personalities going into his true self could hardly coincide neatly enough to form a tight case for his defense before a court of law.

So both the structure, in its isolation of scene 9, and the figure Casement, in his remembrance of the trial, make the Casement who commits treason in Germany strange, foreign, other. This Casement is a mere part in the drama of the colonial politics that led to the First World War; he is a role anyone would be forced to play, anyone, that is, who were in Casement's precarious position at this juncture in history and in "a crack in the kingdom" of Great Britain (21). This is the turncoat's comic part in a tragedy; this is the traitor English Imperialism creates by dictating the part those it oppresses must play. In his famous speech from the dock in 1916, Roger Casement recognized the tremendous odds in this area he had been up against: "This court, this jury, the public opinion of this country, England, cannot but be prejudiced in varying degrees against me, most of all in time of war" (Deane, Field 2: 296).

From the opposite perspective, one might see the rebel's, the traitor's, or the homosexual's part as un-scripted because

they are not normal parts in English society. At best, these parts, being interstitial positions with much freedom of action, are attributed the role outsider. Someone like Casement coming back from the colonies sees antebellum "societeh" (44) for the theater it is and can choose the part he will play, as Lord Beaverbrook (Double Cross) puts it, in this "most complex civilization since the Romans" (1286). Likewise when one discovers one's own brooding subconscious (which Casement lives out in his sexual practices), one finds the underside and backstage to the performance of society. If the English are supposed to have brought the stage to Ireland, then the Stage Irish bring it back—and not just to the playhouses of London.

The fifth action phase I call the epilogue because it stands outside the play proper and forms a structural counterweight to the prologue-like scene 1. The epilogue comprises Casement's and the Youth's short dialogue at the ending. Since the first action phase ends with Casement's cry as they lower him into the grave in Glasnevin, all that follows must belong to a different action phase. The burial is the "typically macabre Irish farce" the balladeer sings of at the beginning of the first action phase (11). If Cries from Casement ended here, its tone would resemble that of Heavenly Bodies and the "typically macabre Irish farce" that ends that play. But Cries from Casement continues after the punch line, a structural fact with important consequences for the figure

Casement and his position in relation to the play and the audience. What distinguishes the dialogue of Casement and the Youth, James Anderson, is this new voice speaking "formalized Ulster" (Rudkin, Cries 76). On casting this part, Rudkin writes: "The Youth of the closing pages must be authentic; and he is most effective if his voice has not been heard at all till then" (84). Although the first broadcast doubled the part, Rudkin's published text, a revision of the production script, indicates James Anderson's is "a voice completely new to us" (76). My argument will therefore be based on an ideal production that would realize Rudkin's wish in the published text.

Since the cold wind that blows throughout the dialogue resembles (as the secondary text indicates) the "Wind of Time" from scene 7, one first associates the two action phases, but the dialogue exceeds the meta-radiotelegraphic level even of scene 7. For one, the figures' statuses and the location of the epilogue are complicated in comparison to the real-life announcers and commentators of the second action phase. "A patriot, not yet born," James Anderson talks with Casement after his second burial and reminds him that he is dead (76). Casement affirms, "Ay. I am dead" (77). The snow falling after the funeral, James Anderson tells us, "makes the buried doubly dead" (77). The emphasis here on death, not to mention the confusing statuses of both figures, impede the search for some meaning in their peculiar situation. That meaning, though, the

figures themselves explain, as the Author has tried before them. Conceding they will have to exhume Casement again, James Anderson informs him about the Border:

CASEMENT. Now I understand. The job's not done.

Relevance on relevance, me in my life a symbol of Ireland's seceding, a token of her fracture in my death: an exile even in my grave. Am I to have no rest from paradoxical significance? Have I to be exhumed and buried yet again? (77)

Now Casement understands; that is, now he sees his own significance. But his significance is paradoxical, understandable only when he will have been exhumed and buried yet again.

When Casement asserts the job is not done, he means more than just his burial because that is contingent on the reunification of Ireland. The fifth action phase is larger than the play itself, because when Cries from Casement ends, the figure Casement is still waiting for the time that will bring his final peace. So this action phase blends with the events of the real world just as the figure Casement does with the historical figure as well as with contemporary events in Ireland. The play must repeat itself before the figure Casement will be complete. Casement is paradoxically significant because as a human he survives his own death and as a dramatic figure he survives the play he appears in.

This epilogue bears comparison with the epilogue of Bertolt Brecht's Der gute Mensch von Sezuan. Jan Knopf argues that the famous verse

Wir stehen selbst enttäuscht und sehn betroffen

Den Vorhang zu und alle Fragen offen. (6.278)

refers not to the action sequence, because Shen Te's fate is sealed, but to the actions the audience must now take so that another Shen Te will not suffer the same end. Likewise, though in a very different context, the first action phase of Cries from Casement is finished, but the question of Casement's final resting place is still open. Since Casement's personality won't come to rest until his bones come to rest, which in turn won't come to rest in Antrim until Ireland reunites, then the figure remains in limbo awaiting the dissolution of the Border. In the play Casement is not a paradoxical figure, but beyond the play he is.

In his final speech he signifies the paradox of a divided Ireland. "Tear this old bitch Erin off your backs"; "Ireland, Ireland," demands Casement, kill the murdering symbol of your country (78). Casement shows the Irish that they have the choice, that they make Irish what they want to make Irish. Choose! is Casement's cry. And he himself chose, as he would have his epitaph testify (45). He does not replace Erin as a new symbol of the country because he is a mere "token" (77), but he becomes an agent in the change he demands. When he tells James Anderson "I'll plead with these," he is referring

to the Irish of the Republic, but the group closest to him is the audience so that them, too, he addresses with his demand.

I now turn to the second step in my argument for the super-radiotelegraphic proportions of the figure Casement: the motif "burial/exhumation."

First and foremost, the play is about two burials, the one in Pentonville in 1916 and the second in Glasnevin in 1965. And not only the epilogue opens the possibility of a third burial, but the Author, too, says that Casement's funeral "might yet, as we shall see, have to be done again a third time [. . .]" (20). Although his comment "as we shall see" most likely refers generally to the future, the Author may have been saving some new information for his lecture interrupted by terrorist violence. Also possible is that he is referring to the selfsame scene at the ending in which Casement predicts his re-burial at Irish reunification. Far from disproving my structural analysis (which, anyway, claims no exclusiveness), the Author's knowledge of the ending proves the structural complexity and reflexivity of a play about a man who defies all definition but his own self-defining.

The motif "burial/exhumation" lies primarily in word choice. Rudkin explains that he set the action in "a box" (i.e., a radio) because the radio actor's voice, unlike the stage actor's, is "internal," delicately suggestive, and would do justice to the text's "tissue-like nature, so many subtle resonances rising from and across it" (81). Resonant is this

motif in another box, too: Casement's coffin. During his research into the "Black Diaries," the Author fears Casement's dead hand and, during his trial, Casement is "throttled" by the dead hand of Edward III enforcing his Act passed in 1351 (12, 65). The dead reach from out their graves into our lives. As a figure in the play, Casement is a phantom and, as a voice on the radio and invisible to the listener, he surrounds and haunts the listener even when finally silent.

The form of Cries from Casement may be an integral part of Casement, but it does not contain its own main figure because he will rise again. The Author argues that, sometime around 1910, "the Diarist's personality—as shown in his writing—begins to fragmentate" (22). The writing is a kind of palimpsest (a rising of one writing through another), the Diarist's sexual adventures penned over and among his business, his routines, and his meticulous record of everything from plant life on the Amazon to mileage traveled. Rising up through the one writing, or the one self, is another and another, so that the scribbled page becomes the image of the figure.

The Author later includes this in his depiction of the man Casement "could have, but did not, become" (26). In the first production, broadcaster and writer Joan Bakewell interviews an aged Casement, Lord Ballycastle, but another Casement keeps rising through this exterior. For example, Lord Ballycastle comments on his stay in the town Iquitos, where

the soldiers wear "the slovenliest blue uniforms—fine specimens, but abominable" (27). He repeatedly begs the question and causes awkward silences by refusing to provide the interviewer with details. Overall we see a Casement whose subterranean self founders his attempts to appear the Establishment man.

Another form of writing that characterizes the figure Casement is the citation, also a kind of boxing. During Casement's lying in state at the proCathedral, Dublin, a mother and her son pay their respects:

BOY. What's in the box, Ma?

MA. Coffin.

BOY. What's in the box, Ma?

MA. A hero of Ireland. A martyr. (72-73)

Inside the sarcophagus is the coffin. Inside the coffin are Casement's bones. And inside Casement's bones is the spirit of the man? The infinite regression typical of the citation is performed here in the boy's innocently repeated question. To stress this point, the actress might even speak the mother's second response as if she were repeating what she has heard tell. In the end, there is no Casement, only endless motion in his performance of himself.

Casement even cites each time the accusation being made against him: "'traitor'" (61, 66). The Attorney-General strips to the bone Casement's defense that his gun running was to arm the South against the Carsonites, "a post factum invention, an

'exhumed defence' from the accusing biography in which I now found myself" (65). The citation "'exhumed defence,'" an apposite description of the play, focuses the significance of the motif "burial/exhumation." Because we hear the Attorney-General's prosecution from Casement's mouth, it, too, is a citation; therefore, when the English Actor claims (sc. 1), "Judicial process perfectly proper," the Irish Actress's addition "On paper" describes the legal perspective, not the narrator Casement's. Legal judgment crushes Casement's defense, but his "forty-minute monologue" (Rudkin, Cries 82) about his capture, imprisonment, trial, and hanging acquits him. Casement's counsel, the Irishman Sullivan, argues on a technicality that the Treason Act does not apply. He is not so much concerned with the "medieval comma" that may or may not have been on the page, he wants rather to prove what is right, namely that an Irish person resisting the English is no traitor: "I could have saved your life...But at what cost...Your reputation...Such hard decisions..." (71). Likewise, reputation has motivated many Irish inmates of British prisons to obtain, through the most demeaning and grueling self-tortures, political status.

If one re-inscribes the Attorney-General's words onto the exhumed defense that the Author, the play, and even Casement give, it becomes clear that the same arguments the British nation used to condemn him, the Irish nation used to esteem him a patriot. Such a re-inscription turns the Attorney-

General's rhetoric for Casement's fabricated defense into a reappraisal of the man's past. The Irish, on the other hand, would counter that whether or not the guns were for an attack on the North, Casement's object was always the same: Irish independence. To this end, any means are permissible, whether it is a deal with the Germans, violence against Ulster, or perjury. But neither nation accepts the Casements lurking below the surface of the traitor or the patriot; neither nation can finally bury Casement until they've come to terms with all that is in him, because it is in them and of them, too.

Double Cross

The title Double Cross succinctly expresses the Stage Irish role as the turncoat. Brendan Bracken and William Joyce betray Ireland by acting English, their Irishness betrays them to the English, and the English betray Bracken by pretending not to notice he's pretending and Joyce by breaking faith with an exalted, pure, ultra-conservative idea of Englishness. That the doubles Bracken and Joyce cross in one actor is the masterstroke of a play by a major, if not prolific playwright of twentieth-century Irish theater. But Thomas Kilroy has also been a director and an academic, whose literary criticism draws insight from his practice. And both the play Double Cross and its first producer, the theater company of the renowned Field Day, have much to say about the Irish-English

relations that comprise the stage where the turncoat plays out his part.

The division of Double Cross into two parts reflects the statuses of the main figures Brendan Bracken and William Joyce. Though divided in two and, therefore, forming a whole, the play Double Cross consists of two plays: "The Bracken Play: London" and "The Joyce Play: Berlin." This contradictory structure coheres through the one actor playing the lead in both parts, so that only in performance do the play's plays come together. So despite Bracken's and Joyce's denials, they have met because they are the same. Bracken and Joyce also meet in their capacities as Ministers of Information of their countries of choice. The Actor and the Actress not only explain the work Joyce does for Nazi propagandists, but they also perform some of the announcements he would make on his program.

ACTOR. No wonder Mr Bracken was concerned.

ACTRESS. As Minister of Information, that is-

ACTOR. Information being his business, as it were-

ACTRESS. And therefore misinformation as well, not
to mention disinformation-

ACTOR. It was as if a Ministry of Misinformation had
been set up to counteract his Ministry of
Information.

ACTRESS. Absolute duplication-

ACTOR. Or rather mis-duplication-

ACTRESS. Intolerable.

ACTOR. Insupportable.

ACTRESS. Action simply had to be taken!

ACTOR. And, at once! (1293)

The Nazi Government's misinformation (what they tell wrongly) and disinformation (what they omit) become the English Government's information, along with their own lies, exaggerations, and omissions (i.e., their own misinformation and disinformation). The two warring nations build up Ministries of Information that are in the constant process of re-presenting the other side's work, or, in the Actor's words, of mis-duplicating the enemy. But mis-duplication is redundant for duplication since no two duplicates are ever alike.

Against the usual neutrality the Actor's and the Actress's "anonymous coats" exhibit (1277), they become agitated and thus perform this process of duplication by appealing for the same thing in different words. Because each alters the other's hackneyed phrases of indignation in order to repeat his or her sentiments, the possibility arises that instead of meaning the same, they might only be appearing to. It is easy to find two people equally angry over some point, but difficult to have them agree on just how that point has angered them.

Both Double Cross and Mutabilitie show how politics and government are theatrical by exposing for constructs the principles and values they base themselves on. There is nothing inherently English about England; and the island or

islands that were so important to the nation's history have been nothing more than geographical opportunities. It is this conception of nationhood that motivates the turncoat, who sees his nationality as a part and his nation as a play.

Notwithstanding, central to the turncoat is the question of fidelity: to which side, to which persons, to which sides of himself does he remain faithful in the belief that these persons or things are greater than the empty shells of nation or the national, of male or female, or of English or Irish.

That Englishness is representation one can see in the way Joyce is disloyal to the Crown. The Lady Journalist calls his simultaneous loyalty and disloyalty both contradictory and repugnant. Although Joyce had applied for British citizenship, as the secondary text informs the reader (1275), it was never granted, so that his efforts in Berlin to convince the English that their future lies in fascism, that their Englishness requires them to side with the Germans, may excellently serve German propaganda, but actually are meant as his ultimate proof of service to the English race. That Joyce has a critical eye for the Germans can be seen in his belief that they waste their ingenuity on sausages. And the only German figure, Erich, is a walking stereotype: first, an asinine imitation of the Stage Englishman, and then the Stage Prussian.

Between the poles loyalty and disloyalty, in analogy to information and disinformation, there lies mis-loyalty, a new

aspect of or a different perspective on loyalty. Mis-loyalty is unapproved, unauthorized, yet possible loyalty, since one can interpret it as loyalty. Joyce, for instance, sees his loyalty to England in pursuit of the fascist ideal, but the country decided against that route. The dramatic text makes clear that things could have happened differently (e.g., 1284) and that some had imagined things happening differently (e.g., the Blue Shirts). From Joyce's perspective, he is made a traitor for the same reason Casement perceives himself as having been made a traitor: mis-loyalty—because the powerful decide to who, to what, and how one should be loyal. Joyce's mis-loyalty finds an outlet in his radio program:

ACTRESS. If William Joyce was re-inventing England,
 England was also re-inventing William Joyce.

ACTOR. This is what is known as the Principle of
 Circularity.

ACTRESS. Other students of the Imagination refer to
 it as the Double Cross Effect.

ACTOR. It is endemic in situations of conflict
 between nations.

ACTRESS. It frequently breaks out between writers
 and their readers.

ACTOR. Who is telling whose story and to whom?

JOYCE. (Declaration of belief) Every man has his
 secret desire to betray. It is intimately related

to his desire for freedom. We simply need the key
to unlock it. (1293)

It is at the site of mis- that Stage Irishry occurs. Whether the Stage Irish bows to authority or tries to subvert it, he will always be acting a mis- because he is not English; therefore, in performance, the Stage Irish has always inhabited this precarious, interstitial space which is no position or (in the terms of Read's ethic of the theater) which is a disposition amiss. In this way the figure makes out of essences such as Irishness and Englishness mere material that he can shape any way he pleases. And this is the knowledge that the self-aware, performative Stage Irish gain: that one need only re-interpret nationality to suit one's needs because nationality is an interpretation or, more precisely, a form open to interpretation.

The Double Cross Effect, from which the play, in part, takes its title, describes the inventiveness of the imagination in its contact with the outside world. Joyce's is "the voice of alternative possibilities" that releases "the most potent subversion of all: the imagination of the people" (Kilroy, Double 1293). Whether Joyce's radio program is seen as "infection" or as "inspiration" depends on the perspective. The Actor and the Actress tell us that the Double Cross Effect is common to both war and literature and, similarly, Kilroy finds it both in the theater and in the act of betrayal when he writes, "I have always been fascinated by the fact that the

act of deception is common to theatricality and criminality" (introduction 11-12). Sometimes Joyce's announcements are actually true, but not because of research or particular fidelity to the facts, but only because of his own ingenuity and inventiveness. The real basis of his work is nothing next to the effect and the creativity of the people's imaginations. This goes for propaganda as for art.

The theme "deception" suits Bracken's part in "The Bracken Play: London" as the dandy in a Comedy of Manners, and it is this style as well as explicit references that recall Oscar Wilde's life and art. Wilde's philosophical tenet "Life imitates Art," on the one hand, makes a work of art out of one's life and, on the other hand, positions the act of deception at the center of human existence, because the will to find expression for our lives brings us unavoidably into conflict with the existing conventional forms society affords us. Although Wilde seemed the quintessential Englishman, he was actually a more subversive figure than his appearance spoke. History acknowledges this in his trial, imprisonment, divorce, and, finally, separation from his family. But what is this criminality at the center of his perfection of the Englishman?

First, his parody of Englishness is subversive because, like Judith Butler's parody of gender, it exposes origins, essence, and normalcy for the imitations the powerful deny them being. Furthermore, parody unsettles the powerful because

their power, operating as it does through the production of those same binary frames for thinking that someone like Wilde parodies (Butler xxviii), becomes laughable, a joke infinitely funnier than the parody itself. Abhorrent to the England which the Irish fascists have taken "to some terrible logical meaning of their own" (1305), the Lady Journalist is terrified not only by the idea of a fascist England, but also by these fascists' implication that a true England can only be fascist.

Second, playing the part of the stereotype requires an ironic distancing of the self from the part one is playing. Again to take Wilde's example, everything about him, his clothes, his buttonholes, his posture, his gestures, his speech—everything was as studied and rehearsed as an actor's appearance onstage. Bracken's appearance is the same: "I happen to subscribe to the Wildean notion that one must make of one's life a work of art. We're given pretty dismal material to start with. One must shape it into significance. I believe that that's what's meant by salvation" (1282). If one adopts the part of Irish or English by choice, one robs these entities of any essential meaning because playing Irish or English discounts the normal sense of being Irish or English. The ironic distance of the performed stereotype exposes it for the mere form it is, while at the same time reinterpreting that form to one's own ends. In this way Englishness, for instance, can become anything one deems it. But a nation cannot be founded on such shaky ground, so the status quo

tries to eternalize itself in a set of symbols and stereotypes of the nation that every citizen must accept or at least pretend to accept.

This latter kind of citizen is illustrated in the Canadian Max Aitken, Lord Beaverbrook, who is perfectly aware that his Englishness as well as that of the English themselves is a fiction:

Oh, anyone can be British. Doesn't matter who you are, where you come from, what the colour of your skin is. All you need is a modest command of the language and a total commitment to a handful of symbols, some of which are pretty ludicrous. But they work. (1303)

They work because British civilization, in Lord Beaverbrook's words, is based on "common sense" (1303). The accent here rests on common, because for England to work for Lord Beaverbrook and for Lord Beaverbrook to work for England they must understand the same thing by Englishness. This understanding must become belief if, as in times of war, it is ever threatened. Common signifies neither lowness nor meanness, but, in this case, the community of English citizens, whose "handful of symbols" function like New England town commons and provide them with places to meet and communicate. In a further reading of common, the English of the Lord Beaverbrook type must be willfully dull-witted to be able to countenance the contradiction at the center of their

identity. This aspect of common sense resembles George Orwell's double think or Peter Keegan's "secret of the Englishman's strange power of making the best of both worlds": "Let not the right side of your brain know what the left side doeth" (182). This is also the way colonialism functions with the theory on one side (i.e., in the mother country) and the practice on the other (i.e., in the colony).

If one takes the stereotype to greater heights by exposing its fiction while at the same time exhibiting the fictiveness of one's act of exposure, common sense becomes an impossibility and there remains no choice but betrayal. This is the point at which, as Lord Beaverbrook recognizes, "[. . .] treason creates a reflection of what is betrayed—so intolerable that it has to be destroyed—a kind of terrifying mirror or something—" (1303). Because Joyce is a sinister version of Wilde embodying the existential questions posed by his tenet "Life imitates Art," he contrasts with the dandy Bracken, who only superficially illustrates this tenet. Joyce takes his knowledge on "how to master nature" to the other side (i.e., to the Germans) because his idea of Englishness would mean the end of what Englishness is (1303). That the Second World War builds the setting is only logical because particularly in wartime must a nation countervail the lack of and self-division in their own identity not only by attacking the enemy, but also by projecting on that enemy everything despicable and hateful so that they must be attacked. English

colonialism in Ireland had the same effects because colonial agents portraying themselves as exemplary Englishmen—when most often they came to their positions because they were anything but exemplary—exposed “the element of play-acting, this Stage English aspect of colonialist culture” (Kiberd, Writer 2). So in order to confirm its Englishness, the colonial power Great Britain, just like Great Britain at war with Germany, had to fight the enemy—be they Irish or German or any other group considered non-English—while attributing to that enemy belligerent national character.

And this leads to the third and final reason for the criminality perceived in the perfection of the stereotype: the performer accesses the imagination of his audience in much the same ways that the writer does the reader and the propagandist does his listeners, and this license to the imagination is the most subversive act anyone can make against a state or its citizens. The setting and the situation in Double Cross is comparable to that of Donal O’Kelly’s Catalpa—The Movie, in which Matthew Kidd shoots the movie he has failed to sell to the producers. O’Kelly writes the following on performing this one-person show:

The theatrical challenge is to flick images into the audience’s heads, to stimulate their imaginations so that they will see the Catalpa at sea, they will see and hear and feel and smell the Atlantic swell, the whale blubber, the scorched Australian shore. The

instruments used to do this are the text itself—the images described, the bits of dialogue, the words used, the sounds, with movement, gesture, energy, stillness, with music sometimes, with lighting, and the use of a few select props. But the main function of all of these is to kick-start the most important instrument of all: the audience's imagination. (10)

The images so produced are not uniform, like in film, but individual because every figure, scene, sight, sound, and smell are the prerogative of the audience's imagination as suggested by the actor's body. To like end, Double Cross uses not just the actor's body, but commandeers the entire stage, its architecture, scenery, machines, and lighting.

Bracken's and Joyce's relationship, which to interpret is to interpret the play, takes shape through four accesses to audience imagination: (1) through the structure of the dramatic text, (2) through the constitutive power of speech in the stage production, (3) through the figures' understandings of themselves, (4) and through the three media radio, television, and theater.

First, as I've shown, what one figure does as Minister of Information the other undoes as Minister of Misinformation. Bracken is to Joyce the Other, the carnival self, the Lord of Misrule, and vice versa. They hurl at each other, as terms of abuse, the names clown, traitor, and trickster. In relation to the other figure, Bracken and Joyce respectively are the

trickster, that figure of world literature who enjoys the license of the fool, who breaks taboos, and who usually ends reaffirming the social order he belongs to. Although they are both Irish, Bracken and Joyce are incorporated into English society, the former accepted because of his splendid performance of the Englishman and the latter rejected and hung because of his act of treason. That Joyce is moved to treason by a hyper-loyalty to his idea of Englishness only justifies his condemnation.

One further parallel between the two figures is that they both claim never to have met the other, but through the stage production's use of the medium television they do meet. Historical and dramatic reality are conflated, and the result is that the audience can no longer decide which is true. The imagination is freed to the possibilities and must decide (or refuse to decide) on its own. The timeline preceding the dramatic text first opens the possibility that the historical Bracken and the historical Joyce met in 1931. But even there it is only rumor that such a meeting took place or that Joyce attended (1275). Over the onstage screen the two do meet, but the question of their figural statuses still persists. For example, during what I call the prologue to "The Bracken Play" (i.e., everything before the Actor and the Actress exit), the secondary text never indicates, as it does for the Actor and the Actress, that Bracken and Joyce are addressing the audience. Only once does one of the two (Bracken) use the

second person, but I explain this singular instance as a rhetorical turn of speech that has no appellative function. The one on the stage and the other either over the sound system or on the screen, Bracken and Joyce talk about each other but not to each other. I get the impression that they are talking to each other because the one seems to be angering the other with his insults: the more the one abuses the other, the more abusive he becomes. Actually they are holding two heated dialogic monologues (Pfister 129-130) because, when the onstage media show them talking to each other, they are actually talking to themselves. So what seems an argument between two Ministers of warring nations proves to be a mess of individual, psychological problems. Bracken and Joyce are their own worst enemies.

Bracken and Popsie are listening to Joyce's program when Bracken dips the volume, as he continually does, and roars, "He referred to me!" Popsie answers, "Rubbish" (1281). Popsie is too literal-minded to deny and too close to the set to have missed Joyce saying "Mr Brendan Bracken." This opens the possibility that Bracken and Popsie are hearing two different programs, one over the radio waves of the world of the play and one in Bracken's head, broadcast over the sound system. The techniques available for presenting the voices a figure hears in his head have been tried and developed in Irish drama, in particular, by Samuel Beckett. Beckett's most experimental forms in this area he wrote for the radio;

therefore, I find it important that Kilroy not only originally conceived of Double Cross as a radio drama (Achilles and Imhof 65) and had broadcast on BBC 3 his radio play That Man, Bracken, but also that the stage production makes extensive use of radio.

We often see the one figure through the eyes of the other, so that the Bracken of "The Joyce Play" appears the self-assured, pragmatic politician hunting down the crazed fascist William Joyce and, in contrast, the Bracken of "The Bracken Play" appears the feebleminded romantic hunted by Lord Haw Haw's program and blackmailed by a mysterious "brother" figure. Removing Bracken's costume to expose him, Joyce ends "The Bracken Play." Joyce pursues him until he can no longer escape what is inside him, and then he drives him from the stage by taking over the actor playing him. This onstage visualization of the turncoat's act I call the "turncoat scene," a performance of the betrayal of self. That "The Bracken Play" might be viewed through Joyce's eyes, and vice versa, focuses the theme "perspective." These two figures, outside the action sequence, might be positioned somewhere close to the audience; in other words, their roles in certain scenes are not directed at the other figures of the play nor at the audience of a performance, but at each of their reflections of the other. Bracken and Joyce not only perceive each other differently than each perceives himself, but their perceptions of each other also effect the other's character

and the other's actions, just as audience perception fundamentally makes a performance. "The Bracken Play" and "The Joyce Play," like a freakish theater building where one stage is pointed at another stage, combine the performances of audience and performer in one figure who appears to be two.

The irony of the "turncoat scene" is that both Joyce's and Bracken's loyalty to England is constructed through their performances to hide their Irish backgrounds. The turning of the actor's coat proves that their relation is identical. Whether loyal to England or to fascist England, both betray themselves and fail to attain the loyalty they strive for. Bracken and Joyce are one but not the same; the figures are two variations on the theme of betrayal. The "turncoat scene" demonstrates the actor's doubling behind the figures Bracken and Joyce and proves that one actor is capable of playing the arch-patriot and the arch-traitor.

Second, the stage production accesses the imagination by the way it defines the relationship between Bracken and Joyce. In the first Field Day production the actor was Stephen Rea, who Kilroy credits with having helped create the figure Bracken/Joyce and for who he says Double Cross was written (introduction 15).

That one actor doubles as Bracken and Joyce seems to make their meeting at least in the action sequence impossible, even though the onstage screen allows the actor to face his image in one of the final action phases. But the question remains

whether Bracken and Joyce really meet here. The secondary text indicates that the dialogue "may be spoken by the actor onstage, with closed eyes" (1304). Although the ending seems to oppose the opening now by monologizing the dialogue, such opposition actually rests on a common structure turned either inside out or outside in. Since Joyce is being detained in London prisons, at least in this action phase their meeting is made plausible, but in performance it can only be a product of the imagination. They never meet in the form of one person standing across from another and experiencing their physical presence. In this reprise of what I have called the "turncoat scene," Joyce speaks the lines he would otherwise be hearing in his head, while the screen shows the image he sees in his mind. I call this action phase a reprise because it occurs at the same structural point in the action as the "turncoat scene" (i.e., the penultimate action phase of the act/play), it refers to this scene, and it functions similarly. In "reverie," Joyce talks to Jesus, to Margaret, and to others, but, being alone in his prison cell, he is actually talking to himself and the actor playing him holds a dialogue with himself. Although Bracken's image remains until the lights go down on Joyce, he is never there, neither as a figure on the stage nor as a voice.

Through allusion to the "brother" figure of "The Bracken Play," the short exchange illustrates the strong ideal affinity between Bracken and Joyce. This is foreshadowed in

their rendezvous with "my great mechanical birds" (1287, 1294). Both figures risk their lives to witness the bombings of their chosen home cities, but when Bracken calls the bombers "my mechanical birds," he is referring to the enemy's, as is Joyce when he calls the RAF bombers "my mechanical birds." These two figures could never meet in any conventional sense of the word because, as the doubling in casting has made apparent, they are identical.

Third, the constitutive power which language has for Bracken and Joyce accesses the imagination. For the motif "voice" and the theme "language" I again find significant the original conception of Double Cross as a radio drama as well as the use of radio in the stage production. For Bracken, language is to his being what breath is to life. "[In] full flight upon his favourite instrument of communication, the telephone" (1279), Bracken is the ruthless businessman buying and selling companies; he is the offended lover complaining about past wrongs; and he is Sir Winston Churchill's Minister of Information at a time of national emergency. Virtuoso performance makes this scene. All together, he makes seven telephone calls, each time (to use Popsie's expression) talking a new Brendan Bracken into existence (1282), so, since the telephone is voice absent of body, he takes lying to new heights.

Likewise on the radio, both figures, and especially Joyce, lie new realities into existence. Like the figures

interpreted in "Imitations," I read Bracken and Joyce as Irish variations on the writer figure. While Popsie is watching Bracken testing the sound of the different titles he might attain, she addresses the audience:

I loved being with him at times like that. He gave the impression of having composed the whole thing in his head, as if he had written the book in which all the important people were characters of his imagination. But how could one possibly give oneself wholly to someone who was never there, if you see what I mean? (1280)

Bracken's sexual foreplay he calls a "composition" and is infuriated when Popsie takes their role playing literally. And when she calls his use of the English language "aboriginal," he is appalled because his very existence has been shaken: "[Language] is what makes me what I am! Without it, I am nothing!" (1282-1283). His accent is English, his grammar is impeccable, his name-dropping shows an extensive knowledge of the peerage, and his use of words shows he knows their power. But in vain he combats Popsie's Philistinism and she cannot understand his personal definition of orphanhood.

Like the people Frank Hardy heals, Bracken's "characters of his imagination" require each a different Bracken. In this connection, might one not understand Joyce's opinion of Bracken as really Bracken's own picture of himself, the picture painted by his Irish background, which he so

desperately wants "totally suppressed" (1286)? I find the word suppressed significant because it refers to more than the information Lord Beaverbrook has gathered in Ireland, but to the psychological processes of Bracken's self. Zealously hunting down Joyce, Bracken corners himself in the "turncoat scene" when Joyce totally suppresses him. The one time language fails Bracken his past overwhelms him. He knows that the surest way to becoming English is to show everyone how much he hates the Irish. This attitude, not unique to Bracken, goes some way to defining an Irish national character: the Irish are everything the British are not. In order to achieve a British identity, Bracken betrays his family (1282), his background, his nation (1286), and himself. When Bracken speaks with a Tipperary accent his Irish persona resurfaces in the voice of his father, a supporter of the Republican movement. In contemporary Irish drama two voices speaking through one figure often signifies an identity crisis, as in Hugh Leonard's Da (1973) and Donal O'Kelly's Bat the Father, Rabbit the Son (1988). The father praises Bracken's brother Peter and derides "Brendan-Brendy, the little scut, Mammy's pet, always whining and bawling, four-eyes—" (1289). Blinded when an explosion knocks off his glasses, Bracken cannot see where he is, who he is with, and, symbolically, who he is. The suppression that is ruining his relationship with Popsie forcefully surfaces in a moment that topples Bracken's ego so that the figure becomes another: Bracken's father.

In the epitome of the play's Faust motif, when Joyce suffers blindness, he calls to Margaret in the belief that they will be reunited in God. The trouble in their relationship becomes apparent when Margaret admits to having had an affair. In his jealous rage, Joyce forgets the principles they based their relationship on and yells,

Whore!

MARGARET. Don't, William, please, don't you see how you're degrading yourself?

JOYCE. It is the betrayal, the betrayal- (1298)

But betrayal is impossible if one is free, and Margaret reminds him of this tenet of their marriage. These are his own ideas, she says, "I insist that you recover yourself, through yourself, through your own words" (1298). Much more than she betraying him, he betrays himself because he is untrue to his own words, to his own beliefs. Margaret knows, "There was always some gap between what he said and what he really felt. When that gap widened all that was left to him was speech" (1299). His demand for a divorce, once granted, he immediately regrets and revokes.

Despite Bracken's efforts to suppress his own past (i.e., despite his efforts to become English), Lord Castlerosse assures us that his past had never been a secret and that he was accepted anyway. "The Englishman always respects the man who comes in from the colonies," says Lord Beaverbrook. "Always has. Always found a place for him. New blood. New

energy. Men tempered by the fire at the front. Men who make the choice" (1286). Only the colonial subject can decide for the Empire, only he can choose to be English; therefore, Lord Beaverbrook advises Bracken to "seize upon it as a sign, a charm that few are blessed with" (1286). English, like any other nationality, is a sign which is its own signified and its own signifier; and like any representation, English rests on a fundamental absence. The English part has no greater reality than the play of signifiers we call England.

Conserving this idea of the English nation means compulsively repeating the declaration of its fixity. So from the moment the English tried to conquer Ireland, many Irish either imitated the conqueror or imitated their idea of the conqueror's opposite. But the Irish cannot free themselves in this way because both roles, no matter how different they appear, refer to yet another role: the role of English.

An alter ego to both Bracken and Joyce, Lord Beaverbrook inhabits the position usually associated with the Stage Irishman: accommodation. His interviews with both figures show a difference of opinions and beliefs that demonstrate some of the differences between the Stage Irishman and my definition of the Stage Irish. Joyce invents an England on the radio by the power of his voice. His voice over the radio waves refers to nothing real, unless by chance, so that he and his voice become tenuous. Joyce speaks in the artist's native tongue, his words are beautiful lies. With his game of Irish roulette

he seeks recognition of his existence and finds it in his arrest and sentencing. His voice has substance because it will cost him his life. Likewise, Bracken's voice is his demise because the throat cancer he will contract is, as the Actor says, "the one thing calculated to kill him. Speechlessness" (1279). The two figures shape their lives through language and robbed of their voices, they die.

But Joyce is able to arrange for his demise so that he becomes a "christus" to his followers (1305). Since Joyce believes in the cause of fascism, he supports the German war effort. Because he also believes in victory, meaning the conquest of England, he creates on the radio waves Joyce's Other England, like the island the English once conquered, John Bull's Other Island. The conqueror creates out of the conquered an alter ego, while the conquered seek freedom from oppression most often (in the Actress's words) by imitating that they may be free (1279). Unlike Bracken stuck on the winning side, Joyce can really achieve the salvation Bracken intends by shaping one's life into significance (1282). Therefore, Popsie thinks that the problem with Bracken is that "something had been pushed out of shape" (1287), whereas Joyce believes in his calling: "I have helped to shape things—" (1303). In other words, Joyce's side lost the war, but at least by remaining true to his principles in Margaret he has the opportunity to bring about his own end by winning in Irish roulette and, thus, perfectly scripting his life. Bracken is

the beginning of Joyce and Joyce the ending of Bracken, which is the best explanation I can find for the order of the two parts of Double Cross.

At the ending, the Lady Journalist recalls the young fascists, her most vivid memory of Joyce's trial:

Those lilting Celtic voices in grief at the death of their christus. They put on their old raincoats, like vestments, and talked raucously of patriotism. It was as if they had taken the idea of England to some terrible logical meaning of their own which England itself could never tolerate. And before they left in the rain for some secret meeting, some illicit upper-room, the tears poured down those long, emaciated, Celtic faces. They wept for Joyce. They wept for England. (1305)

An Irish tear is not far off from an Irish smile, so that the mourners regret their loss in Joyce but revere him for—at least from their perspective—dying in the name of England. Their Celtic voices are reminders, too, that although the English “have always taken more captives with our dictionaries than with our regiments” (1278), those captives still have a voice so that they may mean something other than English when they speak English and something other than England when they say England.

Fourth, the constitutive power language has through the media radio, television, and theater (i.e., the three

components of the Double Cross scenography) is the last way the play accesses the imagination. On the radio, on the screen, even on the stage, the duplication of Bracken in Joyce and Joyce in Bracken becomes a performative multiplication of identities. In the reprise of the "turncoat scene," when our eyes turn back to Joyce from Bracken's image behind bars, we miss the bars that should be obscuring our view of Joyce. In the "turncoat scene," Bracken begins sounding like Joyce when he writes to his mother, "Above all, one must utterly reject that which diminishes one, all that betrays one's higher instincts" (1291). Likewise, in the reprise we wonder who the figure onstage is, Joyce or Bracken. The figure performs to his own image and the actor performs to his image in the figure, so that together they perform the ambivalence at the moment of identification.

The figure, the actor, and the audience witness a suspension of illusion that penetrates the act of identification and shows that it, too, is illusive as well as elusive. "It's the image, my dear," says Bracken. "What might otherwise be beyond our reach. I wonder if that's what it's all about? The contrivance of what is really inaccessible?" (1281). He is talking about art, but concedes to Popsie that it is also true of sex. This statement describes the significance of the reprise of the "turncoat scene," the cause of Bracken's and Joyce's psychosexual problems, and the play's depiction of the relation between art and life. They are all

questions of form. Contriving some form of expression for identity, for sexuality, or for art will never express these things; therefore, Bracken admits that these things are "really" beyond our reach. Real identity, real sex, and real art belong to another order, if they exist at all. The only thing we can be sure of is that we have the power to shape our reality into our own significance...to a point.

It is at this point that art enters and opens for us the unlimited potential of the imagination. Wilde's radical suggestion that "Life imitates Art" has as its principal consequence that art is a form we can live because we shape our lives like the artist his work; in other words, we may be limited in what we can do, but we can pretend to do anything. What one can achieve this way in the real world is a question for another context besides a literary critical thesis, but the reprise demonstrates what theater can do this way. Theater rests not on the duplicity of the convention of taking this for that, of taking the well-known actor Stephen Rea for either Brendan Bracken or William Joyce; theater and life, as this performance demonstrates, rest on the illusion of identification which conceals the multiple personae at the root of our selves. Theater also reveals that the choice, conscious or unconscious, of one of these personae is always the choice of a role. We play many such roles in life according to where we are, who we are with, and what others or we ourselves expect of us.

Each of the two figures, as the Actor puts it, "may be simply acting out a condition of the culture from which he is trying so desperately to escape" (1277). The Irish culture had by the 1940s the one form (i.e., Catholic, peasant, Gaelic), so Bracken and Joyce hastily grabbed the nearest other forms they could find. No wonder, then, that they reached for the mirror image of everything Irish: England. To be free they imitated the English, a model similar to the model chosen by militant Irish nationalists, just the opposite.

Mutabilitie

Mutabilitie's account of war in Munster (1579-1583) and the subsequent plantation of the province invites the critic to read in its figures the character of the colonial subject, in its motifs the language of colonial discourse, and in its action sequence the effects of the colonial project.

After defeat to the English, the Irish ceased to have a native language because they vowed to speak only their conqueror's language: "We had lost power to govern our lives and part of that curse was the loss we accepted over the government of our tongue" (68). Asked why he serves an English master, Hugh answers,

He instructs me in the art of winning.

WILLIAM. Are you a traitor to your countrymen?

HUGH. I have ceased to have countrymen. I am a

servant to the crown. I am a servant's servant. I

am too humble to have a country. I am the lowest

of the low, but like you, I wish to serve, I wish to learn. (69)

Hugh mimics his new master's language and customs, but, since he is actually an Irish spy, his mimicry is a mockery of the enemy. To this distinction Edmund is blind. While English colonizers like him demand the Irish convert to Protestantism, adopt civilized manners, and reform their laws, they presume their authority to be impervious to the changes and distinctions arising out of the very colonial encounter.

Homi K. Bhabha calls colonial mimicry "an ironic compromise" between the realities of change and difference and the colonist's claims to unerring rule by superiority over the conquered; it is "the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite":

Mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both 'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers. (86)

The ambivalence of mimicry makes the colony a place where colonial agents must witness their wisdom becoming cunning and where the native can turn his cunning into a potential form of wisdom. "The onlooker had to guess at the native's hidden intention," writes Kiberd,

much as English administrators tried to figure out the meaning of the ever-changing Irish Question, or as English audiences struggled to decipher the latent meanings in experimental Irish texts. It was but a short step from the recognition that the observed could turn observer to an awareness that the natives might have an alternative set of criteria, by which their masters could be judged vain, foolish, even weak. (Writer 131)

Mimicry resembles yet differs from mockery. Not merely the contradicting of colonial hegemony, mimicry is an uncertainty so unsettling and, therefore, so threatening that it "fixes the colonial subject as a 'partial' presence," which Bhabha explains as both an "incomplete" and a "virtual" presence (86).

On this head, Kiberd can agree with Bhabha only in theory because "To suggest the workings of an agency without a subject, as he does, is to impute to the colonial encounter a randomness which anyone still caught up in it will find hard to credit" (Writer 132). Where Kiberd sees randomness, because he believes agency must precede the colonial discourse and the

act of resistance in which the subject is embroiled, cultural theorists like Bhabha and Butler see the process of signification from which the subject cannot be extracted and in which its very agency is exhausted. This is not a pessimistic determinism, but a radical re-visioning of the formation of power and the opportunities for subversion open to the oppressed. As Butler argues similarly for gender parody, mimicry subverts the normal, the essential, and the original, and the very possibility of such subversion becomes "its own occasion for laughter" (176). (This perspective I suggest as the most advantageous to understanding what goes under the heading Irish black humor.) Kiberd cannot accept that someone would make the toilsome and dangerous effort to resist oppression if he had no self and no nation to fight for. I counter that one might resist colonial authority just because it imparts one a "partial" presence; in other words, like William Joyce imitating the powerful to be free, one might use that same incomplete, virtual identity as one's means to resistance.

Bhabha combines in his concept of the "metonymy of presence" the dual presence manifest in colonial mimicry (i.e., incomplete and virtual) in order to describe how mimicry serves both as the prohibition of inappropriate customs or appearances and as the inappropriate (because imperfect) imitation of the colonial ideal. For example, the mimicry giving rise to the difference between being English

and being Anglicized "is like camouflage, not a harmonization of repression of difference, but a form of resemblance, that differs from or defends presence by displaying it in part, metonymically" (Bhabha 90). Neither complete as an Other nor itself an identity beyond mere appearances, mimicry is what Bhabha calls an "identity effect" (90). Compared to this metonymy of presence, open revolt would seem more serviceable to the colonialist because, by permitting him to draw a line between the colonized and the rebels, it would seem to further the efficiency of his project. But colonial discourse only seems to operate through such distinct, binary objectifications of its reality (91).

Edward's laudatory verse to queen and God has, by the opening of Mutabilitie, changed to the prose of his colonialist tract A View of the Present State of Ireland, the writing of which is contemporaneous with setting and action sequence of the play because, although printed in 1633, it was composed shortly before Spenser's death on 13 January 1599. Not only do we witness him writing A View, but the dialogue, while providing the form in which it will be written, gives Edmund occasion to voice opinions on the Irish and Ireland (with Elizabeth 8-12, with William 45-48). After fluently recounting to William the Irish errors of law, custom, and religion—against which last he proposes the establishment of a class of mimic men, "ministers of our faith who are their own countrymen" (48)—Edward's lines become meager, his speech

blunt. "What is my nation?" he asks William and, as his wording suggests, provides the playwright with Macmorris's famous line, so getting the Stage Irishman off to a clamorous and unlikely start. "England," replies William.

EDMUND. England no longer needs me. I am abandoned here in exile.

WILLIAM. You are recognized as a secretary of the crown.

EDMUND. A poor servant of the crown. Poverty is my reward and my reputation. Is it yours, William?

WILLIAM. My family were prominent in the county of Warwickshire.

EDMUND. Were? There were many Catholics in Warwickshire. They lost prominence. (Silence.) You are a Catholic? You were a Catholic?

WILLIAM. I am troubled.

EDMUND. I am not. (Silence.) There is no God but God alone, and we are his servants.

WILLIAM. And God alone guided me in fortitude and righteousness to this castle. You alone, great poet—

EDMUND. I have ceased to write—

WILLIAM. Great poet—

EDMUND. The poem, the great poem is unfinished—

WILLIAM. Great poet, if I enter the service of the queen, I will devote my life to her glory, to her

empire. Your wife spoke of the lords of the sea,
 the lords of the world, this is what we are,
 lords, lords—

EDMUND. We are the English in Ireland—

WILLIAM. We have started to conquer, we have
 conquered—

EDMUND. We have started to go mad. (51-52)

Abandoned to Irish exile, as he now perceives his post; unable to compose an epic as indomitable, perhaps, as the conquest of Ireland; and fearful of his and his family's safety, even of his own sanity, Edmund claims to be untroubled. It is a loud silence following "I am not." It is a silence that speaks of the colonial subject's dilemma, his impossible choice between missionary salvation and ruthless extermination. This silence Edmund tries to break through prayer, but his good intentions constantly reveal violent tendencies. His "Cleanse [Ireland] of herself" (23) displays a biblical vocabulary beneath which lurks a vocabulary of massacres and seizures. It is a telling moment when Edmund answers the File's and Hugh's requests for more about "the virgin, the holy virgin, the fairy queen" with verses about the evil Duesse (5-6; FQ 1.1.48.1-5).

In the forest, the Irish deride the "profound self-importance" of the English who believe that their queen is God's representative on earth and their capital God's chosen residence (14). Through defeat in war, the Irish have learned that the gentle countenance of Queen Elizabeth in the home

country becomes a hardened mask of violence and hatred in the colony. Hugh and the File, playing innocent to roil their master, pose Edward the tricky question to the queen's (and by extension the colonial power's) character:

Is the queen cruel?

EDMUND. Cruel? (Edmund laughs.) No, she is gentle.

HUGH. Like you.

EDMUND. Gentle, me? Not always. Not in the service of my queen. Go back to work. (11)

Edmund's laugh is a difficult laugh for the actor because it sounds ambivalently between condescension and constraint. Also, his abrupt termination of the talk ("Go back to work") must combine the anger of one caught out and the composure of one suppressing such awkward, unbecoming inconsistencies of purpose.

The passage is besides an example of the illogical, imprecise thinking usually associated with the Stage Irishman; but the Irish of Mutabilitie don't make such errors and leave the bulls to the English. Although worshipping Our Lady is for the English Protestant blasphemy, they have substituted for her their queen, and so practice the same worship they condemn in the Irish. Edmund's prejudice becomes blatant when, since one so recognizably an Englishman as William could never commit blasphemy, he takes William's prayers of thanksgiving to Our Lady for devotion to Queen Elizabeth. William's address on Our Lady, Edmund echoes addressing the queen (23), so

uncovering English religious hypocrisy and the colonizer's stereotyped thinking. Both Maeve (30-31) and Edmund's wife Elizabeth (46-47) underline the parallels between the File's and Edmund's professions, just as Kiberd (in his remarks on the general similarity between the Irish and the English of this period) ascertains that the Irish poets "were court poets, whose duties were, like those of Spenser himself, to praise the sovereign, excoriate the kingdom's enemies, and appeal in complex lyrics to the shared aesthetic standard of a mandarin class" (Inventing 11).

Likewise, the play on recurring words such as service and duty qualifies the standpoint from which the colonizer would further religious conversion and military conquest. By recounting their righteous cause and their duties as colonial agents, Edmund tries in vain to quell his wife's paranoia over the native threat (8-11). She reminds him of his duty as a husband to protect her and of her duty as his wife to mourn him when the Irish murder him in their bed. Present to their quarrel are their Irish servants the File and Hugh, who, after they exit, wryly turn these words to their own ends and "laugh lowly" saying their duty is to their race (11).

The outcomes of the main action phases, too, support a reading of Mutabilitie as an illustration of the destruction colonialism brings. The savage murders of the English hostages attain to the ritualistic revival of the Irish king. The uncertainties surrounding the "spoiling" of Kilcolman as well

as Edmund's paranoiac accusation of "high treason" against its stones (98) represent the crisis at the colonial agent's retreat. And Hugh's perpetration of regicide as well as his and his followers' exile in their own land (a performance of the aftermath of betrayal and war) represent the irretrievable ante-colonial past and the unsustainable post-colonial present.

The perspective I've taken so far on Mutabilitie would compel me to read the play-within-the-play (4.2) as a thinly veiled allegory of English colonialism in Ireland and to agree with Margaret Llewellyn-Jones that the ending heralds new "postcolonial subjectivity/subjectivities" (58). Before these and similar conclusions, though, I stop because the above perspective misses the spring of every figure and of every action in Mutabilitie: the act of betrayal. And intricately connected to this act are Bhabha's colonial mimicry and Read's act of theater, both imitative and repetitive, both imagined and imaginative. Betrayal as both delusion and treachery overlaps significantly with the kind of betrayal that is the act of theater. Crossing in ways important to any understanding of the actions and figures of Mutabilitie, performance in the play and the performance of the play become two sides of the same thing, namely, the act of performance.

The action sequence is one mesh of betrayals and retaliations that take no beginning and seem they will never end. I cannot discover in Mutabilitie one significant action

unconnected to some act of betrayal and even a cursory sketch of plot, figure, and speech shows how all three are shaped by betrayal.

Dominating the action phase before act 3 are the Irish preparations for their counterattack on the English. Meanwhile, the crown's outpost in Edmund's custody is a nest of intrigues and betrayal. Both Edmund and, more openly, Elizabeth betray their fear of the Irish, their pain of exile, and their despair at their civil and religious duties. In this connection, Edmund's idealistic hope of converting Ireland to Protestantism and assimilating the Irish under a united kingdom appear hypocritical as well as indicative of a latent desire for domination. So the colonizer's good intentions and well-laid plans betray the colonized to an ulterior vision of normative control. Elizabeth feels betrayed by Edmund who won't fulfill the duties of a husband and a parent and protect her and their children, so she defies his patriarchal authority and pretends a newly discovered love for Ireland which she intends to awake his jealousy. Suggested by the File, intent on the demoralization of the English and, ultimately, their capitulation, Elizabeth's betrayal of her husband is actually part of the Irish plan for counterattack. Despite the uncertainties surrounding Edmund's flight, the File effectively achieves her aim when he speaks the accusation "high treason" at the collapse of Kilcolman. In the Irish camp, Niall renounces his faith in the Catholic

religion, Hugh is unfaithful to the mother of his deceased child, Maeve maneuvers both king and prince to suicide and regicide and patricide, and the captors execute Ben and Richard on perjured testimony. That Richard's intentions by Annas have been neither pure nor unselfish he has made clear, but his jealousy betrays him more than his most honest admission could ever have. In the wandering troupe of actors reigns dissent over whose idea it was for coming to Ireland in the first place. Judging from the variety of personal motives which the figures gradually reveal, each is guilty of turning his fellows' wishes and wants to his own ends. Even the play-within-the-play, "The Fall of Troy," presents the aftermath of the most famous city betrayed to its ruin.

The most significant, because most serious betrayals are those the figures perpetrate against themselves. The actions by which they betray other sides of their selves, sides they would conceal or suppress, are the threat of exposure prowling the base of any conception of self or self-identity. This betrayal is a variation on that metonymy of presence Bhabha calls colonial mimicry because it conceals no self behind the mask and, worse, it implies the same for the betrayed; therefore, the betrayal of self is the most serious kind, because it is a betrayal of the idea of self and, thus, a betrayal of society. Because in the act of betrayal appearance and intention, intention and effect, effect and expectation diverge, the more serious the betrayal becomes, the more

rapidly any graspable notion of identity regresses. In Mutabilitie it is William and the File who perpetrate such grave betrayal. By acting the religious fanatic relishing a heretic's execution (70), William betrays himself because in that Catholic woman is his mother and in his mother the Catholic Irish and in the Irish the File who begs his help, and so his act returns to himself denying the heretic at the stake. The uncertain circumstances surrounding the death of the File's child do not acquit her of having betrayed a life put in her care. In the same act by which she has betrayed her child she has been betrayed by the English who overthrew Sweney, by Hugh who seeks revenge by spiting her love (97-98), and by God who (as she imagines) punished her faith by bringing on the misfortunes and hardships that cost her child's life (29, 94).

Even loyalty and service are, in Mutabilitie, varied forms of treason and malice. If for the Irish the File is a spy to the English, for the English she is an Irish convert aspiring to their beliefs and lifestyle. "She has convinced the fools she is their loyal servant," Maeve exults. "But she comes in secret to serve us" (13). Serving the English servant to Queen Elizabeth, the File serves her deposed sovereign in the hope he will regain power. But the spy's inextricable loyalties arouse Maeve's suspicion so that she accuses the File of consorting with the enemy before instructing her on the truth that service, anyway, is betrayal:

Your English master, Edmund, he is no different to you. He serves his queen as you served your king. He writes exalted verses to her as she sits in glory upon her throne. That is his dignity. You have no such dignity any more. You worship a king grown old before his time, foraging for sustenance in a forest, in danger of forgetting his own name. You are no longer his poet. You are his spy, as is Edmund the queen's spy. Do you think she, like us, values him for his vision? No, it is for his cunning. All wisdom comes down to this. And from our servant you have now truly turned into his, the Englishman's, and that is your cursed destiny. (31)

Although Maeve grants the File free choice in the matter, fact is, she doubts her, and this alone reveals the complicated loyalties of the turncoat. Because the File's cunning in pretended innocence betrays the English by disarming their cunning and making them innocent, she also betrays her king and queen because it is through this same cunning that she has attained her honored profession.

In order not to become insanity, betrayal must involve loyalty, but it walks this line between madness and normalcy. Betrayal exposes the performativity of a society's laws, customs, and religion for norms compelling the members to act how they act, to think how they think, and to believe what they believe. In her listing of the learning and knowledge of

an Irish poet, the File includes "the games of government" (30), and so shows up loyal service and social position for the playing and the role playing which they are. That the English and the Irish figures reflect on one another in their occupations, their societal norms, their beliefs, and their laws argues a mimicry born of betrayal, a role playing born of the lack of any authority to which one might be loyal. "The ambivalence of colonial authority," writes Bhabha,

repeatedly turns from mimicry—a difference that is almost nothing but not quite—to menace—a difference that is almost total but not quite. And in that other scene of colonial power, where history turns to farce and presence to 'a part' can be seen the twin figures of narcissism and paranoia that repeat furiously, uncontrollably. (91)

This is the radical ambivalence that can be heard in Edmund's prayer "Cleanse [Ireland] of herself." This is the terrible realization of the colonizer's paranoia that can be seen in Elizabeth's "Kill them all" (10) menacingly repeating in the execution of the English hostages.

The form of resemblance that is colonial mimicry, concludes Bhabha, "is the most terrifying thing to behold" (90). As Kiberd concedes, "that unease, disabling enough for an administrator out in Africa or India, took on an extra terror in the neighbouring island of Ireland," and he cites the example of the novelist Charles Kingsley who, on his visit

in 1860 to Connaught, was terrified by the "white chimpanzees" as well as the example of the returned Indian civil servant who in 1891 admitted he couldn't bear to treat the Irish "like white men" (Writer 130). While the colonizer takes the change from mimicry to menace most seriously, the colonized, like Butler's feminist subject, laughs when the normal is exposed for that which merely has been normalized. At the seat of English colonial power, the London theaters may entertain the citizens and, at best, congratulate the queen's plantations of foreign territory, but in Ireland the natives have plotted a counterattack, sent out spies, taken hostages, and instructed followers—all the stuff of good war drama. England is a nation, Ireland the scene of a war. And where the English take their project in Ireland seriously, the Irish must watch everything they've known and everything they're coming to know reduced to play. No wonder, then, that in the colony we find:

Chaos of change that none can flee,

This earth is Mutabilitie. (78)

The title Mutabilitie derives, on the one hand, from Spenser's "Two Cantos of Mutabilitie" (first printing 1609) and, on the other, from the eponymous principle ascendant in the world of the play.

The two stanzas addended to Spenser's "Two Cantos of Mutabilitie" have often been taken for his despair at decay, misfortune, vain endeavor, and death; but Sherman Hawkins counters this view and, from the philosophical and

intellectual content of the poem, finds convincing evidence for Spenser's ardent hope. The goddess Mutabilitie's dominance in the world is not at issue, argues Hawkins, neither does her influence rank below that of her sisters Hecate and Bellona nor can the most powerful gods resist her beauty. The case before Nature is not between Mutabilitie and some unimaginable static equilibrium, "but between the aimlessness of change for its own sake, and the constancy of movement directed by love and law towards a perfect goal" (79), which is salvation through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. (The File's contrary assertion that "The English won, the Irish lost. There is no change to that pattern" (43) is a bit of Stage Irish humor on the paradox that not all changes are change.) Hawkins is right about Edmund Spenser and his "Two Cantos of Mutabilitie," but what about the play Mutabilitie showing us Edmund unable to write, despairing, abandoning his child, and deserting his appointed post? The biographical reading of the poem would seem to return in the play, and in a way it does. What we have in the figure Edmund is like the seemingly autobiographical portraits by Micheál macLiammóir, Brendan Behan, George Farquhar, and Declan Hughes discussed in "Imitations"; Edmund is a mask of the Edmund Spenser of Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene. Instead of supporting or supplementing any one historiographical account of Edmund Spenser's service in Ireland (which one presumes to have left discoverable traces in his poetry) the figure Edmund is a

performance of the person and personality deducible, for example, from the "Two Cantos of Mutabilitie" and from knowledge of the period and of human psychology. And the figure is more than this. He is Edmund, not the Edmund Spenser of literary history or of lay reputation, but the theatrical image and the actor's performance of this part in Mutabilitie.

If the play were only the dramatization of historical fact, a sort of biography for the stage, objection to its speculation and inaccuracy might be justified. But this very notion of a one-to-one relation between theatrical presentation and historical record simplifies the processes of image creation in performance and the act of imaginative participation by the audience—not to mention basic questions of historiography. Such misapprehension of the act of theater has led again and again to the denunciation of "history plays" freely treating their subjects, as in the renowned debate over the historical accuracy and inaccuracy of Friel's Translations. Being a creation as well as a creature of the stage, the figure Edmund is the one Edmund Spenser I am sure is conscious of playing Edmund Spenser. So Mutabilitie heightens a common experience in theater, an experience at first unrelated to alienation effects or the like, namely, that the spectator's attention shifts from the image of a figure in action to the actor playing the figure and back again, thence to the roles the figure plays and back again, and so on. Although the play may be about just this, this is

what the play is: a performance of such mutabilitie as occurs during performance.

Unlike the File, Edmund lacks a tactical awareness of the contingencies of his profession and his nation. When he disavows doubting his faith in God and his service to England, one hears another Edmund speaking through the first's surety, like the Author's Casement—who-could-have-been revealing coded signs of the Casement we know from the play. In the penultimate scene of the play, Edmund's identification of Kilcolman with his father exemplifies the shift from loyal service to hate-filled betrayal.

Edmund is alone.

EDMUND. All children should die before their father dies. That way they may not stain their pretty feet in the pool of foul and filthy sin. Father, forgive me, I have failed. Failed. My wife and children are not abed. They stand prepared to flee from you, my castle built into the air. Shall you vanish after me into wreck and ruin? You sheltered me from rain and snow. I now abandon you to this afflicted country. I should wish you stand for ever, but what have these senseless stones done to deserve such infection as eternal life? Eternal life, eternal light—such illusions of the mind, the broken, battered mind, torn to ribbons on the rack of its confusion. I did my best, these dumb

walls cry in all innocence. Indeed you did. Indeed you did. But you could not succeed, for I fashioned you from my broken mind, your masonry is my lost majesty, and yet the mind may be mended. Perhaps these stones are not senseless. They are capable of crime. Crime against my person, crime against my country. This is high treason. I must sentence you, my castle, to severest punishment. As we do burn heretic flesh, so I must burn heretic stone. You, my great cathedral, where my queen was virgin goddess, have turned to devil worship. I must free the devil from you and baptize you anew in fire. Cleansed, these stones will be free. Fire, burn. Fire. Fire.

Edmund flees. Fire.

The destruction and the self-destruction comprising the act of betrayal are present in the identifications both of the father with the burning castle and Edmund himself with the builder of this castle. In order to help clarify the seemingly contradictory significance one reads in Mutabilitie, such as Edmund's conflicting identifications with Kilcolman or William's desire to murder the ghost of the son he claims to have lost, I suggest a particular interpretative approach.

Following Hugh's doubly inscribed act of murder (i.e., both regicide and patricide), the Irish believe themselves cursed and damned when the File delivers to them the king's

penance. They are to cast off their royalty, abort the counterattack, and become "beggars, pilgrims" (96). Hugh surmises their plight well saying, "We are nothing," but Annas surmises more correctly saying, "My family is my fate" (97). The family and all its variations on affection, familiarity, and fellowship as well as all its relationships, for example, between father and son, mother and daughter, brother and sister, and husband and wife is the pattern that gives form and meaning to the figures of Mutabilitie. It may be that "This earth is Mutabilitie," but everything always changing also means that everything is always changing into everything else, or that each thing or being relates most intimately to one another. Over change can be laid the pattern of the family because mutabilitie leads, by necessity, to the familiarity and interrelationship of the people of our world.

The concept of mutabilitie as presented in the "Two Cantos of Mutabilitie," with God as both savior of humanity and constancy above this mutable earth, does not hold in the play; nor is God substituted by the family nor are the family's relationships and values set as original and essential because those same relationships and values can give rise to the most potent forms of hate, alienation, and enmity. Where else but from within the family, or one's most trusted circle, does betrayal annihilate one? What else but the hatred of those one should love gives patricide, fratricide, and the like their terror? In Mutabilitie, the figure determines his

place in the world and his identity through his "familial" relations to God the Father or Mary the Virgin Mother, to king or queen, to master or servant, to husband or wife, and to children. In short, the religion, the government, the society, the community, and the partnerships of the play are variations on the pattern of the family.

Even the individual figure in his own actions is contained by this pattern. The poets are "fathers" to their work, their work being their creations. William's feverish, confused recitation of Sonnet 18 discloses a father to the poem, if not his own father. Sonnet 18 turns on the conceit "eternal preservation through verse," but William's recitation tells of the father who died even though William supposed him "eternal."

In summer, a fair day, my father lost possession of what he owned. The day turned to shade. Eternal father. He said to me, you are a blaggard. You will come to no good in your wandering. Mark my words. Can you breathe, man? Can you see, eyes? Live—give life, my father said. Too hot, more lovely. Chance, changing, eternal. My father said I was a blaggard. I let the fox get at the geese. (19)

For Sonnet 18, at least in the context of Mutabilitie, to be able to live and give life, first someone must be sacrificed so that he can determine whether the living can breathe and see. In the conceptual framework of the pattern of the family

this means that for the son to create he must take the father's place. William's recitation of Sonnet 18 doubts the truth of its conceit because what really matters is not the ink on the page or the structures of the verse or its language, but how one speaks and how one sees that verse. Verse, like literature and like performance, is not the same thing without an audience. And what gives life to Mutabilitie is that which gives life to its performance: the figures as portrayed by the actors and as perceived by the audience.

In the play, Sonnet 18 demonstrates how creativity and creations entail destruction and deaths. The formation of a colony is the deformation of a native culture; therefore, the File sings in the coda to the play-within-the-play,

Elizabeth,

Great queen of England,

Your name rhymes with death. (80)

But any culture one might call native must have, in its time, also driven out another "native" culture, which cyclical course of rising and falling cultures leads Rudkin's pastor Agricola (The Saxon Shore) to ask the penetrating question "Whose was any land, 'to start with'?" (6). The Irish and what might be called their land, Ireland, have always been divided: where there were the Celts, came the Normans, came the English, came the Scots, are coming African asylum seekers; and where the Border has dominated the political landscape of the twentieth century by separating the Northern Irish from

the Southern Irish, or from another perspective, the Ulster English from the English, the Pale also once separated opposing groups of Irish or English.

Also through the pattern of the family I make sense, for example, of the ending of the play-within-the-play when the Irish address Edmund, "Father, father, father" and he responds, "Fire, fire" (79). His family awakened and close around him, he cries,

Let me have fire to see what demons haunt me.

Edmund clings to Elizabeth.

I have seen my late father in these wars of Munster. He is a frightened child fleeing through the hills. He is hungry for food and I refuse him bread. The fires of hell leap about his feet and he runs away from me so quickly. Father, I will burn my books. I will burn my house. I will flee with you father.

Edmund races away, followed by his family.

Silence. (79)

As colonial agent and missionary, Edmund is father figure to the Irish, while to the "late father" who he hunted during the war he would now be reconciled so that together they can desert Ireland for England.

The fires of arson and of hell consume his hopes of completing The Faerie Queene, of converting the Irish, of being rewarded for service done the crown, and even of

receiving the grace of God. Edmund's description of his father outside the burning castle and lost in the wilds of Ireland matches exactly what his son experiences in act 5. Edmund believes that his father has become his son and that to kill his son would mean the death of his father. One last, desperate attempt to regain what he has lost Edmund makes when he strangles his son, so incurring the son's expressed hatred (5.1). The scene signalizes Edmund's utter desperation and receding sanity through the distorted reprise of "The Song of Common Prayer." Already the opening two metrical feet of "The Song of Common Prayer" ("There is no God") upset its discursive authority to sing God's praise. And their completion in the end of the second verse ("but God alone / To speak his name is holy sound") plays subversively on the homonyms holy and wholly (44). The immanent catastrophe in the "spoiling" of Kilcolman is also anticipated in the distortions of the closing verses Edmund sings because they read "we" even though he has alienated his family and "your" even though he has been disowned by his son.

The parallels I've drawn between Bhabha's concept of mimicry and the "identity effects" consequent on the act of betrayal lead me further to compare these to the processes at work in the act of theater. Mutabilitie demands of actors and actresses convincing and self-conscious performances. The audience must be able to accept that the story as presented onstage may have been history while knowing full well that the

playwright has taken liberties with his material. Making important contribution to this end is the motif "theater."

When Annas recounts what Richard has told her of the English theater, the File's pretended naivete stretches audience patience not only because we know she has heard about it from William (as she presently admits to Annas), but mostly because one always finds it hard to take seriously a figure onstage denying any knowledge of the stage. Such conscious betrayal of someone who knows what's up is one apt description of the act of theater. Writing of Double Cross, Kilroy informs us that neither Second World War history nor fascism drew him to Brendan Bracken and William Joyce as figures for a play, but his

interest in doubleness or doubling; that is, the way things repeat themselves endlessly in life or attract their opposites. This is one of the sources of acting or role-playing. It is also behind the universal need to invent stories or alternative realities that may reflect everyday life but that are still distinct from it. This is a play which moves along the line from role-playing at one end to treachery at the other, from fiction-making to political treason. I have always been fascinated by the fact that the act of deception is common to theatricality and criminality. (introduction 11-12)

Speaking of his work on Double Cross, Kilroy speaks for Cries from Casement and Mutabilitie as well as for the conceptual framework of this chapter on the turncoat.

Although the Irish rebels' deceptive military tactics for reconnoitering the enemy and for undermining their morale require of the spy a role intended as merely functional (i.e., to defeat the enemy), the logic of his act of betrayal makes his role last beyond its efficacy to awake the suspicion of his fellows. Because the spy plays his part for the highest stakes (i.e., military victory and personal survival) he will aim to perfect his performance. Always a potential double agent, the turncoat performs a double agency since one and the same action will be read differently by either side to the conflict. He no longer goes unquestioned by either friend or enemy, but must always play his parts with the utmost attention to detail.

So turncoats exist only in conflict situations like war and colonialism. As trite as the statement seems, it will recall the necessity of two parties to any act of betrayal. Like the nation versus the nation or the colonizer versus the colonized, also the actor and his audience are two parties in an act of deception: theater. In order to betray someone, one must first fulfill his expectations and entertain his wishes, and the perfect position from which to do this is from within his deepest trust. To take this position one needs to win that trust by deceiving him who should have most reason to mistrust

one. The perfect betrayer is the best actor because he can make others believe that he is someone else or, alternatively, that it is someone else they should suspect. So this actor, this betrayer, neither conceals one true self behind the masks he wears nor one true intention behind the actions he perpetrates. This line of reasoning brings me to the recognition of the intrinsic tie between mimicry or role-playing and betrayal or deception.

The three actors Ben, Richard, and William, despite conflicting personal goals, have journeyed to Ireland "To play our parts upon the stage" (22), and this stage is set from Ben's histrionic lines opening the play: "This is Ireland. We are in it. We are alive, breathing the air of Ireland, unknown, unwanted and unloved" (1). Ben speaks in this romantic style only when he is being sarcastic. We learn that the actors' work has met with violent response, audiences having axed their stage to pieces, because the theater is to the Irish "unknown, unwanted." The inhospitable environment—"It rains a lot in Ireland," remarks Ben (1)—and the hostile natives—Ben and Richard will also soon be taken hostage—shows how the actors are "unloved." Already from the short opening scene we find one stage replacing another and the figures, themselves actors, changing one appearance for another. This aspect of Ben's and Richard's figural statuses is later made explicit when Ben relates how his success in Jewish parts had

led people to take him for a Jew and when Richard discloses his Welsh background (4.1).

Before the climactic action phase on the simultaneous stage of act 3, much space goes to the exploration of William's identity (1.2, 2.1, 32, 36-37). In act 3, the File claims, in fulfillment of the prophesy she has been singing to the Irish, to have solved the "riddle" of who William is: "A Bard of Avon. A poet from the river." "Bard of Avon?" William objects to how the File newly addresses him. "What an extraordinary description. Quite barbaric really. I don't like it" (55). The File hasn't the solution nor can we expect from the remaining acts of the play a solution to this "riddle" because William is and remains, as much for the other figures as for the audience, a "riddle." Diviner of the mysteries of oracle and prophesy, the File misinterprets her own song, as she must, and also as we must misinterpret the figure William because he confronts our expectations of the greatest English playwright and poet with a delirious, beaten, opportunistic homosexual who wants to obtain any available post in the crown's agencies of the plantation of Ireland so that he can quit writing for the theater. His career in the theater obstructs any search for his identity, as when Hugh asks him if he is a soldier:

WILLIAM. I have been.

HUGH. Who did you fight for?

WILLIAM. I have also been a king and his queen and a boy and his girl and a lover and a clown, all these trades come naturally to me when I sit alone and sometimes I hear sweet airs in the fire, throw water on the fire, let the ashes sing—(William sings.) Dig the grave, dig the grave—(Silence.) I can't remember what I am. I don't know. (He starts to clap his hands.)

HUGH. What are you doing?

William continues clapping. He stops suddenly.

WILLIAM. I can't remember. (20)

The uneasy, because unfamiliar feeling William causes an audience by applauding them (Read 95) flaunts his and the entire play's irreverent theatricality which will spare no conjecture in filling in the gaps of historical record in order to present the Irish influence on Shakespeare.

Under the impression that the theater no longer needs him, William petitions Edmund for a job. This, their only conversation alone, inevitably draws one's attention to the two historical persons so that it is Edmund Spenser who inspires that most famous of Stage Irishmen, Captain Macmorris, and it is William Shakespeare both seeking his fortune as an actor-playwright in Ireland—against the pattern of Irish artists emigrating to England!—and quitting the theater to become an agent in Queen Elizabeth's plantation of Munster. Edmund grieves the incompleteness of The Faerie Queene

while the dialogue composes the dialogue of A View. Before restating his reason for leaving the theater, William elaborates on his work as a playwright:

I know how to lie intelligently, to lie beautifully. I have taken this knowledge and placed it on a stage. I have written in the vernacular so that all who see and hear must first understand and afterwards embrace the doctrine of my plays, and thereby be led, knowingly, to what salvation is contained therein. I have paraded before the people those thoughts, those images, those words, those hearts, those minds, that until the time of reformation lay concealed in the corrupt cloisters and confined courts of kings—let those see who would see, hear who would hear. I let the lives I create burn in brilliant, everlasting fire. I have been in the business of discovering fire. And I have burned myself to ashes in the pursuit of fire. (52)

Itself beautiful, the passage describes through McGuinness's poetic diction the act of playwriting and the playwright's perception of his audience.

Despite the humility William expresses in the image of ashes, his irreligious pride in his work and his strong self-confidence as an artist make his polite phrasing just one more instance of his beautiful lies. Prominent motifs throughout the play are the four elements, whose connotations radiate to

varying extents according to context, so that each appearance of earth, water, air, or fire participates in an arrayal of significances. William's use of the motif "fire" admits the following two readings. First, considering that Shakespeare's best plays were written or staged after 1598 (the likely year of the action sequence), the "ashes" in which William ends will become the coals from which he, like a phoenix, will rise. Second, fire is the playwright's forge where he creates lives out of lies, but which also can become the furnace to consume him and all he has created.

By the formal climax (act 3), which is also the climax of the action sequence, the theatrical makeup of the figure William has become evident. In their every appearance, his actor companions Ben and Richard make indiscernible the line between reality and performance; William himself cannot remember who he is because onstage he has been so many; and his journey to Ireland is, in his own words, a segment in the "plot" of his destiny (22). Also the simultaneous stage for the performance of ultimately four configurations at separate locations on the set (i.e., William, the File, and Hugh; Sweney, Maeve, and Donal; Annas, Niall, Richard, and Ben; and Edmund and Elizabeth) contributes to William's performative character and, consequently, to the significance of the metatheatrical in Mutabilitie. Rather than a cacophony of voices or merely the ironic juxtaposing of the figures' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs, the simultaneous

conversations around the stage interweave so intricately that they must be heard together for any one conversation to make complete sense. An example:

FILE. You wish to turn away from the all-consuming
theatre, why?

SWENEY. I am tired.

FILE. I have imagined this place.

SWENEY. I wish to die.

FILE. Is it not now a sacred dwelling? Is it not a
temple where the remembered dead rise from their
graves?

SWENEY. I have seen too many dead.

FILE. Sins are forgiven there.

SWENEY. They died for my sins.

FILE. Cries are heard.

SWENEY. I pray to God for forgiveness.

FILE. Prayers are answered.

SWENEY. He is tired too and no longer listens.

ANNAS. I can get you to England, do you hear me? Speak
to me.

FILE. Is it not there that your race now speaks to God?
Is that theatre not your country's true place of
reformation?

BEN. Richard, answer her.

FILE. Are you not a priest in this new religion that may attach itself most secretly, most devoutly to the old abandoned faith?

ANNAS. I will leave my mother and father.

FILE. Your father's, your mother's faith.

RICHARD. And go where?

FILE. You are a Catholic in honest service to a Protestant nation that shall keep the true faith through your fire, your theatre. It is a holy place of great, good magic—

WILLIAM. These theatres are rough.

FILE. The grace of god is rough.

RICHARD. I don't have a wife—I have a whore.

MAEVE. My gentle husband—

SWENEY. Too gentle—censure me for that.

ANNAS. What is a whore?

FILE. Through that rough grace you have come to me to be saved for Ireland, for England.

BEN. Me, when I was younger.

RICHARD. And me.

MAEVE. I will never censure you for that gentleness.

FILE. William, solve the riddle yourself.

RICHARD. We'd sell our arses for a plate of bacon.

BEN. A plate, not a slice.

FILE. Tell our story, our suffering to the people of England.

RICHARD. And so will you in England.

FILE. That is the answer.

RICHARD. An Irish whore, her soft face growing hard.

MAEVE. I am warrior enough for both of us.

FILE. Through you there will be peace between these
nations.

RICHARD. I will sell you rather than let me starve.

FILE. The war between us will end. (56-58)

From between the lines of each separate conversation and from the spaces between each of the four different locations in this action phase, the stage of the performance emerges. When on this stage the figures speak lines significantly dependent on the previous line or the following line, one must assume one of two things: either the figures are cueing one another or they are all reading the same text. Both cases, though, result in the extension of the metatheatrical to the limits of the play Mutabilitie. When the figures openly perform their performing of a part or, going a step further, perform such open performance, then one valid and useful approach to the play is to ask whose script they are reading and whose lines they are speaking. These questions are foremost of interest because they are fundamental questions of performance and only secondarily of interest for any definitive answers one might make to them.

Mutabilitie presents three poets at critical moments in their careers as poets; that is, it presents these poets from

an aspect that most reveals the performativity at the center of their professions. Any one of the three or none might be read as the writer figure whose script the others are reading and, therefore, as the Stage-Irish figure pushing the limits of the dramatic text and the medium theater. Notwithstanding, I argue that for the greater part of the action sequence William is playwright, actor, and director besides being a figure to the same. I conclude, then, that the most important Stage-Irish figure of Mutabilitie is none other than the English theater man destined for immortal fame. He who has been supposed all English turns out to be all stage, and the suggestion that Shakespeare has "played" in his life Catholic and Irish parts makes the figure William Stage Irish.

On the night of the same morning as in act 3, William betrays his hand in the other figures' actions and speeches when he composes and directs the play-within-the-play. William pays constant attention to the potential any event or speech might have for creative transformation into his plays. This same night, for example, he asks Hugh whether he has cuckolded Edmund because the story might make a good comedy (70). On learning that Hugh's child was killed by its mother, William responds, "A tale indeed that's best for winter"; and, trying to show sympathy by admitting "I have a child that dies as well," he only obscures his intention by using the present tense, so that it sounds like a relation of the main strand of a plot. Into the play-within-the-play William redirects the

storm which makes the aural background to the scene. Casting spells, conjuring spirits, and performing rituals, William enlists for his play "The Fall of Troy" first the File and Edmund and then all the other Irish figures who he casts as the appropriate members of Priam's family.

Just such a combination of magic, performance, and poetry leads Owen Dudley Edwards to entertain the idea of a "Celtic heritage" in Shakespeare's writing (95), in which his opinions coincide with W. J. Lawrence ("Shakespeare"), another Stage-Irish researcher otherwise holding views vastly different from his. This "Celtic heritage," together with such mischievous suggestions as to the source of both A Winter's Tale and the figure Captain Macmorris, permit conjecture to flourish so that one begins taking a freer perspective on William Shakespeare and the possibilities for an Irish influence on his plays. Historical record does leave just enough gaps as well as provide just enough evidence to make plausible a visit to Ireland by Shakespeare. And the Irish joke has it that to have written such wonderfully imaginative poetry Shakespeare must have been Irish. McGuinness is bold with his material and, casting Mutabilitie in the five-act structure common to both Elizabethan and Jacobean dramas, he stokes the fires of conjecture. Is Mutabilitie an unearthed Shakespearean play, a lost piece of extraordinary autobiographical content? Does Mutabilitie reclaim the Shakespeare England stole from the Irish to make their national poet? Is McGuinness, with

Mutabilitie, posing as a Shakespeare of his time? Such questions are better left unanswered, or not asked at all, and my having asked them I must attribute to the turncoat mask of the figure William, revealing more than it conceals and concealing less than it should. William is a Stage Irish because he opens the possibility that William Shakespeare was one too.

The coda to the play-within-the-play is being spoken by the File, still under William's spell, when Hugh, awake and watching, declares,

William is not our saviour. Words will not help us. Now we know this castle inside out, and the minds of our enemies are ours for the taking.

FILE. The time is not yet right.

HUGH. Stay here or come with me to the forest.

(Silence. Hugh exits.)

FILE. Elizabeth, Elizabeth, you rhyme with death.

(80)

The scene ends and the File has not gone to the forest. As throughout the play, a figure's proxemics signal his fidelity and his identity, every move closer to or further from a figure or a place being accompanied by moves in the figure's loyalties and character. The File, for instance, is recognizable as a spy because, as Ben puts it, she "moves between two camps" (35).

But her closing line already suggests that she will decide for the Irish; nonetheless, she uses the opportunity of her and William's parting to appeal to him one last time:

FILE. You are a fearful creature, William. It is only in delirium you acquire the strength to sing. And your gift was a dream, a fantasy. A man shall come from the river, a Bard of Avon, to sing the song of songs and save us. There is no such song, is there? (Silence.) I believed in the wrong man, you didn't exist. (Silence.) Do you not exist? Did you ever exist? And if you do not, then do I? Am I nothing? Is there nothing? Tell me, help me, William.

WILLIAM. How?

FILE. Let me believe in you, even if you're not the truth.

WILLIAM. No.

FILE. I will die without faith. My people will die.

They have lost all except faith. Let us keep it.

WILLIAM. Keep it. Stay faithful. You say your people have lost and mine have won. I am with the loser, but I won't live with them. I am going home. It is time to greet the loved soil of England again. Once as a boy I ran all the way from home to the great city of London. It was from your faith I was running—I don't believe it. The journey there was

hard and now I must make another hard journey. I am looking forward to it, I swear. I do believe in the journey, for I had made it myself, that and all I imagined.

FILE. You are yourself what you imagined, as I am what I imagined. That is your gift to me. I have to accept it.

WILLIAM. Do you not want it? (Silence.) I have a living to make. I do exist but not as you imagined. Another crooked sixpence in a crooked house among men as crooked as myself.

FILE. In London?

WILLIAM. Where I found another faith—

FILE. The faith you do believe in. Live, give life. (Silence.) Find that faith here. Stay with me, give life in Ireland. (Silence.) Priest.

WILLIAM. Poet. Haste you to the forest.

FILE. Haste you to England.

WILLIAM. Fear the fire.

FILE. I fear you.

WILLIAM. And I you.

Their hands touch. He is gone. (93-94)

To the File, a person like William appears insubstantial, like the figure of a play, and her dealings with him implicate herself in his performativity so that she is forced to betray everything her profession of a file stands for. Where William

believes only what he performs, the Irish are, at first, willing to perform only what they believe; therefore, the File pleads with William for some truth or some faith, for anything he can give her. So his gift is forced on her because, having lost everything, she needs something to hold onto. It is a gift both of the imagination (i.e., fantastic and unreal) and of imagination (i.e., a grant of creativity). And this gift, by dichotomizing the imagination and reality, concentrates in this most significant motif of the play the related dichotomies "waking/dream," "fact/fiction," "truth/lying," "wisdom/folly," and "sanity/insanity." That the dichotomy "imagination/reality" should prove vital to an understanding of Mutabilitie was to be expected because, as I've been demonstrating throughout this thesis, on this same axis turns the performance as well as the interpretation of the Stage Irish.

With his play-within-the-play William claims to have staged the story of Irish suffering, so giving the File what she asked for. But neither she nor the Irish accept his offering. Mutabilitie, though, stages the File's hopes for William and the Irish influence on him, so that it becomes onstage that unsung story of the Irish. Mutabilitie is thought-provoking and just plain provoking because to include a William (Shakespeare) in the dramatis personae confronts the audience with their preconceptions about the man, about the artist, and about the theater in general. What has been

supposed a most characteristic feature of Irish writing, imaginativeness, is the gift of a poet supposed the most English of all English poets, Shakespeare. William gives the Irish the idea of performativity, the idea that one is oneself what one imagines or, alternatively, that one is what one imagines oneself. Either way, the gift shows the Irish figures that they are nothing but figures and that to be Irish they must imagine and perform Irish. This I consider the most convincing argument for viewing William both as dramatic figure and as the figure of the poet-playwright of much of Mutabilitie's action sequence.

William's exit marks a new direction in the action sequence. Like William, the Irish exiles are beginning a journey that is of their own making. The murders of their king and queen threaten to bring total ruin on the Irish because the monarchial system had provided every figure with his purpose in life and his role in society. When Hugh takes stock saying "We are nothing," he not only puts in words their total defeat, but also recognizes their performative natures. The Irish, too, must perform to be. So when the File reports what their king and queen communicate from beyond the grave, they have instructions, a script even, which they can follow to be able to endure.

Assuming that Edmund's son (who exits in 5.1) and the child Niall finds in the forest (5.7) are the same, I conclude that the family that the Irish, for the child's sake, make

themselves into is an act born of war, hatred, and betrayal, but an act promising a future of unison, love, and trust. The parental figures are the File and Hugh, but only after they've been reconciled to each other by performing both the burial of their deceased child and their own marriage:

FILE. My heart hardened when I lost the child.

HUGH. So I wished it.

FILE. Then wish it back to life now.

HUGH. I do.

FILE. I do.

HUGH. Our journey begins.

FILE. It begins. (97-98)

Their words bury their child when they remember it, revive their love when each speaks the "I do" of the marriage ceremony, and begin their exile when they name it "Our journey," so speaking the condition of exile.

In the closing scene, "The Irish move with a new freedom. [. . .] What clothes cover them do so with ease"; Hugh bathes in the river, which is the stage's symbol of mutabilitie, ever nonparticipant in conflict because too changing, too fluid, to oppose anything. But already on this first stop of their journey the Irish are put to a test. Mischievously, Hugh suggests attempting to regain power and, since bathing has cleansed the blood off his hands, asks, "So may I kill again?" (100). Then Edmund's lost son enters. He recognizes Hugh and the File and he asks, "Are you our servants?" Hugh responds,

"Aye, your servants" (100). Despite the mischief Hugh has just played, his tone must be one of defeat because it seems that the old order is returning, that they are again the innocent, foolish servants to an English master. The File is frightened because she, too, remembers how her spying at Kilcolman endangered her life and, worse, aroused in her own people a hostile distrust. At this anagnorisis, the ending teeters between tragedy and comedy. Either the Irish will kill again and reengage the English in battle or they will protect the boy and adhere to their penance.

The ending turns toward the comedic. In this group of Irish exiles, the File is also frightened for the safety of this English boy. The figures' individual reactions to the boy are telling:

ANNAS. We have a child.

NIALL. An English child.

DONAL. A hostage.

HUGH. We have a child. He is to be fostered as our own. Reared as our own. Nurtured like our own, and natured like his own, as decreed by our laws, our customs, our religion. (100-101)

Against the threatening words "English child" and "hostage" Hugh's words enact the birth of a new child, their child. The Irish act on William's gift to be as they imagine themselves; in other words, they perform a family, and so become one. Minimal speech and actions, recognizable in the exact

correspondence between actors' lines and secondary text, show the figures performing the most basic parts in a family. The child is hungry, they give him milk and food, he drinks and eats. At the castle the File has withheld milk from a child because it is foreign, not hers, but now she demands that their scanty supply be offered the boy because Edmund's and Elizabeth's son has become hers. At the closing line music begins, giving aural expression to the harmony achieved in this performance.

If the family provides the roles through which a figure of Mutabilitie is to live, the Irish here, by accepting these same roles for performative constructs, open the possibility of subverting the stereotypes that led to conflict and, thus, of changing their lives for the better. A harmony is discoverable in the troubled Irish-English "family" if only they recognize that they are themselves the family they imagine.

Interim Remarks

IRISHMAN. What do you call an Irishman with a machine gun?

COMEDIAN. I don't know, Paddy. What do you call an Irishman with a machine gun? (The Irishman points the machine gun at the comedian.)

IRISHMAN. You call him Sir.

(The comedian's expression changes to one of fear.
All the spotlights go out. In the darkness there is

the rattle of machine gun fire.) (qtd. in Bleike
292)

This joke-gone-wrong closing the Royal Shakespeare Company's 1985 production of Christina Reid's Did You Hear the One about the Irishman...? summarizes roughly the relation between entertainer and turncoat. As a mask, the turncoat conceals no presence, only its opposite, its difference; therefore, the turncoat and the entertainer are one and the same. There is an uncanny similarity between the congenial entertainer and the sinister turncoat, uncanny because the one is the other's doppelgänger, uncanny because the one returns in the other. Explaining how the English have read into Ireland their fears and hopes, Kiberd concludes: "The two major Irish stereotypes on the English national stage embody those polarities of feeling: on the one hand, the threatening, vainglorious soldier, and, on the other, the feckless but cheerily reassuring servant" (Inventing 12). The ambivalent relationship between the Irish and the English or, for that matter, between performer and audience makes the Stage-Irish masks entertainer and turncoat really just variations on one mask: that of the figure of the Irish performer.

Chapter 5: Irish

How Irish are the Stage Irish really? In this chapter, I want to show, especially through the endings of the plays The Weir, Someone Who'll Watch over Me, and Stones in His Pockets, how the Stage Irish are as Irish as an audience believe them to be.

The three plays would provide the researcher of stereotypes about the Irish with ample material: returning emigrants, good dancers, heavy drinkers, cunning farmers, hopeless dreamers, country clergymen, exiles either by necessity or by choice, political prisoners, hard workers, lazy bums, negligent fathers, male chauvinists, antagonists to England, middle-aged bachelors, superstitious rustics, contrary bollocks, slippery buyers and sellers, sons idolatrous of their mothers, and incessant talkers. For the director of the film The Quiet Valley, the Englishman Clem, even the cows have an Irish type which they must fit to or they're out. Though such material proves the existence of certain stereotypes about the Irish and serves well research into the historical development, the social distribution, and the literary functionality of these stereotypes, it must be returned to its performative context if one is to avoid making new stereotypes out of it through the objectifying and abstracting procedures of some science.

I write this chapter by way of conclusion to this study which has emphasized the performativity of a dramatic figure

playing Irish. I do not depart here from this thesis but try to find some purpose, some meaning, or, most importantly, some value to the term Irish when it has become evident that onstage an Irish is, much like anyone else, a performer. The Stage Irish play many different types or stereotypes, and with my preceding analysis of the Stage Irish into an entertainer and a turncoat I have only been able to show how these are two aspects of the same figure, two masks which the figure of the Irish performer might wear or even switch between according to his relationship to his audience, who, on their side, adopt a part historically akin to that of English audiences of past centuries. The entertainer and the turncoat are best described as masks, and if I also call them roles or parts I have meant these in their senses of changeable, adaptable personae, rather than in their senses of established figures or types. As my examples evidenced, the Irish figures who wear the masks entertainer and turncoat range from the clown and the magician to the patriot, the informer, and the rebel.

Notwithstanding, I suggested at different points throughout (e.g., the significance of playwrights' biographies to dramatic figures and my interpretation of the ending of Faith Healer) that there is something more to the performance than just the stage and that evidently there is a way that Irishness conditions the Irish Performances. I have used performative and significative theories of art, culture, and social life and portrayed the Irish of the stage as effects of

certain of these processes, but Judith Butler and Homi K. Bhabha, two important proponents of these theories, also recognize the radical potentialities in repetition and parody. And I have built up from the foundation of Read's ethics of performance my understanding of the Stage Irish as a performer, as someone who is who he is because of where he is. By who, if not the people in the theater, are the said processes initiated? And how else but through the presence of actors or actresses and their audience can an ethics, as a disposition, come about? Put bluntly, how can there be her onstage, him over there, and you, if there (i.e., in the theater) are not her, him, and you?

I will now refocus the social and material aspects of the Stage Irish as these appear, in particular, in the term Irish, but I also will stress (as I haven't so far) that theater is no game played entirely by its own rules, but has real beginnings and real consequences in its practitioners, its audiences, and the places it occurs; so, to the question to theater's value I answer with Read that "Theatre is worthwhile because it is antagonistic to official views of reality" (1).

Any meaning attributable to Irish, any political or literary meaning, any contemporary or nostalgic meaning, measures itself against stereotypes, and if one maintains that the stereotype has left the stage, then anyone or anything Irish has accompanied it. In the street outside Maeve's and

Rory's wedding celebrations, the extras are dancing like happy peasants when Simon shouts,

Cut...beautiful...the Irish know one thing, it's how to dance.

CHARLIE. You would think he wasn't Irish.

JAKE. He just wishes he wasn't.

SIMON. Yeah mate you're right, because every time you fuck up I get it in the ear from these people...ever hear the phrase...Irish what do you expect...well unfortunately for me they tend to include the whole nation. (49)

Being Irish is a matter of opinion. And sometimes whether one wants or doesn't want to be Irish has no effect on the expectations and prejudices others bring to bear in forming their opinions of one. From those lulling themselves into undue security about being Irish, one hears, "He has no idea what it means to be Irish," while, from those absolving themselves of any claim whatsoever to being Irish, one hears, "I know exactly what it means for him to be Irish." So an Irish dramatic figure is necessarily, to some extent, stereotypical.

But precisely this extent is the object of my question "How Irish is the Stage Irish really?" No one can really tell us what Ireland is or who the Irish are. It is a common, yet extraordinary expectation made of foreign nationals that they should be privy to the patterns of behavior, the psyche, the

opinions, and the likes and dislikes of their compatriots. "You're Irish," begins the question, "what do you think?" All the expectations and prejudices expressed through this question are contained in the prefatory "You're Irish" because it serves as the asker's evidence ("You will know" and "You will care") as well as his imperative ("You must know" and "You must care"). And the national, most often, will diligently comply and try to answer the question to the best of his ability. But the authority to answer, which he derives from the question or, in other social contexts, from the asker himself, is constructed around a contradiction that, if recognized, debilitates any conventional sense of authority: that the national might provide a satisfactory answer but himself act and think differently. But this contradiction is merely the index of a more fundamental one arising from the performative character of the situation in which an Irish should answer for the Irish and so assume, under the complicating reflexivity always attendant on matters of identity in performance, a position very similar to the actor's. As hard as I find it to believe that any national, Irish or other, is capable of truly answering such questions without succumbing to the same stereotypes inhabiting the questions themselves, I don't think it is for lack of trying, because for as long as nations continue to dominate social conceptions of reality, there will be opinions on national characteristics.

Because Irish belongs to all the discourses already using it, any attempt to appropriate it to another end or any study on what it means is immediately complicated, if not thwarted. Although nomination is an initial step to power, any act of saying or writing Irish quickly falls in line with what the word "normally" means because, as Read recalls, "An official view of reality is often barely discernible from the words that resist that power" (175). If one proposes the representative survey as remedy to the aporia in questions of national identity, one overlooks the composition and the selection of the data which go to making the representative survey unrepresentative. These are the fictions that sustain religions and political parties long after belief in them has ceased; these surveys collect the data on the supposed adherents to this church or to that cause, but (as Certeau puts it) "The totting up becomes a tale" (178). This perspective on the representations of that which we hold Irish as being tales or fictions I will pursue below, so let it suffice now to say that the hard facts we are accustomed to from journalistic documentaries and scientific studies are not to be found in support of a good answer to the question "What does it mean to be Irish?" No science of humanity and no methodology from academia can overcome the problem of its own "rigid strategies that miss all that is coincidental and therefore most telling about [researches on everyday life], that turn people into 'the People'" (Read 110). And if one

would interpret representativeness as the authority granted certain people or institutions in a nation (in Ireland, e.g., the president, the Dáil, and the national theater), one again overlooks an important fact, namely that it is only through official acts that these people or institutions attain the representative authority invested in them in the first place, and so one finds oneself back in front of a stage.

But it seems to me that the stage is a very important location of Irish. Because a theater performance is an action, a set of practices in one place at one time, and because the partakers in it are themselves active and living, it opens a space where Irish can enter into what Raymond Williams calls a "substantive" relationship with people and things Irish. On formalism in linguistics Williams criticizes the invariability attributed to the sign for the purpose of more precise study, and he criticizes the concomitant oversight of the "internal dynamics" of its form as well as, most importantly, of the dynamics of its material and social relations (21-44). For theater performance such oversight should be less likely because here the reminders of human reality are blatant: stage and scenography; the movements of the actors on and amongst these; the sounds they make moving; the sounds the audience make sitting beside, behind, and in front of one another; the relief of an intermission; and so on and so forth.

I am interested not in the statistical, historiographical, political, or economic records scientists

make of people and things Irish, nor am I interested in Irish society and Irish culture as studied, generalized, and abstracted by many cultural researchers, but I am interested in that which is "lived specifically and definitively, in singular and developing forms" (Williams 129). This is culture from a first-person perspective and in the present tense, and it is what Williams means by his hypothesis of structures of feeling. For this reason I posit a structure of feeling for a section of the Irish theater of the 1990s who were facing "All the known complexities, the experienced tensions, shifts, and uncertainties, the intricate forms of unevenness and confusion" (Williams 129) in the question of Irish identity. I am not claiming that after a century finally some fraction of the Irish theater had begun addressing their identity as Irish theater practitioners or Irish citizens or Irish Catholics or what have you. Precisely this theme and such concerns have been a major component, if not the foundation, of the Irish theater since its modern beginnings. Can we deny this fundamental of the work of W. B. Yeats, Lady Gregory, J. M. Synge, and Sean O'Casey, of Micheál macLiammóir and Edward Hilton, of Alan Simpson, Brendan Behan, and Samuel Beckett, of the Field Day Company, of the Parkers, of Tom Mac Intyre, Patrick Mason, and Tom Hickey, of Garry Hynes and Thomas Murphy, and of all the other distinguished and less distinguished practitioners in the Irish theater? But because with his term Williams defines "a particular quality of social

experience and relationship, historically distinct from other particular qualities, which gives the sense of a generation or of a period" (131), I make the fine distinction between earlier structures of feeling (or even formations) in the theater and the structure of feeling to the question of Irish identity at the turn to the twenty-first century.

This "quality," or, as he elsewhere calls it, this "sense" or "style," Williams vividly describes as "social experiences in solution, as distinct from other social semantic formations which have been precipitated and are more evidently and more immediately available" (133-134). What is "in the air" (as the idiom goes), dispersed, incoherent, inchoate contrasts to what is instituted, established, unified, aggregated, condensed like the raindrop. This is my assessment of the productions of The Weir, Someone Who'll Watch over Me, and Stones in His Pockets during the 1990s; it is my assessment from outside the country, beyond the period in question, and with only the secondary materials of the "unwritten theatre" to guide me; it is my assessment after weighing the evidence of how I imagine an audience must have reacted on seeing these plays performed. But I believe my judgment fails me not. I will try to provide glances at some of the moments in this structure of feeling, because I want to be specific even if my evidence is ever so little and unconventional; nevertheless, I am aiming at something other than the generalizations and abstractions inherent simply to

calling the 1990s a new renaissance (e.g., Achilles and Imhof 163; Llewellyn-Jones 1; Mahony 11-18).

The manifesto to the structure of feeling I am describing (and so, likely, its changing into a formation of contemporary theater, especially with its publication in the year 2000) is Declan Hughes's boldly titled and boldly written "Who the Hell Do We Think We Still Are? Reflections on Irish Theatre and Identity." Hughes's summary dismissal of the playwrights since 1960 "obsessing about the Nineteen Fifties, stuck down the country being Irish with themselves" (8) comes as a shock. The 1960s marked, by most accounts, the revival of the Irish theater after its so-called "doldrums" through the mid-century. Are we to dismiss, for example, Friel's facing Bloody Sunday in his Freedom of the City, Murphy's facing the gangster-like activities of the IRA in his The Blue Macushla (a genre Hughes himself re-appropriates in his first novel The Wrong Kind of Blood), and Reid's facing mid-1980s' all-to-real reality in her Joyriders? No, but we are to recognize that the playwrights first making their mark in the theater during the 1990s experienced these changes differently than playwrights of earlier generations either because they were too young or because they had yet to become the consummate playwrights they would become, and, also, we are to recognize that then, during the 1990s, they and their producers and audiences were experiencing related or different changes, but in any case not the same ones. Succinctly, it's not so much the playwrights of

earlier years who failed to stage Ireland, but it is the Ireland that must be staged that has changed.

Speaking directly to such thoughts and feelings on an Irish identity entirely contemporary with the performance of any one of these three plays are the slight changes that occur in the stereotyped Irish figures. In Stones in His Pockets, Jake tries to temper Charlie's exorbitant hopes of his screenplay, when Charlie retorts,

And what, just keep touring round Ireland waiting for movies?

JAKE. Even that's dying out...they have used up most of the forty shades of green by now. (34)

In 1996, when Dubbeljoint produced an earlier version of the play at The Rock Theatre (Belfast), overseas spending on film production plummeted (O'Brien), which I see as a possible significance to the substitution of valley for man in the movie titles The Quiet Valley and The Quiet Man. It is something completely different to stage a movie shoot in the Ireland of the 1990s than in the Ireland of the 1950s when the novelty, prevalence, and popularity of such an event was given and before the country had economic competitors in Hungary and the Czech Republic (O'Brien). The difference prevails, for example, in the comparable instance of the productions about fit-up companies when they still belonged to theater audiences' realm of experience, as in 1933 with Drama at Inish, or when the day of the fit-up had long since passed, as

in 1991 with The Madame MacAdam Travelling Theatre. Kilroy's play is, incidentally, a strong indication that he and fellow playwrights like Friel and Murphy belong to "the generation that substantially connects to its successors" (Williams 134).

This difference prevails, again, in The Weir when the audience, on the one hand, hear nostalgic tones in Jack's story about a fairy road of yore and, on the other hand, apprehend its commonality with the tale of phantasmal voices down the telephone line from a DCU teacher whose daughter drowned under mysterious circumstances at a clinic in a Dublin suburb. The ghost story of the country clashes with the Dublin greater metropolitan area, with the hospital surroundings, and with Valerie's position at a polytechnic university, but it gains, for all this, credibility and force. Likewise, the consistent parallel drawn between Dublin (as city and as the capital of Ireland) and the counties of the west and of the Midlands (as medieval sites of politico-religious influence and status) show an Ireland without center, without permanence. Here rules change. "This townland used to be quite important back a few hundred years ago, Valerie," Jim says, his diffident tone belying his conviction. "This was like the capital of the, the county, it would have been" (63). Jack's second story about missed opportunities and the ghost of his past still haunting him is set, like Valerie's, in Dublin and, contributing as it does to the above parallels, becomes one more challenge to an audience to dismiss what they have seen

and heard. "Just try and make quaint of these fairy stories!" the figures importune for their audience's belief. The Weir, for being set in precisely such a country milieu as Hughes disapproves of, is perhaps the most forceful re-evaluation Irish storytelling, and especially short realistic narratives in the English language, has received since the days of the early twentieth century when folklorists were scrambling to preserve what was left of the Gaelic tradition (Lysaght).

This difference prevails, lastly, in the Irish figure of the political prisoner who, in Someone Who'll Watch over Me, is neither terrorist for the nationalist cause nor victim of an unjust Protestant regime, but bystander to the international conflict of Western capitalist societies and Arab religious fundamentalists. Because of the circumstances of Brian Keenan's captivity in Lebanon the play had (when first produced in 1992 just two months before the publication of An Evil Cradling) a currency and topicality different to its currency and topicality now after 9/11. "Being an Irishman" (i.e., a citizen of Éire) didn't help Keenan as it does the figure Edward (166), because precisely his passport from Éire coupled with his Protestant background and his last residency in Northern Ireland (Lojek 83-87) fanned the coals of another conflict very distant from the terrorism in Lebanon. To the force with which McGuinness presents the hostage's situation Keenan attests when he writes in his introduction to the play that, for one who had been there, the

initial experience was an uneasy blurring of fact and fiction, until, "with a pace and ferocity I had not expected, the play and its people blasted out of the shadows. A life-enhancing interaction of human souls becomes a substantial and fleshy thing" (82). How real fiction can sometimes seem! As I will demonstrate below, this is not a play about an American, an Irishman, and an Englishman in terrorist captivity, but the play of three men, whose names are Adam, Edward, and Michael, in search of who they think they are and who they really are.

"Seeing is believing" runs the saw, but if what we see is not what we get, as with the "as-if" of theater, then we can believe in something invisible, something imagined. The imaginative community of performer, dramatic figure, and the audience is irreducible to mechanical reproduction or structuralist analysis because it is an experience of the here and now. Hughes takes the example of Olivier's Othello, who he watched on film and thought "the most preposterous display of vainglorious preening and bombastic declaiming" and who moves him to consider that "[. . .] maybe what counts, all that counts, is what we're doing right now. Making it new" (11). But he concedes—the concession essential to his case for the value of the contemporary theater—"But if I'd been there, at the Old Vic all those years ago, I'm sure I would have been enthralled" (11). Many a qualification which might soften his tone, like this one, is lost sight of because Hughes writes polemically. He is out to step on as many toes as possible so

that people look up and pay attention to him. In relation to the structure of feeling to the question of Irish identity, the community participating in the performances of any one of these three plays have been a community worthy the name Irish because their actions, thoughts, and experiences are about and of Irish. This is the "truly banal" which Read argues only a relevant theater has (60-61). And, although the Irish, especially in recent history, have focused an exorbitant amount of their literary energies on writing explicitly about Irish identity, it is the theater which has acquired, since its near contemporaneous establishment with that of the political state, a prerogative on Irish culture, Irish society, and the Irish nation: "It was theatre which taught the Irish to know who they were," writes Christopher Murray.

That has been its most significant contribution throughout the century, and the theatre continues to gather in audiences, young and old, and engage them in the important business of thinking collectively.

("State" 23)

So one form of Irish is the theater.

The creations of theater may be to a large extent only images, but Kearney recalls in his Poetics of Imagining that the creative imagination is intrinsically and vitally related to the Other, so that indispensable to a person's understanding and feeling of being Irish are the images of others (149, passim). The stage in and outside Ireland is a

major venue for negotiating the meaning and the ethical value of Irish, and for an audience hoping for any reply at all to the question "What does it mean to be Irish?" even stereotypes are worth considering. The question to ask of them, though, is not are they quaint or degrading, accurate or inaccurate, or progressive or reactionary, but are they good. An audience to whom the question of Irish identity matters will ask of a stereotype what its value is to the performance at hand. Does the stereotype make the performance better or worse? Better, most likely, if it fosters doubt and raises questions. Worse, most likely, if it goes unnoticed.

Two correspondences between Hughes's manifesto and Williams's hypothesis of the structure of feeling further underpin my assessment of unique experiences and witnessed changes in the Irish theater during the 1990s.

First, the structure of feeling to questions of identity, no matter what sort the identity, is in itself volatile and unlikely to settle into even a provisional formation. I distinguish here between individuals or groups whose identity raises no question and who (in Williams's terminology) belong to the hegemonic or, at the least, a dominant social order, and people in groups seeking to find out on their own just who they are. These people recognize with Hughes that "Identity is inchoate: it's up for grabs, it must be constantly reinvented: like theatre, made new every day" (9).

Second, it is for art and literature that Williams reserves a "special relevance" of his hypothesis because "in a significant number of cases" the creation and reception of art is so specifically lived and felt that "the specializing categories of 'the aesthetic,' 'the arts,' and 'imaginative literature'" have arisen with the aim of describing this seemingly "private, idiosyncratic, and even isolated" experience (132-133). Art, its creation, and its reception do, though, relate to institutions, formations, and less organized social forms as well as to physical and natural experiences often unrecognized because entirely unknown to dominant ways of thinking. In support of Williams's view, for example, Read writes "Nature Theatre Culture," part 2 of his Theatre and Everyday Life. It is precisely the combination of "unmistakable presence" and felt experience and the complex interrelationships these evince socially and materially that leads Williams to the term structure of feeling. And if one art form among all were to be singled out as displaying the strongest tendency toward harboring structures of feeling, I would bet on theater, even though I am aware of its conservatism. Expressed another way, even the most radical piece of written literature will never impact like a play that has gone against the system. This same wager Hughes is making when, in the above quotation, he brings the question of identity in line with the practices of theater. Identity is the stuff theater is made of, and all theater practice turns

on the play on identity which acting is: the taking-on of changing roles (cf. Hornby 71). For this reason, theater practitioners of all nationalities and historical periods have varied the theme "The World as Stage."

It comes, then, as no surprise that Hughes chooses the idiom to be written on the wind to describe theater or that he writes of theater, "It's created out of air, and vanishes into it" (11). But that Williams, too, should have chosen this same image (his word solution he culls from the natural sciences) to describe the structure of feeling particularly as it operates in art is, here, significant:

Yet this specific solution is never mere flux. It is a structured formation which, because it is at the very edge of semantic availability, has many of the characteristics of a pre-formation, until specific articulations—new semantic figures—are discovered in material practice: often, as it happens, in relatively isolated ways, which are only later seen to compose a significant (often in fact minority) generation; this often, in turn, the generation that substantially connects to its successors. It is thus a specific structure of particular linkages, particular emphases and suppressions, and, in what are often its most recognizable forms, particular deep starting-points and conclusions. (134)

The "particular deep starting point" for this structure of feeling during the 1990s is, I venture to say, the first appearance of an Irish onstage as an Irish or, in other words, the advent of the Stage Irish. The Irish have long come to Western theater as outsiders, and, being the foreigner in what has been to them a foreign art, they have become accustomed to re-thinking positions of power and powerlessness, of prestige and vulgarity, of legality and illegality, and of reality and illusion. Theater condones, at least for the length of the show, such re-positioning and alternative thinking. The modern Irish theater, I have argued, is one more "stage" (in both senses of the word) in this long tradition of trying to stage the Irish, which is tantamount to saying, of getting to know the Irish by performing them. Also, that the three plays under discussion in this chapter move "at the very edge of semantic availability" is evidenced when they change (in theater) forms and conventions, which, as Williams explains, "are often among the very first indications that such a new structure is forming" (133). And, as my above short selection of the innovative theater practitioners of the twentieth century demonstrates, each successive generation has had a theater, a playwright, a performer, or a play to look back to before they have worked to forge anew something they, for a time, might call Irish.

This is a discrete form of Irish if there ever was one. Certainly this is not the same Irish as that meant when we

speak about the Irish nation? The same probably not, but I do think it is very similar because, like the imagined construct of the nation, the theater and the theater act entail performance and belief.

Incisive, useful definitions of nation, nationality, and nationalism, which account for peoples' active parts in the formation of these groupings, proceed out of the imagologist Leerssen's relational analysis of the image, the autoimage, and the heteroimage (Mere 13-25). He turns "the vexed question of 'national identities' inside out" to pose the question of "national differentiations"; that is, he arrives at a definition of national identity by focusing not on the characteristics attributed to a national group, but by focusing on the exclusions and the oppositions that the belief in such characteristics performs (Mere 17-18). Since the nation has meaning only through differentiation, it compares to the linguistic sign whose meaning lies in its difference to other linguistic signs and cannot be analyzed into a finite list of positive features, as structuralist linguists once presupposed. Leerssen argues that

the definition of a group of individuals is performed by applying certain possible common criteria whilst disregarding others. In this sense, a group identity (and this applies also to the 'national' one) is reached by virtue of the

agreement to disregard those criteria that exist within the group. (Mere 22)

He concludes that the nation is "a group sharing a common demographical self-definition that distinguishes it from its non-members, and sharing a common allegiance to the criteria by which that self-definition is performed" (Mere 24). Because the choice among national characteristics might be said only to be historically constrained, the defining moment for the nation is the act of giving credit to certain of these while all but forgetting the remainder; constitutive of the nation is the very act of national self-definition (Mere 15, 23).

Although Leerssen is basically correct about the choices one makes as to one's belonging to a local, regional, or national group, he fails to give the right emphasis to the action of believing or to the practices going into such decisions and judgments on Irishness.

For my purposes, the first practice of concern is that of performance itself. A play is a kind of make-believe because the performers play at doing things (i.e., they don't intend these things as theirs) and they act as others (i.e., they don't intend these others to be taken for themselves). But with the opposite of play being not reality, but seriousness, one will find that any make-believe which isn't taken seriously ceases to be and that the playing of theater is not all fun and games, but hard work. The delicate but significant combination of performance and seriousness and make-believe

which I am aiming at here Certeau captures in an important term of his theory of spatial practices: habitability.

By a paradox that is only apparent, the discourse that makes people believe is the one that takes away what it urges them to believe in, or never delivers what it promises.

—precisely this is what Leerssen's definition of nation misses by abstracting; but Certeau continues—

Far from expressing a void or describing a lack, it creates such. It makes room for a void. In that way, it opens up clearings; it 'allows' a certain play within a system of defined places. It 'authorizes' the production of an area of free play (Spielraum) on a checkerboard that analyzes and classifies identities. It makes places habitable. On these grounds, I call such discourse a 'local authority.'

(105-106)

The German Spielraum suggests to me the English playroom, which is a suitable description of any stage, even the stage of the most serious drama, as Someone Who'll Watch over Me proves. Certeau's "local authority" is an apposite term for the make-believe of theater. What the conventions of time and place in theater make unreal, our witnessing of the people, the things, and the events onstage—"There they are"—makes real again. This is the interplay or, simply, the play of presence and absence that Hornby describes as the unique character of

theater. And the "clearing" thus opened is the stage where Irish might be radically destabilized because performances of Irish request an audience attend so that something can be put to them which they either believe or disbelieve.

Specifically for Irish Performance in theater, the "apparent" paradox is that of being Irish where (i.e., onstage) one may only play Irish. This is really just one expression of a vital ambiguity at the center of drama and theater practices since they had first been critically and theoretically viewed. The confusion arises from Aristotle's use of the participle δρώντας—his plausible suggestion for the etymology of the word drama—to refer either to the object of representation on the stage (i.e., people as doing) or to the means of such representation (i.e., people onstage doing as people doing). Far more than a pedantry of classical philology, this confusion stems, as Ronald W. Vince points out, from the actor's playing at being someone else or, similarly, from human action representing human action (384). But as "local authorities" of cultural Ireland, theaters become

supererogatory semantic overlays that insert themselves 'over and above' and 'in excess,' and annex to a past or poetic realm a part of the land the promoters of technical rationalities and financial profitabilities had reserved for themselves. (Certeau 106)

Because everything said and done onstage not only reaches us through our senses and our imaginations, but also is created by these, a theater performance lays claim to our belief, while our believing it supports this very claim. This is also Read's point when, citing Kearney's various studies into the imagination, he asserts that it is only from an understanding of the imagination as originally creative "that belief in something can occur" (87). So the paradox can be shattered, even if only momentarily (like all things in performance), through a good performance which convinces its audience that they have won some ground, some "past or poetic realm" hitherto believed lost, where they might get to know Irish for themselves and where they might be Irish as only they can.

I turn now to a second practice of concern, namely that of believing, also widely left unexamined by Leerssen. In "Ways of Believing," part 5 of his The Practice of Everyday Life, Certeau defines belief as an act, as Leerssen does, but Certeau rightly emphasizes not the result, but a person's action in this act of believing, "the subject's investment in a proposition, the act of saying it and considering it as true" (178). This emphasis on a person's active role in the practice of belief raises our awareness for how, since the beginning of modern times, belief has been devaluing to a "semblance" of what it once was and for how, today, communities of believers (like the Catholic Church) persist on "the relics of former convictions" (177). Certeau puts an

entirely new perspective on Leerssen's "national differentiations" when he writes:

A rather simple technique keeps the pretense of this belief going. All that is required is that the surveys ask not about what directly attaches its 'members' to the party, but about what does not attract them elsewhere—not about the energy of convictions, but their inertia: 'If it is false that you believe in something else, then it must be true that you are still on our side.' The results of the operation thus count (on) vestiges of membership. They bet on the erosion itself of every conviction, since these vestiges indicate both the ebbing-away of what those questioned formerly believed and the absence of a stronger credibility that draws them elsewhere: 'voices' do not go away; they remain there; they lie inertly where they were, but nevertheless make up the same total. The toting up becomes a tale. This fiction might very well be an appendix to Borge's Esse est percipi. It is the fable of slippage which figures cannot register but which affects beliefs nonetheless. (177-178)

Read extends Certeau's theory of the practice of belief by discovering the parallel between what one believes in and what one considers worth knowing (67, 73-74). To strengthen our belief in something, we must see a reason for or a value to

it. We must become concerned about something. Those, for example, contributing to the structure of feeling to the question of Irish identity were concerned, and they would not accept a semblance, a stereotype, or someone else's version for the real thing. These people wanted to know what Irish means to them. So the access of imagination that is theater performance paves the way for better believing because it gives an audience the freedom to ask themselves, "Do we subscribe to one or the other "tale" of Irish or have we something our own to tell?"

Where identity is being questioned, as with this structure of feeling, the understanding of Irish as a story whose truth can only be worked out in the telling is a welcome heuristic tool for prying the lid off a term whose definition is the paradox that it means as much you as you make it mean. To tell what Irish is, as with any story, is a mustering of belief in the face of disbelief—but precisely this is what Irish is, a story told to a (dis)believing audience or, the other way around, a make-believe that, depending on its success with the audience, may or may not become real. So when I speak of something as tenuous as a structure of feeling during a past decade of the Irish theater it is primarily because the only noteworthy content I can discover to the word Irish as used in a theater context is belief in the same. And belief is tenuity itself. If one takes the term Irish at face value, that is, if one understands Irish not as a concept or

an ideal but as a word becoming meaningful through enunciation, then to say it under the sign of some such dogma, program, or agenda as Independent Ireland, Catholic Ireland, Republic Ireland, Literary Ireland, Irish Ireland, Postcolonial Ireland, or Globalized Ireland is merely to cite the respective concept or ideal, whereas to say it oneself and not "in the name of the others" (Certeau 189) is to open the possibility of a true kind of Irishness, one worth believing in.

On the basis of this structure of feeling during the 1990s I venture to say that the actresses and actors of these three plays wanted to tell of and, thus, bring out an unmistakable presence of Irish that had been disregarded, disallowed, outlawed, or ousted both by poststructuralist theories of the sign and by the dominant socio-political order of the economically booming country. Ireland, as officially and stereotypically known, is only another collection of stories and acts that has been reified and that forms the hegemony over the term. This is illusive appearance because this Ireland does not constitute the real and the possible, it only tries, in vain, to limit them. But the imagination will not be limited, and make-believe, especially make-believe that is out in the open about what it is (like theater performance), only serves to promote imaginative activity. I argue that these performers could have said to their

audiences, with Kaghan after the familial rearrangements at the ending of Eliot's The Confidential Clerk, that they

Would like to mean something to you...if you'd let

us;

And we'd take the responsibility of meaning it.

(127)

This is no peculiarity, though, of a few years of Irish theater because, as Carlson's synthesis of decades of work and study on performance concludes, "Performance is always performance for someone, some audience that recognizes and validates it as performance [. . .]" (5). The performers of The Weir, Someone Who'll Watch over Me, and Stones in His Pockets, surely, found a significant portion of their audience attuned to what they were saying about the meaning and value of Irish.

I come to a third (and for my purposes the final) practice of concern to questioning Irish identity, and it is one all but ignored by Leerssen: storytelling. The figure of the storyteller has a tradition in the line of Stage Irish from Conn the Shaughraun through Lady Gregory's peasants and Christy Mahon and "Captain" Jack Boyle up to the tramps and voices of Beckett's plays. Storytellers in any of their guises, from those who talk and talk, to the liars, to those who know good jokes, to the tradition bearers, to those who tell the outlandish things the fairies do—such storytellers can be called Irish. The relation between identifying someone

or something as Irish and a way of acting on or speaking of this identity shows that everyone has, by necessity, his or her own version of what Irish means and, likewise, his or her own stories to tell about Irish. So Irish identity and any talk about it become inseparable in the very saying of the word and in the very act of narrating an Irish story. I have broached the difficulties besetting any use of the word Irish, and those difficulties also obtain in this view of Irish as a story because criteria of judgment like fact or fiction and truth or lie must recede before other less regarded criteria of knowledge like belief and disbelief or the imagination.

A story always relates to our belief: we believe it, we disbelieve it, or we do some combination of the two, as when we witness a narrative performed onstage. A conundrum of storytelling arises from that fact that, regardless of the verity of the persons and events reported on, in the moment of their reporting they are a kind of make-believe, a story reported by a more or less reliable storyteller. Bauman's analysis of oral performance into narratives, narrated events, and narrative events provides a first simplified picture of the performative complexities inherent to any storytelling. A story told onstage, or the staging of a narrative event, raises on yet another level of awareness the conflicts between fact and fiction and between belief and disbelief, and so, I argue, better enables its audience to participate actively in what this story might mean. If it is an Irish story, then they

participate in the act of defining Irish. And, as to the imagination, it is through the images and the imaginative activity of performance that plays can become "real make-believe"—real because, if the performance doesn't muster its participants' belief, it is nothing, but if it succeeds in this, the events of the production are footed in both the material and the imaginative and are real for being more than real. This, in my understanding, is what the phrase "the world of the play" means as it is commonly used to refer to the people and events as read from a dramatic text or as witnessed in a performance.

In this connection, staging Irish means setting Irish stories onstage. The theater is neither a more nor a less significant venue for questioning and defining Irish, but, if anthropologists are correct in conceiving narrative not merely as reflective of culture and society, but as "constitutive of social life in the act of storytelling" (Bauman, Story 113), then the stage on which narrative is performed just may have always been one of the few places where Irishness is give accessible expression. So, in these three plays, it is the real and not the realistic, the imaginative and not the imaginary, and the credible and not the rational that might bring the performance inside of some meaning and closer to some value of Irish. "Oral performance," writes Bauman,

like all human activity, is situated, its form, meaning, and functions rooted in culturally defined

scenes or events—bounded segments of the flow of behavior and experience that constitute meaningful contexts for action, interpretation, and evaluation.

(Story 3)

The immediate situation of the stories told in these three plays is the theater and, secondarily, the moments of the structure of feeling to the question of Irish identity. For these audience members, Irish comes to mean what they consider it worth meaning, and, through the theater's felicitous combination of make-believe and disbelief as well as the complexity and the complicity inherent to belief in theater performance, Irish also comes to mean what they can believe it to be.

Such onstage stories can tell us that categories of identity like the nation are in themselves narratives laying claim to our belief and that, if we don't decide for ourselves where to apply our belief, then we will continue to believe weakly "just the same" (Certeau 187-189). These are the stories (or narratives or meta-narratives, as they are often called) which cultural theoreticians like Paul Ricoeur, Jean-François Lyotard, and Paul Feyerabend uncover underneath the discourses of culture, society, and science. The sciences describe their objects, they approach certain contained realities from positions deemed objective. But the telling of a story "is characterized more by a way of exercising itself than by the thing it indicates. And one must grasp a sense

other than what is said. It produces effects, not objects. It is narration, not description. It is an art of saying"; it is "the style of tactics" (Certeau 79). Certeau's tactic is the clever trick by which the powerless gain one over on the powerful and the know-how of saying just the right thing at just the right time, and it operates in (to name just the prominent examples he gives) the art of theory, the art of cooking, the art of walking, and the art of reading. Certeau cites Marcel D tienne's work on Greek myth as an example of a nonscientific reading of the story, a reading that disavows the "-ologies" that would objectify what they read in order to elucidate and interpret it. For D tienne the Greek myths are already practices: "They say exactly what they do. They constitute an act which they intend to mean. There is no need to add a gloss that knows what they express without knowing it, nor to wonder what they are the metaphor of" (80). Wilde remarks—if in a different context, then certainly not in an entirely unrelated one—"It is style that makes us believe in a thing—nothing but style" (989). And so it is that the Stage Irish who tell stories can impart the tremendous recognition that, as with religions and governments, only when we believe stereotypes do they exist. If we say we don't believe them and mean it, then they are only figments void of reality, fairy tales we once heard as children which no longer lay any claim to our thoughts and feelings.

Two valid and useful understandings of what comprises an Irish story are, first, to view it as those narratives we are well acquainted with from literature and everyday life and, second, to view it as anything that we do because we imagined it possible, or (to adopt Certeau's terminology) anything that operates like a story by temporalizing and spatializing the place where one is so that telling it is the condition, the very possibility, of doing it.

The more familiar variety of the story abounds in these plays. The audience hear ghost stories, "personal experience narratives" (Bauman, Story 33-35), and the figures' relations of where they've been this day and what they did there; the audience hear recitations of poems and movies, reminiscences, jokes, and the captives' antic make-believe; the audience hear the tales of Charlie's breakdown, Jake's return home, Sean's wasted youth, Caroline Giovanni's Irish roots, and Mickey's local prestige as well as the story lines of the movies The Quiet Valley and Stones in His Pockets and the stories we tell each other because we are insecure (e.g., Charlie to Jake on his reason for leaving the North) or because we are embarrassed (e.g., Jake to Charlie on his first date with Caroline Giovanni) or because we are having one over on someone (e.g., Mickey to the producers on the weather the next day).

The second variety of the story is also integral to these plays. The figures tell local histories and their personal

histories; they tell what has happened, what is happening, and what may happen; they tell where they are and when it is—in short, they narrate the important actions of the plays and, in this way, they narrate what they do and who they are. Because a story only exists in the telling that is heard (or read), as a performance only in the acting that is witnessed and the dramatic figure only in the performing that engages the imagination, it is a practice or, more precisely, a subtype of spatializing operations. Space is to place as movement, the moving, and the changing are to stability, the inert, and the permanent:

In short, space is a practiced place. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers. In the same way, an act of reading is the space produced by the practice of a particular place: a written text, i.e., a place constituted by a system of signs.

(Certeau 117)

Certeau calls stories “narrative actions”: “every day, they traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them” (115). The most radical thing about Certeau’s writing is his basic proposition of the presence exhibited by people in the face of the sciences of nature, money, and society; that is, despite the rigors of the functionalist systems working to contain them and their practices, people still do and think

and say and feel. For this reason, Read argues the pertinence of Certeau for theater. Recognizing that Certeau's view of the story changes everything about the function, the significance, and the study of narrative, Read avouches, "Stories are not limited to describing actions, movements, and practices but make these operations possible in theatre forms" (173).

Certeau's contrast between the map and the tour illustrates well the power of stories. He defines the map as a "knowledge of an order of places" and a "plane projection totalizing observations" (119); maps, especially as they have changed since early modern times, are autonomous of the experiences of people going somewhere. Tours, on the other hand, are the directions and guiding signposts a person can tell about because he or she has been there or now is there. While a map can only see things in their proper places (e.g., "The bathroom is across from the bedroom. There is a hall between them."), a tour leads you there by the hand (e.g., "Walk a bit down the hall until you come to two doors. The bathroom will be on your right."). "What the map cuts up," writes Certeau, "the story cuts across" (129). And in this form, the story recalls the nuances both of the Greek *διήγησις* ("guidance" and "transgression") and, as Certeau so brilliantly remarks, of the mass transit of Athens, *αὐτοκινητοπορεία* ("transportation" and "transportable limits"). Although the story still exists within the confines of the "map," or within the conventions of narrative and linguistic

systems, it also transgresses those confines and transports the limits established by the system. The story, in other words, is "delinquent."

Because it operates "not on the margins but in the interstices of the codes that it undoes and displaces" and because it privileges the tour over the map,

[. . .] the story is a sort of delinquency in reverse, maintained, but itself displaced and consistent, in traditional societies (ancient, medieval, etc.), with an order that is firmly established but flexible enough to allow the proliferation of this challenging mobility that does not respect places, is alternately playful and threatening, and extends from the microbe-like forms of everyday narration to the carnivalesque celebrations of earlier days. (Certeau 130)

The words one chooses to tell a story are the lemmata of some lexicon, and the ways one combines them are governed by some syntax, and the schemas one works with for the presentation derive from conventionalized narrative patterns, and the version one tells has been told before. This situation of the narrative and its narrated event will stifle many a singular act of telling, but it also may unleash the potential residing in a fleeting act, repeatable as well as singular, to become in an unforeseeable manner active and real:

The significance of a story that is well known, and therefore classifiable, can be reversed by a single 'circumstantial' detail. To 'recite' it is to play on this extra element hidden in the felicitous stereotypes of the commonplace. The 'insignificant detail' inserted into the framework that supports it makes the commonplace produce other effects. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. The finely tuned ear can discern in the saying the difference introduced by the act of saying (it) here and now, and remains attentive to these guileful tricks on the part of the storyteller. (Certeau 89)

They who have ears to hear the Irish stories of The Weir, Someone Who'll Watch over Me, and Stones in His Pockets are they who partake of this structure of feeling and who take their own look at what Irish should mean. Stereotypical Ireland and stereotyped Ireland become Irish Performances which, although short-lived, may also be long remembered. This is an invigorating of the past, a reviving of that which once had passed and is now passing again.

Like the Greek deities, the fairies of Ireland, for example, are "the multiple, insidious, moving force" of the landscape (both real and imagined) and "the agile representations of narrativity, and of narrativity in its most delinquent form" (Certeau 129-130). It is through the stories of fairies, ghosts, and deceased loved ones, as told by three

"country fellas" and Valerie, by Adam, Edward, and Michael, and by Charlie and Jake, that these unreal beings come to life.

The Weir, Someone Who'll Watch over Me, Stones in His Pockets

My view of Irish as a story is my main reason for choosing, to the exclusion of such other likely candidates for this spot as Sebastian Barry, Marina Carr, and Martin McDonagh, Conor McPherson and his The Weir. I do not mean to say that I might not have expounded my view on their plays or that their plays lack storytelling (the proof of this can be found alone in Our Lady of Sligo, Low in the Dark, and The Pillowman), only that McPherson seemed to me here the obvious choice.

The Weir ends with Brendan tidying the bar, so he can drive Jack and Valerie home, and Jack asking Valerie to come in after tourist season begins:

VALERIE. What? Come in...with the...Germans?

JACK. Yeah.

VALERIE. Doesn't bother me.

JACK. Ah, I think that's the right attitude. You should stay with the company and the bright lights.

BRENDAN. Do you see my keys?

He is looking around. Valerie and Jack look around a little.

VALERIE. Sure I might even pick up some German.

JACK. Ah, I don't know. They're eh...Are they from
Germany, Brendan?

BRENDAN. What?

JACK. The Germans. (To Valerie.) We call them the
Germans.

Valerie picks keys off the mantlepiece.

VALERIE. Is this them?

BRENDAN. Yeah, thanks. Are we right?

They are moving towards the door.

JACK. Where are they from? Is it Denmark, or Norway?

(To Valerie.) It's somewhere like that.

Jack goes out, followed by Valerie.

BRENDAN. Ah, I don't know where the fuck they're
from.

Brendan turns off the light and leaves. (97)

What the figures do know about "the Germans" comes neither from "the Germans" themselves nor from normally permissible sources of information like books or documentaries, and would seem to be limited to what they tell each other about them, so Brendan's closing remark would also seem to decide the matter: "the Germans" aren't from here, they're tourists. Accordingly, we would assent to Jack's accusation that Finbar has ulterior motives in playing the tour guide to the newcomer Valerie: country folk are nice to outsiders always for a reason, never for the people themselves. His reason, the old bachelor Jack presumes, is sexual. After all, Finbar has shown her all the

sights and now is introducing her to the "country fellas" and an authentic country bar. He keeps Valerie informed by showing her the photos on the walls and describing for her the attraction the area has for tourists. For example, he comments to her on the view of Carrick from Brendan's family's top field, "You get all the Germans trekking up here in the summer, Valerie," and when he remembers the fairy road, hoping for a good story for his guest, he assures her, "The Germans do love all this" (62).

But Brendan can imagine "the Germans" differently, too. When Jack and Jim are teasing him about providing campsites for tourists, he paints them a picture of what the tourists would then become to him, namely, families and children and, possibly, friends:

If you had all the...families out there. On their holliers. And all the kids and all. You'd feel the evenings turning. When they'd be leaving. And whatever about how quiet it is now. It'd be fucking shocking quiet then. (Short pause.) You know?

Pause.

JACK. Mm. (53)

They know. Their silences speak for them. One begins to see that, since they play no part on this stage, "the Germans" are only what the Irish say of them. They are a story by these Irish. We might imagine the reverse, too. "The Germans" who

visit Ireland will return home and predicate this or that about the Irish and support what they say by telling the stories of their experiences there. The purport of these stories can be as evident as one might wish, but if such is the evidence one has to support one's opinions or bolster one's knowledge about others, then the moment one tries to explain or interpret it, there begins another tale. I mean this as no discouragement to inquisitiveness into foreign lands or to the pleasures of traveling, rather I am only remarking that such appears to be an important condition of what we think about others and what we think we know about others. Although not apparent to the critic who misses the storytellings for the stories or whose interest in these ceases with the events they narrate, The Weir poses big questions.

In adherence both to Williams's understanding of art as a social experience and to Bauman's understanding of oral performance as situated human behavior, I draw attention to the storytelling in this play and de-emphasize the content of the stories (i.e., the narratives). A mere preliminary situating of the four ghost stories demonstrates the complex social relationships, the personal motivations, and the apparently incidental circumstances at work in them. Jack tells the first story at Finbar's request and Finbar the second at Jack's instigation. Because the narrated events of Jack's story happened in Valerie's new house, he makes a

chilling ghost story out of Maura Nealon and the fairy road in order to aggravate Finbar. When Finbar won't tell his story (because, as we later find out, he must then admit he was scared) Jack starts taking over, so Finbar picks up there, not wanting to allow Jack to tell his version. So, amongst other things, the first two stories express the antagonism that Jack and Finbar later show openly when they quarrel. Jim's story, on the other hand, surprises everyone, including himself. Finbar is only indirectly responsible for it because he has mentioned Declan Donnelly, whose name triggers a story that is far worse for their guest than either Jack's or Finbar's because it is about the ghost of a pedophile haunting a little girl even after their deaths. Reminded of her own loss, Valerie asks for the Ladies and, in a play of few entrances and exits, leaves for Brendan's house toilet.

Although the men actively try to put an end to the ghost stories, Valerie tells hers; rather than stop the storytelling, the company's commentary and conversation breed more stories. Valerie's story shocks them because the ghost she confronts is not some stranger, but her daughter. In the agitation following her story, Finbar in particular tries to repudiate the veritableness of the stories: Jim was "delirious," Maura Nealon was an alcoholic, the Walshes were "headers," and he was—"Fair enough"—scared (86-87). He wants to show that the stories, despite appearances, really are "old cod" and that they wouldn't be ghost stories if they didn't

scare. But his arguments against the stories seek not only to banish his belief in such things, and with it Valerie's, but also to nurse his wounded pride because it has been primarily the antagonism between him and Jack which has changed what might have been an entertaining evening of stories into an embittered contest of wills. In so interpreting the circumstances behind Valerie's story and her motivation for telling it, I am making a break with a common interpretation of Valerie's part in the action sequence as the woman who the men are all out to impress but who shows up these doddering old men with a masterful ghost story of her own (e.g., Cummings 308-310; Jordan 361). Folklorists have shown that colloquies over the reliability of tales and the veracity of their tellers have always been an essential part of oral performance (Lysaght, Correll). In storytelling sessions, these "traditions of disbelief" find outlet in logical argumentation, counter-evidence, discoverable inconsistencies, or just one's own differing view of things, and they often reflect or provoke personal animosities (Correll 3, 9). The situation at Brendan's bar is no different. When Finbar sputters, "But...just...no one knows about these things, sure, they're not real even" (86), there is much less evidence and logic apparent, than there is his desire to end all this nonsense and get back to the reality where he is the Carrick businessman and Jack, Brendan, and Jim the "country fellas."

Although the skilled storyteller will try to answer the listener who asks "Is that true?" he will concentrate his efforts in the area where his real power lies, namely, in making the doubters forget or want to forget they ever didn't believe; in other words, he will so craft his story that it makes them believe, which original causative use of the Middle French faire croire is still retained fragmentarily by the English cognate to make believe. The storyteller's art infuses in his audience the practice of Coleridge's "suspension of disbelief." McPherson's acquaintance with the art of storytelling extends beyond his practice of it to his own reflection on it. One detail of his staged stories from the 1990s arguing a critical awareness of storytelling is that he has from Coleridge's "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" the title for his This Lime Tree Bower, the story lines of which tempt us to believe out of sheer vicariousness: Frank, 22, gets away with robbing the bookie who his widower father owes a few thousand pounds, while the one cool person who his impressionable younger brother, Joe, is able to befriend betrays him and while their sister's boyfriend, the college lecturer Ray, becomes involved in all this by being in such an ongoing state of debauchery that "I couldn't give a fuck" (89). McPherson's series of ingenuously unhistrionic storytellers and unapologetically fictitious stories lead Scott T. Cummings to the following reasonable assessment of his oeuvre:

McPherson flirts with the improbable and the unbelievable first and foremost for the sheer fun of it and then as a way of drawing attention to the psychology of storytelling. When regarded collectively, his body of work demonstrates a self-consciousness about the mechanics of McPherson's craft that adds a meta-narrative dimension to his tall tales. They become, in part, stories about storytelling. (306)

Through the "improbable" and the "unbelievable" McPherson's narrator "activates and isolates the audience's (aesthetic) will to believe his story in order to secure their (moral) will to forgive his shortcomings" (307). For Cummings it is important that we accept these storytellers on moral grounds and that they, through telling their stories, ease regret and bad conscience, but I argue that these moral questions might be addressed on a different level and in a different form.

Take the issue of lying. Is it wrong, for example, that Jack "relishes the details" of the story about the fairy road at Finbar's and, perhaps, Valerie's expenses? And if there are details one might add or subtract for the occasion, how true can any story be? Must a storyteller lie, even if only a bit? In his work with Texan tall tales, Bauman examines the ways in which personal experience narratives modify the generic expectations of the tall tale, and vice versa. He finds that where the two genres meet in a story told both in the first

person and about incredible events the storyteller draws himself into what Erving Goffman calls "fabrication." Fabrication is, simply, a double lie: first, the lie about the narrated event and, second, the lie about its connection to one's own experiences. The second kind of lying is perpetrated, then, in the telling of the tale; it is the storyteller's lie for the sake of his performance. Lying in oral performance or "creative exaggeration" (Bauman's word for the same thing) functions socially as a means of constructing and negotiating personal identity (Story 20-21). But oral performance is also "a form of verbal art": "That is, it is characteristically performed, subject to evaluation, both as truth and as art for the skill and effectiveness with which it is told" (Story 21). It is in these two senses that, in many social contexts, "lying is overwhelmingly licensed as part of the fundamental ethos of sociability" (Story 22). If this is true for Bauman's examples of coon hunting and dog trading, then all the more so for the theater.

The dissolute theater critic of St Nicholas, who after deserting family and job to chase a young actress has a run in with vampires in London, yearns for the magic his lies once possessed in exciting his girl and boy, those lies every parent tells their children:

You can't light a stranger's face with the mention
of Santa.

You can only do that to certain people for a certain time. (25)

St. Nick is a children's story, but told to adults it becomes deception. Unless it is told in the theater. One Christmas, McPherson tells us in his introduction to the edition of St Nicholas and The Weir, he started off all the new acquaintances he made at pubs by telling them a "big lie." From his experiment he concludes that "we live in a world where we don't expect complete strangers to lie to us. Not in pubs at any rate. But it's nice in the theatre" (vii). I recommend, as I have through my interpretation of Frank Hardy without recourse to metaphor, that we don't evade and talk around the obvious: theater performance is lying and it is fabrication. But by regarding theater as theater we may come closest to the play at hand and circumvent the displacements, the alienations, and the abstractions too many critics deem necessary to a proper understanding of what is said and done onstage. Theater as only theater can be is the radical potential that will rupture any tendency theater has to conservatism.

When Eamonn Jordan mentions the "distancing features" narrators can use to conceal, for example, the personal significance a story has to them (359), I am put in mind of the "distancing features" listeners and especially literary critics employ when interpreting stories and plays. This McPherson has counteracted by setting his plays, his staged

stories, on the stage before which the audience find themselves. Of Rum and Vodka, The Good Thief, and This Lime Tree Bower he writes, "These plays are set 'in a theatre.' Why mess about? The character is on stage, perfectly aware that he is talking to a group of people" (Lime 5). At first glance, though, The Weir is not as avowedly staged as these three plays or as St Nicholas. Nonetheless, The Weir has a stage, and, like the stage of Heavenly Bodies, its stage is more complex than those of McPherson's previous storytellings for the theater; moreover, one mustn't forget that, for all its realistic detail, The Weir is a play and that, since it is a play by McPherson and a play full of stories, there are "stages" strewn about its stage, where the "country fellas" meet the conceited Finbar, where the men meet Valerie, where the figures meet their actors, where we humans meet ghosts and fairies. In The Weir, then, I take the ghost story for a ghost story and the ghosts for ghosts. When the play is understood as a theater performance, then the so-called meta-narrative discourse on fact and fiction becomes itself a narrative and the storytellings open portals on reality which show it to us as something entirely different to the ordinary, mundane world we think we know. Anyway, who really knows the truth about fairies and ghosts? As Joe (This Lime Tree Bower) remarks about all the versions of the story behind the shipwreck near town, from the version of its scuttling at the hands of the English captain running guns for the IRA but betrayed in love

by an Irish girl, to the version of the fisherman Vinty Duggan crashing while drunk, "Lots of things could have been true, who knows?" (96).

If you have reason to believe in the existence of ghosts—and by reason I don't mean logic or corroborative evidence—then the likelihood you will encounter one increases a hundredfold. Valerie has such reason. At the end of his own outlandish story, the figure of St Nicholas says,

But most important.

Over everything else.

I had a story. (42)

Although this is to be expected from someone whose career is journalism, his meaning also pertains to his encounter with the vampires as well as to the ghostly occurrences in the stories of The Weir. To have a story is emphatically not to have an explanation. With a story one solicits others' emotional understanding and their belief (in the sense of faith in the truth of what happened to one), not their rational understanding and their conviction (in the sense of persuasion through the facts of what one can prove happened). Valerie's daughter's odd behavior and the bizarre sequence of events surrounding her drowning are for Valerie both a confirmation and an expression of what has happened, and because no attempt at explanation, at comfort, or at forgetting can help her, she had hoped at least for her husband's credence in what she told him: "Daniel felt that

I...needed to face up to Niamh being gone. But I just thought he should face up to what happened to me" (85). Jack's response to her admits belief. When Brendan leaves the two alone briefly, Jack confides in Valerie that it has been a special evening for him and, his words marked through his standing up to leave, he says, "Makes you feel very powerless. I'll say that much" (94).

Powerlessness, of the sort Jack is talking about, lies not in our inability to relate what happens—the figures' adept storytelling, yes, the whole of literature prove this—but it lies in our inability to make sense of what happens. Jack's admittance of powerlessness is a victory of the storyteller over the scientist and of the telling over the tale. Wherever we try to make sense of things, there is a story; whenever we try to make sense of things, then we tell a story. These are the scientific descriptions that cultural theoreticians have exposed as displaced narratives, the explanations that the figure of St Nicholas argues only gloss over our ignorance:

We view nature scientifically. We can predict its laws.

But our pride in doing this blinds us. Blinds us to this simple fact: We don't know why there are laws at all.

We may know that the earth goes around the sun. And we may know that this is due to 'gravity.'

But not one of us knows why there is gravity. So don't sit there and cast judgement on the credibility of what I say, when you don't even know why you aren't floating off your seats. (26)

I can find no better reason to take theater on theater's terms. If it's all masks and illusion, then understand it so. In art, one need not give an answer because one can just give both, or all, standpoints. In his essay "The Truth of Masks," detailing the effective artistic use to which Shakespeare put historical research and archeological accuracy, Wilde concludes that "The truths of metaphysics are the truths of masks" (1078). Wilde's supposed contemptuous disregard for facts is not reflected in his own attention to detail or in his main argument throughout this essay, namely, that Shakespeare, too, was at pains to be accurate. Wilde values facts, though not for and in themselves, but for their effects, and it is the artist's task to convert a detail into an effect and to weigh every detail's relative importance (1073). That regard to costume, props, and scenography (taken today by good theater practitioners as a matter of course) which Wilde adamantly supports has, in his mind, "the illusion of truth for its method, and the illusion of beauty for its result" (1078). If anywhere might be incarnated such illusions deriving from reality as well as from the image, then on the stage and through the actors and their audience. This is one way of expressing what I have been calling the make-believe of

theater performance. So the admittance that all you have is a story is a recognition of that fact that making sense of things is often little else than making things make sense.

When the company talks of betting, they broach the pertinent conflict between science and the things science cannot disprove, or that which is not falsifiable. Jack is trying to defend his betting on Jim's tip when he explains his "principle" in betting. One bets for the fun of it, he argues, "from judgement" (58), but not from long, close study of the published figures to narrow the margin of risk. Jack's principle is luck, but Finbar interrupts, "Ah, the principle of the thing is to win a few quid and don't be giving out" (59). Finbar says this to aggravate Jack, but his words show that the same action may follow more than one principle, and so the word becomes polysemous and dilute. Jack concedes, "I don't have a system. And I do" (59). For all Jim's effort, he might just be luckier than Jack and no one can say for certain why he wins more often; so, despite Jack's appearance of being an opportunist, he is consistent in his betting practice.

The incident raises weighty questions. What does what we know have to do with what we don't know? Or, does knowing something mean the same as not knowing something else? Is knowledge just another word for awareness? And if we are made aware, like one awaking to the calls of one's partner or child, what is it that we are made aware of? It's hard to say when we consider what else there must be still to be brought

to our attention. "At me too someone is looking," says Vladimir while observing Estragon sleeping, "of me too some is saying, He is sleeping, he knows nothing, let him sleep on" (58). We can't know, we can't even know more or less. But if we accept this, we at least can be ourselves and let others be themselves, too. It is here, in the imagination's dual vocations of poetics and ethics, that Richard Kearney locates a way out of the disillusioning collapse of authority and belief that plagues our postmodern day through the practicing of humility and humor (218-240). To humor I will only say that it astonishes me that a play so full of darkness and suffering as The Weir also can regularly make me laugh out loud. To humility, Kearney says that we must constantly be trying to find that position where things make enough sense, because they will rarely be self-evident, and this means keeping both paths to knowledge and action always open: "Ethics without poetics leads to the censoring of imagination; poetics without ethics leads to dangerous play" (236). We must admit, for instance, that, no matter how much we may pride ourselves on knowing, just one thing we as yet have no way of knowing could topple it all.

If, then, we cannot know whether stories like Valerie's are true, how or why should we believe them? We can believe them if we view them as oral performance or, in the case of The Weir, stories told onstage. We should believe them because the storytelling itself shows us the way to make do when we no

longer know how. In his 1937 essay "Der Erzähler: Betrachtungen zum Werk Nikolai Lesskows," Walter Benjamin contrasts the storytelling ("die Erzählung") to the novel and finds that where the novel, closing as it always does with the word and the intention "Finis," strives for an answer to the meaning of life, storytellings end on the question "Wie ging es weiter?" and, thus, suffice with advising their listeners (274-276). "Wie ging es weiter?" would not be out of place at the end of any of the ghost stories, in fact, every figure is asked to give some indication of what followed where he or she has ended his story. The same question can be asked at the endings of the stories the captives tell because these are the stories of who they are. And the play Stones in His Pockets ends when Charlie and Jake are just beginning to tell another story also called Stones in His Pockets.

Because a story can lead to a story can lead to a story, the door to change is never shut. Like "Scheherazade, der zu jeder Stelle ihrer Geschichten eine neue Geschichte einfällt" (Benjamin 273), the storyteller knows his trade and, Benjamin maintains, is wise because he knows what one has to do to live. Scheherazade is wise for not letting the entertainment stop, because she knows then she will die. Jack is wise because he knows that he is powerless to help Valerie—even that his and the others' ghost stories may have harmed her—and that she is powerless to help herself:

I wonder if being out here in the country is the best place for to...you know...

VALERIE. Why?

JACK. Ah. Girl like you. Hiding yourself away, listening to old headers like us talking about the fairies. Having all your worst fears confirmed for you. Tuh. Ghosts and angels and all this? Fuck them. I won't have it. Because I won't see someone like you being upset by it. You've enough to deal with for fuck's sake. I am very, sorry, love, about what happened.

VALERIE. Thanks. (94)

Something happened to her, Jack doesn't doubt that, but he wants her, somehow, to make the best of it. His invitation for her to come in to the bar, "with the company and the bright lights," when the tourist season starts may well be the best advice she has got so far.

In Someone Who'll Watch over Me, since the captives can do nothing but talk or move the length of their chains, nearly every action is make-believe. But what kind of make-believe, relevant or fantastic? Through my interpretation of the ending, I will show that their make-believe is the make-believe of a relevant theater and, therefore, very relevant. Despite oppression and duress threatening death, Adam, Edward, and Michael manifest life and, similarly, despite the mental

and emotional confinements of stereotypes, they come better to know themselves and each other.

The only scene in which a figure has freedom of movement, the closing scene, opens on Edward dressing and Michael watching:

There is silence.

EDWARD. Being an Irishman helped me. I don't know what kind of deal the government would have done.

MICHAEL. Yes.

Silence. (166)

The play doesn't make much of the nationality authorized by a government, a church, or a civil bureaucracy. It is no peculiar merit of a country like Ireland that it is neutral to the war in Lebanon because history has brought circumstances to a head in this hostage taking. As Edward and Michael in their comic re-enacting of the 1977 Wimbledon Ladies' Final conclude, history is unfair because, being a game, it must have losers (sc. 7). Because it is not on account of his holding an Irish passport that Edward's release makes any sense to him, to Michael, or to the audience, it has the appearance of a fortuitous twist of fate or, in theater terminology, a *deus ex machina*.

Hope, that "essential optimism of the medieval mind and its profound faith in human happiness to triumph over despair" (McGuinness, Someone 140), comes in this play, as James Hurt ascertains for McGuinness's oeuvre, in "arbitrary moments of

blessedness, enabled either by art or by individual human compassion" (285). The captives access "the medieval mind," for example, through Michael's recitations of Sir Orfeo and The Wanderer, but hope does spread through all their renderings of movies, popular songs, sporting events, and personal histories as well as their zanily playing at writing letters, mixing cocktails, and driving a flying car. If Sir Orfeo, set in Winchester, offers hope, then the "desolate, frozen landscape" (McGuinness, Someone 158) of The Wanderer recalls more accurately their present situation. But hope is not blind cheeriness, and even Sir Orfeo had first to descend to hell before he "came out of his care." Just such hope Alec Reid discovers in the destitute figures of Beckett's theater, and so he concludes, Beckett's is an art of love (49-58).

The first step forward which the hopeful must take is to acknowledge where they are, and so gain some understanding of who they are. This association between location and identity is a strong motif in McGuinness's oeuvre and, therefore, a key to understanding the figures' identities. Of the setting for Beckett's Play Reid writes: "There is real comfort here; bed-rock may make a painful couch but at least one feels it, and by feeling knows that one is still alive" (56). For Michael in Someone Who'll Watch over Me, as long as he, for instance, refuses to acknowledge their cell as a cell (123), he remains innocent of the fact that he is a captive and his life in danger. Likewise, to Edward's concerned "We're going mad" Adam

gives the terse reply "We're in Lebanon" (97). Since they are captive, where else should they be? The rhyme cell/hell reflects the proximity of these places as well as the like sufferings of their inhabitants. "There is a hell, Da," cries Edward. "And I'm in it. I'm very scared, Daddy. Please save me. Please get me out of this place. Carry me in your arms away from here. If you're in heaven, will you save me?" (165-166). The contrast between their freedom (or heaven) and their cell (or hell) becomes most poignant when Michael breaks in on Edward's attempt at comforting him and laconically states, "You're free, and I'm here" (167). Long before this, in his idle attempt to bridge an awkward silence, Michael voices the sentiment that it would be wonderful to be released together and, unwittingly, sets them off rambling about his Peterborough and its cathedral, Edward's Dublin and the bird sanctuary at Booterstown, and Adam's San Francisco and the lobster you get in Chinatown (133-134). Our acquaintance of the captives teaches us that national identities and cultural feelings of belonging are not the prerogatives of groups, but of the people who make up the communities in which they live together and in which they change. Descending on Ireland in the passenger's seat of Chitty-Chitty Bang-Bang, Edward recognizes his country's shape and its color; Edward's Ireland is a particular time (i.e., Christmas Day) at a particular place (i.e., the side of his father's grave).

When Michael speaks of his pride in having been a professor of English (even despite his meager publication record and his dismissal by the university) his meaning is much more precise and personal than it would at first appear. After telling Edward the plot of The Wanderer, they are silent. Then Michael goes on:

We long for our dear life, lamenting great loss—my father is dead—but accepting fate. Wyrð bith ful araed. In the same poem. Wyrð bith ful araed. Fate is fate. When I read 'The Wanderer,' I feel possessed by my father. I feel for him, and for England. I love my country because I love its literature very much. (158)

How could one label Michael English or his pride as that proper to an educated Englishman? How would one even begin to unravel the intricacies of his upbringing, his knowledge of Old English, his father's German captivity, his interpretation of this poem, his feelings, his circumstances, and the relationship between him and his listener, Edward?

It is impossible, without the grossest distortions to a person, to label anyone American or Irish or English or Arab, because such labels reduce people to documents and numbers identifying them with functions in a power regime. Labels are the clothes of stereotype, but a label only stays if a person consents to wearing it, and this play is about three men enduring unjust captivity by coming closer to each other, by

bridging the gaps that so often separate us. Someone Who'll Watch over Me presents Adam, Edward, and Michael becoming each his own American, Irishman, and Englishman, and this process is a vigorous and profane mixing of that which is normally considered American and that which is blatantly un-American, of that which is normally considered masculine and that which is blatantly feminine, and so on. Adam, Edward, and Michael predicate an alternative understanding of nationality, an understanding that focuses moments of both despair and well-being as well as places where individuals have experienced and felt something of those same places. Theirs is not the nationality that looks to political representation, territorial domain, and historical myth in order to recognize and understand a nation. Michael's Englishness, for example, looks to a poem in which one line, one hard, untranslatable line (Wyrd bith ful araed) helps him to come to terms with his father's trauma. This is a literature and, consequently, Michael's is an Englishness that will admit no stereotypes.

Verbally assaulting Michael with cliché attacks of the Irishman wronged by the English (i.e., language death and culpability for the Famine), Edward's joking starts assuming a serious tone, when Michael exasperatedly responds, "You are ridiculous, Edward." He retorts, "I am Irish" (131). Irish like this are ridiculous, and sometimes, even, being Irish of any type or of any persuasion is ridiculous:

EDWARD. When I was covering the troubles at home I interviewed this Derry woman. She'd had her windows broken, I asked her in my innocence—I was a cub reporter—to sum up the situation. She said, 'Son, this whole situation can be summed up in two words. Ridiculous. Ridiculous.'

MICHAEL. Is it really our fault for your troubles at home? Is it the English people's fault?

EDWARD. Ridiculous.

MICHAEL. Is it our fault we're here in the first place?

EDWARD. Ridiculous.

MICHAEL. Do those children holding us captive have a reason to hate us?

EDWARD. Ridiculous.

MICHAEL. Sum up our situation in two words.

EDWARD. Christ, help us.

MICHAEL. That's three words.

EDWARD. Jesus, look down on us.

MICHAEL. Five words.

EDWARD. God and His Blessed Mother, help us.

MICHAEL. Ridiculous.

EDWARD. Yes.

MICHAEL. Ridiculous.

Silence. (152)

To sum up any situation in words is to tell the story, but in some situations in life words fail and the story ends senselessly or drops off in silence. Then the only answer to the question "Why?" is some such word as "Ridiculous" or, what David Mamet reminds us is the only correct response to the bereaved (182), the practicing of silence. "Save us from all who believe they're right," Edward declares. "Right, in the name of God who is not merciful and not compassionate, for he is like them, always right" (126). Edward knows he doesn't have the answers, but he knows it is he who does what he does, who tries to survive, who errs, who needs the help of Adam and Michael. The difference between him and his oppressors he captures in the words "They do as they're ordered. I do as I choose" (128). He may not choose to leave, that much isn't given him, but he does have the faith—not to mention, the wit—to answer Michael's above request in ever-lengthening appeals to Jesus and the Blessed Mother.

After Adam's removal and likely murder, Edward refuses to speak or eat. But he hunger-strikes from motives vastly different to those of the Irish political prisoners who his act brings to mind. Michael recognizes the signs of debilitating grief, of someone wanting to give a friend's death meaning, "some sense of sacrifice," but he recalls Edward from his self-destructive exercise in grief and teaches him how to "bury" Adam, how to "remember" Adam (144). He lets Edward talk, he is silent, he recites Herbert's "Love (3)"

("You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat: / So I did sit and eat."), he offers Edward food, he reminds Edward that they are still alive. On his release Edward regrets, "We should be let go together," and a desperation, not heard in Michael's earlier whim, sounds in their exchange:

MICHAEL. We're not.

EDWARD. Yes.

MICHAEL. When you cried, you were heard. I wasn't.

Maybe I didn't cry hard enough. Maybe they think I haven't suffered enough. Is that what all this is for? To see us suffer? And to what end? What is it for? I don't know. I never will. (167-168)

Michael has suffered more in his life than just this captivity, though his present situation is most dire, and his questions are directed at all that suffering, even at all human suffering: "What is it for?" It is for laughing. Words cannot answer their predicament; words can answer only by telling it as it is: ridiculous. The captives will endure their pain only so long as they can continue talking and laughing, only so long as they can keep up their stories and songs, their ceaseless chatter and zany acts, in a word, their making believe. Their immobility forces them to relinquish the active life for the acting life (cf. Swift 41). Adam's pretense of staying active and feeling alive by keeping fit he himself exposes: "Who am I fooling? Who the hell am I fooling? Me. That's who" (91). Their world of make-believe and acting,

though, is no game, but, like theater work, demands their full attention and complete energy. Against harsh imprisonment and— which for a play about harsh imprisonment seems even more crucial—against “the boredom, the boredom, the bloody boredom” (90) Adam, Edward, and Michael muster all their creative powers and their wills to believe in the make-believe.

Before the interval and Adam’s disappearance, this reaches a climax when Adam and Michael join Edward “on the outside” for a drink. Their captors appearing, they, too, are asked to join in the party:

Take the weight off you feet, boys. Imagine it’s a wedding or as near as makes no difference. Bit of a song. A story. The same the world over. Have a drink if you like. We won’t tell. Join us. (137-138)

“Bit of a song. A story. The same the world over”—this they declare in the culture of Scheherazade, this they know is the power of a story. Their talk takes on monumental proportions when, for example, they speak Adam dead before he is (128, 132-133) and resurrect him after he dies (148, 167). Acting out the story of brave men going to battle, which Michael’s father had once told him, Edward and Michael perform roles wholly new to the Irishman and the Englishman who they have at times pretended to be: they become friends, each the other’s fidus Achates, each playing Ruth to the other’s Naomi.

At the ending, the battle (i.e., the battle of human suffering) is already turning in Michael’s favor because he is

able to replay their parting, repeating Edward's lines ("Right." "Good luck.") and adopting his role. This is a prime example of what Joan Fitzpatrick Dean calls the "self-dramatization" of McGuinness's figures (qtd. in Hurt 290), which is, simply, their performative aspects. The performances of McGuinness's figures, like the performances of Adam, Edward, and Michael, are their survival tactics in their lives torn by grief; and grief is, according to James Hurt, "the bedrock of a remarkably consistent vision":

McGuinness's protagonists live in a kind of afterlife, scarred by traumatic encounters with the death of friends, family, or loved ones. Their experiences, though, have not left them numbed or defeated but rather have given them the gift of tongues. Remarkable talkers, they rewrite their worlds in bravura feats of storytelling and dramatic improvisation. (285)

Michael bears his new loneliness with such "self-dramatization." Because of his father and his wife, Michael is well accustomed to speaking to those absent by talking to himself, so he speaks for and to Edward; and because literature has always given him strength, he quotes from the literature that has, in his renderings, been accompanying the captives in their plight.

Viewed from this aspect, Edward's and Michael's talk of Adam watching over them and of themselves watching over each

other are no empty words, but what they really mean and what they really will do. Someone Who'll Watch over Me—no better title could McGuinness have given his play. Michael is not alone, but the absent (alive and deceased) are with him as he recites from Sir Orfeo lines which themselves echo The Book of Ruth (1.16): "Whither thou goest, I will go with thee, and whither I go, thou shalt go with me" (169). Creativity lies not in subject matter or content, but in what we make thereof. And with the help of these oft told stories, Michael is surviving.

The form of Stones in His Pockets, I argue (in the hopes of discovering a new, relevant aspect to the play), is such an affront to the "as-if" of theater that it is possible to understand the play as being just what we see. Stones in His Pockets expels make-believe from the stage to drive it away, chiefly to the movies. But, as I've made clear in this chapter, not all make-believe is bad, as when it makes you believe you can do something and be somebody. The play is not a substitute for the movie, it isn't even about the movies per se, because a movie called Stones in His Pockets could never come about under these barest conditions in which the play is performed. Movies function otherwise than theater, and precisely this point the form of the play stresses. The play Stones in His Pockets is an appeal to its audience to believe that what they see (i.e., two Irish being themselves by playing other people) can be true.

For Charlie, the movies are a good time, brushing shoulders with celebrities, sniffing the riggers' coke, succumbing to the sentimentality of on-location shooting and romantic film scenes, not to mention the opportunity at his big shot when someone in the business accepts his screenplay. He says it all himself when he exclaims, "I love the movies. Unreal man" (28). Jake repeatedly incites Charlie, though, to "get real" (33, 43, 51-52) and yet at Sean's wake (the one real event of the play if by real we mean both being authentically Irish and upstaging the make-believe of The Quiet Valley) Charlie remarks astonished, "it's like being on the set...the same people" (46). But Charlie's enthusiasm for the movies, despite his fun and his cliché screenplay, also stems from the possibilities and the freedom of the make-believe of film, when unconstrained by budget figures and Hollywood conventions. After all, from Charlie comes the realization that the plot, the characters, the sets, absolutely everything in The Quiet Valley lies in the hands of those making it: "It's only a story...this is the movies, can't you do what you want?" (39). From here an audience can take the step of believing what they don't see, as Charlie and Jake do working out the shots to the opening scene of their movie. There the secondary text's "animated" to describe Charlie and Jake reveals much about the play. They are in no way meant to play cows. Their lines prove this. They are not actually playing anyone but themselves, which is to say, they

are two men on a movie set imagining together the opening scene of their own movie idea. So it would seem they appropriate a medium not usually conducive to alternative or oppositional perspectives on filmmaking, on the Irish in film, or on reality in film. For how ever briefly and how ever late in the show, they make a movie say what they have to say.

But is that all? Have the audience really just been watching a play about the germination of a good Irish movie? If yes, doesn't that mean that they are to assume that the fulfillment and, therefore, the value of the play lie elsewhere? I say Stones in His Pockets is more than that. As I have consistently throughout this thesis, I argue for a perspective on the play which sees it as a performance: two actors play the two figures Charlie and Jake. But the nonexistent scenography and the minimal props ("a large black metal chest" and "a row of tattered boots upstage," Llewellyn-Jones 127) as well as the fact that Charlie and Jake play not only their own roles as extras in The Quiet Valley but also the parts of the other extras both on and off the set make these two dramatic figures begin strongly resembling the very same actors playing them. At the ending, when Charlie and Jake are working through the opening shots for their movie idea, the full force of the play's spare form becomes apparent. The two actors or Charlie and Jake have been doing this same act all along because both pairs have been doing the script in voices. True, the actors/figures do present the other figures

in the play by assuming their roles, but why else should the actors' default positions or, so to speak, their anchor figures be these same two men who come up with the idea for the script of Stones in His Pockets? A play that might well seem the epitome of postmodern metatheatricality I call emphatically theatrical because at no point do the actors or Charlie and Jake (these two indistinguishable pairs) step outside of what they are doing onstage. In this sense, the whole play is just them.

The form of the play Stones in His Pockets is the fundamental theatrical form: two actors playing their parts onstage. The great significance of this form is that it is open about the performativity of its people or figures. Stones in His Pockets is acting, and if that acting multiplies and diversifies our understanding of Irish by complicating its reference and confusing its meaning, then, by a paradox of reality in theater, it is a real experience of what Irish is. Other versions of the word, told by this or that church, by this or that party, by this or that side of the Border, are false precisely because they won't recognize (or, sadly, don't recognize) the construct they deem ideal and absolute so that one ought to be prepared to die for it. For Charlie and Jake the stakes are set much lower, even though they are tapping into the same powers of belief and imagination which have made martyrs of the faithful and sent nations to war. The difference is that Charlie and Jake believe themselves when

they tell Sean's story, and so what is Sean's story becomes their own, too. "Why couldn't it be done," demands Jake, "don't we have the right to tell our story, the way we want it," and, in an exchange all the more forceful for its humor, their movie idea starts taking shape before Charlie knows what Jake is about (54-56).

When Jake assures Charlie this will work because Charlie once had the gumption to write a script, no matter how bad it turned out, Marie Jones strikes an autobiographical note which anyone familiar with her beginnings as a playwright with Charabanc as well as her commitment to community theater will understand as encouragement to tell your own story in your own way. But Jake's newfound enthusiasm aggravates Charlie to the point of aggression because Charlie, feeling he's reached rock bottom, just can't take any of it anymore:

Sorry Charlie, sorry, alright I understand...I do...Charlie it's just...how do I put this...Charlie, you and me are fucked, we have nothing, and we are going nowhere, but for the first time in my life I feel I can do something...they can only knock us if we don't believe in ourselves...and I believe this could work Charlie I do... (55)

Jake is talking about really doing something, in a way they were incapable of as the bystanders to Rory's family's eviction in The Quiet Valley or as themselves to Mickey's "eviction" from the movie set which once was his grandfather's

land (43, 53-54). Viewed together with this impotency in both make-believe and real life and considering Jake's efforts to find the right words to express himself, the otherwise hackneyed saying "they can only knock us if we don't believe in ourselves" takes back its rightful force.

The Weir and Someone Who'll Watch over Me are strings of stories and they are the stories of who these figures are. Stones in His Pockets, as Jake says, is "only a story," too. But he goes on, "if it was a story about a film being made and a young lad commits suicide...in other words the stars become the extras and the extras become the stars...so it becomes Sean's story, and Mickey and all the people of this town" (54). Stones in His Pockets, whether one means the play or the movie, is all this. It tells Sean's story, and it is Sean's story; it presents Sean's story, and it is the acting of Sean's story; it is about Sean, and it is about being about Sean. There is no end to the significances stemming from the overlap in the titles Stones in His Pockets and Stones in His Pockets, just as the myriad uses and the myriad interpretations of the one word Irish lend no end to its significances. This way I come to yet another vital significance of the form of the play: even against the theater convention dictating the audience pretend they are not in the theater, the actors/figures defy them to say where they are. This I call acting defined negatively, and it closely resembles the fabrications which Jack's and the others' tales

are, as performed on the stage of The Weir. Both plays, thus, raise on yet another level of audience awareness the conflicting claims which theater and storytelling lay on their belief, and so, as I've argued, better enable them, together with the performers, to define Irish as they see fit. In Stones in His Pockets, though, both actors and figures give every indication that they are onstage, but the story they are telling implies they are not; despite even their acting like they are onstage the audience will find some way to believe that what they are witnessing is true or, at least, that it can be true.

When Clem advises Charlie and Jake to follow the Hollywood schema, to conform their story to the formula of the happy ending and give it those "elements" which make it "sexy enough" and "commercial enough" to succeed, Jake counters, "But this could happen to any kid, any rural kid": an adolescent's life loses meaning and nothing will make it worth living, so he gives in.

CHARLIE. How can you have a happy ending about a kid who drowns himself?

CLEM. He doesn't.

JAKE. But he did.

CLEM. No...the farmer who sees him walk into the water actually saves him...just in time.

JAKE. And then what?

CLEM. Well...that's the end. (56-57)

Clem's happy ending is really a crappy ending. It takes no cues from real life and leaves us nothing to worry about or to hope for; because we cannot ask with Jake "And then what?" but must submit to the formula of the happy ending (i.e., all problems solved, all questions answered), we want nothing but more of the same and nothing else will we enjoy (in both senses of this word: "to be pleased with" and "to have the use of"). The happy ending by formula constrains free expression and open communication. In his reports on the Rotherhithe Theatre Workshop's treatment of soap operas and sitcoms, Read proves how the stage explodes such myths as the happy ending: "Theatre exposed these tales to another, more critical mode of expression where apparently 'true' life stories would solicit laughter and criticism for being absurd and irrelevant to the everyday lives of the participants" (104). With Clem's arrogant dismissal of the two at Aisling's hands and with Aisling's predictably smug remark to the title Stones in His Pockets ("Doesn't say much...not very catchy...a bit nondescript," 58), we find that those working in the movie business understand about as much of what Charlie and Jake are trying to achieve as the cows that watched Sean would have understood him and his suicide. Therefore, we discover Clem, that expert on the Irish cow, "munching his breakfast" (56) while Charlie and Jake tell him their idea. And Aisling's criticisms of their title suit far better Clem's own The Quiet

Valley and not the expressively succinct Stones in His Pockets.

At just this moment, Charlie and Jake realize that they are after something completely different to what Hollywood can offer them:

JAKE. Do you think they are right?

CHARLIE. No...No...Jake...I don't.

JAKE. Jesus...neither do I...god. All the time he was talking I kept saying to myself you are wrong...Charlie for the first time in my life I believed me.

CHARLIE. I'm so used to believing everything I do is bound to be no good.

JAKE. Not this time Charlie.

CHARLIE. No...not this time.

JAKE. So you have the opening scene of the the film, people comin' onto the land to ask Mr Harkin can they shoot over the landscape...but we see it from the kids' point of view and him a wee buck.

CHARLIE. So all you see is cows, every inch of screen, cows...cows, just cows and in the middle of it all these trendy designer trainers.

JAKE. Like Aisling's?

CHARLIE. Exactly, sinkin' into a a big mound of steaming cow clap...this is the first thing this child sees, the first intrusion into his world.

JAKE. Yeah...Cows...big slabbery dribblin' cows.

Jake and Charlie...animated.

JAKE. Udders, tails, arses, in your face.

CHARLIE. Fartin', atin', dungin'...moooin'.

JAKE. Big dirty fat brutes...lukin' at ye...wide
shots.

CHARLIE. Yes, mid shots.

JAKE. Yes. Close ups.

BOTH. Yes.

Blackout

The End. (58-59)

What Charlie and Jake are after is a view of Ireland from between the cows and from the height of a wee buck, a view through cow arses, past steaming dung, and on the designer trainers of the movie people invading Mr. Harkin's land. And if they can just convince the audience, and if the audience realize that only they can do what they are trying to do, then Charlie and Jake will have given them a look at something really Irish, even if it is already gone after the house lights come up again.

Charlie hears Jake tell how it dawned on him that "for the first time in my life I believed me." Jake believes himself, which is not the same thing as him believing in himself. Belief in oneself rests on the condition that one knows who one is, that identity has been established. But when we ask someone "Do you believe me?" we're proposing the truth

of what we've told them. It is not a question of character or identity, but one of the credibility or the incredibility of a story. And if the answer "Yes, I believe you" comes, then the exchange establishes the very truth which the storyteller gives expression to and which the story lays its claim to. What had been doubted becomes certain, the storyteller and his audience become a community, a story becomes their past. From such a community, who enjoy a common past and a common belief, can arise a future also common to them all. So when Charlie and Jake repeat "this time," they mean the present of the action sequence, when they are talking about what they think and feel. This moment is soon to become the present of a showing of Stones in His Pockets, which, in my view, is the performance of the play Stones in His Pockets, so the inextricability of present and future becomes apparent as the two here begin melding. But the present cannot stretch into the future without having its natural counterweight, the past. And so Charlie and Jake mean by "this time" also their hopes looking out from past failure ahead to future success. For people like Charlie and Jake, that is, for people who are so far removed from the bastion of the highly successful that they couldn't enter even if the gates were swung open wide, mediocrity and failure have become habit. This habit finds expression in Charlie's "I'm so used to believing everything I do is bound to be no good," and precisely this line the actor must make credible for his audience because if they don't

believe him here, they also won't when he and his partner assert their hopes for the future:

JAKE. Not this time Charlie.

CHARLIE. No...not this time.

Without the admittance of defeat, not only would Charlie and Jake never have found the inspiration, the motivation, or even the subject-matter by which a film like theirs might succeed, but they could never have gained the momentum to give it a try.

When finally each says yes before repeating it with one voice to end the play, they are directing their audience on how to become an Irish community with both past and future. "Believe us and believe we can do it," are their directions; or simply, "Yes." Belief is a strong reason to go on. Perhaps this is why it principally refers to spiritual or religious feelings and, in everyday usage, is interchangeable with faith. Charlie and Jake don't ask their audience to believe in the church, in the nation, or in the Irish because none of these are of their own making, but established (and, thus, to a great extent) stereotyped ideas. Instead Charlie and Jake ask their audience to believe this Irish story, to believe this telling of this Irish story, and to believe their own parts in these. In sum, these two performers ask their audience to believe both them and themselves.

A performance by, with, and about two Irish who hadn't known anymore how to go on demands its audience believe the

play's stories and the performances of these stories, the figures' performances and the performances of the figures. These are high demands which could well tax or domineer an audience's capability to believe. But when this play about a Hollywood movie leading to the idea for an Irish movie ends on the opening shots for it, an audience in a small venue in Northern Ireland (like the ones the play toured) would, I am sure, have been so impressed that they would have wanted to make such effort and take such risk.

Closing Remarks

"What you say is frankly incredible, Aimhirgin," a listener addresses this file of the first century AD, "but we believe you, because you are a poet, and when a poet says a thing, it becomes true" (qtd. in Kiberd, Classics 617). Poets create the Stage Irish on paper so that, onstage, performers and audiences can regard and criticize them. Stage Irishry isn't reality, it's show and fiction. But to pass it off as irrelevant or insignificant to the real concerns of the Irish and Ireland would be to miss the show and fiction in the government, in the churches, in the business, and in the society of this or any nation. Every fiction is its own reality and has something real about it, too. The stereotypes going in to making the Irish of the stage and the characteristics attributed them by tradition and public opinion are approached by the literary critic to best advantage from the stage where the Stage Irish appear as well

as from the processes of performance always shaping and continuously transforming the Stage Irish.

It has been my effort in this concluding chapter to reinstate the material and human reality in this apparently closed significative order, and so I have addressed with the term structure of feeling a short period and a small group in the Irish theater. But my reason for doing this was to lend substance to my broader discussion of how belief and storytelling in theater performance give to the word Irish specific meaning and specific value for an audience.

The one thing I hope this study contributes to literary criticism is the interpretative and theoretical gains that come from viewing Irish drama (or drama at all) from a perspective on its performance, because from this perspective the Irishness that the Stage Irish signify is not derivative or less true because it is of the stage, rather it is highly significant to any understanding of the word Irish, and the country would be poorer for the loss of the Stage Irish.

Appendix

Productions of Plays Interpreted

Louis D'Alton's This Other Eden was first produced by the Abbey Theatre at The Queen's Theatre, Dublin, on 1 June 1953; Ria Mooney produced it and Sean O Maonaigh directed it.

Borstal Boy was adapted by Frank McMahon from Brendan Behan's Borstal Boy. It was first produced at the Abbey Theatre on 10 October 1967 as part of the Dublin Theatre Festival; Tomás Mac Anna directed and designed it.

Declan Hughes's Love and a Bottle (with George Farquhar) was first produced by The Rough Magic Theatre Company at The Project Arts Centre, Dublin, on 1 May 1991, and then at The Tricycle Theatre, London, on 2 June 1992; Siobhan Bourke produced it and Lynne Parker directed it.

Stewart Parker's Heavenly Bodies was first produced in the Birmingham Repertory Theatre on 21 April 1986; Peter Farago directed it. Stewart Parker revised the text before it was published in Three Plays for Ireland.

Christina Reid's Clowns: A Sequel to Joyriders was first produced in The Room at The Orange Tree, Richmond, London, on 21 March 1996; Natasha Betteridge directed it.

Brian Friel's Faith Healer was first produced at The Longacre Theatre, New York, on 5 April 1979; José Quintero directed it and James Mason played Frank. With Patrick Magee playing Frank, it ran just six nights at the Royal Court Theatre in London in 1981. The Abbey's 1981 production had

Donal McCann in the lead role. At the Abbey and at the Royal Court in London, McCann returned to the part in 1993.

David Rudkin's Cries from Casement As His Bones Are Brought to Dublin was first broadcast on BBC Radio 3 on 4 February 1973; John Tydeman produced it and Norman Rodway played Casement. The Royal Shakespeare Company produced a stage adaptation in 1973. Another stage adaptation was produced by The Project Arts Centre, Dublin, on 4 September 1976; Paddy Scully directed it.

Thomas Kilroy's Double Cross was first produced by The Field Day Theatre Company at the Guildhall, Derry, on 13 February 1986; and then at The Royal Court Theatre, London, on 10 May 1986; Jim Sheridan directed it and Stephen Rea played William Joyce and Brendan Bracken.

Frank McGuinness's Mutabilitie was first produced at The Cottesloe Theatre, Royal National Theatre, London, on 14 November 1997; Trevor Nunn directed it.

Conor McPherson's The Weir, commissioned by The Royal Court Theatre, London, was first produced there in Upstairs on 4 July 1997, and then at The Gate Theatre, Dublin; Ian Rickson directed it.

Frank McGuinness's Someone Who'll Watch over Me was first produced at The Hampstead Theatre, London, on 10 July 1992, and then in the West End; Robin Lefevre directed it and Stephen Rea played Edward. Noel Pearson produced the play at The Booth Theater, on Broadway, New York, in November 1992.

Someone Who'll Watch over Me has since played at The Abbey Theatre.

Marie Jones's Stones in His Pockets was first produced at The Rock Theatre, Belfast, by Dubbeljoint Theatre Company on 7 August 1996; it opened at The Lyric Theatre, Belfast, on 3 June 1999 and at The Tricycle Theatre, London, in August 1999; Pam Brighton directed it, Conleth Hill played Charlie, and Tim Murphy played Jake; it won the Irish Times/ESB Award for best production of 1999. Stones in His Pockets was produced at The New Ambassadors Theatre, in the West End, London, on 24 May 2000; Ian McElhinney directed it, Conleth Hill played Charlie, and Sean Campion played Jake.

A Chronology of Writing on the Stage Irishman since the Founding of a National Theatre in Ireland

- 1904 Frank Hugh O'Donnell's The Stage Irishmen of the Pseudo-Celtic Drama.
- 1910/1 Eduard Eckhardt's two-part study Die Dialekt- und Ausländertypen des älteren englischen Dramas.
- 1912 W. J. Lawrence's "Irish Types in Old-Time English Drama."
- 1913 Maurice Bourgeois's John Millington Synge, in which he gives a summary of the Stage Irishman.
- 1920 Edward D. Snyder's "The Wild Irish: A Study of Some English Satires against the Irish, Scots, and Welsh."
- 1929 Fritz Mezger's Der Ire in der englischen Literatur bis zum Anfang des 19. Jahrhunderts.

- 1937 The Stage Irishman by G. C. Duggan, who knew a type-written manuscript (dated 1930) of Barley's later book Teague, Shenkin and Sawney (Truninger 8).
- 1942 James O. Bartley's "The Development of a Stock Character: I. The Stage Irishman to 1800." (Part II, "The Stage Scotsman to 1800," and Part III, "The Stage Welshman to 1800," appeared in the following volume of The Modern Language Review. Together Bartley's two articles represent preparatory work to his 1954 book.)
- 1947 Florence R. Scott's "Teg—The Stage Irishman."
- 1954 Bartley's Teague, Shenkin and Sawney: Being an Historical Study of the Earliest Irish, Welsh and Scottish Characters in English Plays.
- 1964 For his editions of Boucicault's The Colleen Bawn, Arrah-na-Pogue, and The Shaughraun for The Dolmen Press, David Krause wrote the introduction "The Theatre of Dion Boucicault: A Short View of His Life and Art," which insightfully comments on the Stage Irishman.
- 1972 Patrick Rafroidi's "The Funny Irishman."
- 1976 Annelise Truninger's Paddy and the Paycock: A Study of the Stage Irishman from Shakespeare to O'Casey. And in his Paycocks and Others: Sean O'Casey's World, Bernard Benstock recurs to the Stage Irishman in order to explain and interpret a variety of O'Casey's figures.

- 1977 Michael Ó hAodha's "O'Neill and the Anatomy of the Stage Irishman." And Elizabeth Hale Winkler's The Clown in Modern Anglo-Irish Drama, despite excessive categorization and subdivision of its subject, provides the occasional interesting comment on the Stage Irishman.
- 1978 James Malcolm Nelson's "From Rory and Paddy to Boucicault's Myles, Shaun and Conn: The Irishman on the London Stage, 1830-1860." And Sally E. Foster's "Irish Wrong: Samuel Lover and the Stage-Irishman."
- 1979 Declan Kiberd's "The Fall of the Stage Irishman."
- 1981 R. B. Graves's "The Stage Irishman among the Irish."
- 1984 Although Maureen Waters's The Comic Irishman, like Winkler's study from 1977, categorizes and subdivides its subject to excess, it, too, has something to contribute to the study of the Stage Irish.
- 1986 Joseph Theodoor Leerssen's imagological study Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael: Studies in the Idea of Irish Nationality, Its Development and Literary Expression prior to the Nineteenth Century. And Terence Vere White reads "The Stage Irishman," later published in 1988.
- 1987 Three articles in Wolfgang Zach's and Heinz Kosok's three-volume work Literary Interrelations: Ireland, England and the World: Kathleen Rabl's "Taming the 'Wild Irish' in English Renaissance Drama," Jochen

Achilles's "Transformations in the Stage Irishman in Irish Drama: 1860-1910," and Richard Allen Cave's "The Presentation of English and Irish Characters in Boucicault's Irish Melodramas." And Heinz Kosok's "'Stage Irishmen' und 'True-Born Irishmen': Auswirkungen eines literarischen Stereotyps im anglo-irischen Drama," which appeared largely unaltered in 1988 as "John Bull's Other Ego: Reactions to the Stage Irishman in Anglo-Irish Drama."

- 1991 Richard Allen Cave's "Staging the Irishman."
- 1994 Owen Dudley Edwards's "The Stage Irish."
- 1999 Ann Saddlemyer's "John Bull's Other Island: 'Seething in the Brain.'"
- 2005 Michael Bolten's imagological study Imagining and Imaging Ireland: Konzeptionen Irlands bei den jungen anglo-irischen Dramatikern Martin McDonagh und Conor McPherson contains a chapter on the Stage Irishman, besides returning to the figure throughout.

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