

Contemporary Irish Theatre

Transnational Practices

Wei H. Kao



P.I.E. Peter Lang



This monograph is one of the first to examine a collection of Irish plays from a transnational perspective in today's era of globalization. The works dealt with in this study dramatize how foreign cultures are integrated into contemporary Ireland. In addition, they focus on the experiences of immigrants and marginalized people living on the fringes of Irish society. The aim of this book is therefore two-fold: first, it highlights how specific theatrical productions reflect the global factors at work in modern Ireland; second, it seeks to document how Irish dramatists exert a profound impact on theatre practitioners from non-English speaking countries and enrich their stage aesthetics. Accordingly, the works discussed in this book have not only been authored by Irish playwrights. They are set in the Middle East, Russia, South Africa, Taiwan, the UK, and the USA. This monograph concentrates both on canonical and established playwrights, such as Dion Boucicault, Edward Harrigan, Eugene O'Neill, Sean O'Casey, Brendan Behan, Samuel Beckett, Frank McGuinness, Sebastian Barry, Tom Murphy, Marina Carr, and lesser-known writers, including Jimmy Murphy, Dolores Walshe, Damian Smyth, Colin Teevan, among others.

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P.I.E. Peter Lang

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Dramaturgies
Vol. 35

The book was subject to a double blind refereeing process.

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© P.I.E. PETER LANG s.A.
Éditions scientifiques internationales
Brussels, 2015
1 avenue Maurice, B-1050 Brussels, Belgium
info@peterlang.com; www.peterlang.com

ISSN 1376-3199
ISBN 978-2-87574-300-8
eISBN 978-3-0352-6574-3
D/2015/5678/65

CIP available from the British Library and from the Library of Congress, USA.

Bibliographic information published by “Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek”.
“Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek” lists this publication in the “Deutsche National-bibliografie”;
detailed bibliographic data is available on the Internet at <<http://dnb.de>>.

Contents

Acknowledgments	9
Introduction	11
I. When Incest Is Not A Taboo: Desire and the Land in Eugene O'Neill's <i>Desire Under the Elms</i> and Marina Carr's <i>On Raftery's Hill</i>	27
II. Remaking the Stage Irishman in the New World: Dion Boucicault's <i>The Shaughraun</i> , Edward Harrigan's <i>The Mulligan Guard Ball</i> , and Sebastian Barry's <i>White Woman Street</i>	45
III. Migrant Workers on Stage: Tom Murphy's <i>Conversations on a Homecoming</i> and Jimmy Murphy's <i>The Kings of the Kilburn High Road</i>	65
IV. A Russian Mirror to Ireland: Migration in Tom Murphy's <i>The House</i> and Anton Chekhov's <i>The Cherry Orchard</i>	81
V. South Africa, Racism, and Irish Sectarianism in Dolores Walshe's <i>In the Talking Dark</i> and Damian Smyth's <i>Soldiers of the Queen</i>	99
VI. Transnational Ireland on Stage: America to Middle East in Three Texts	121
VII. Peace and Beyond in the Middle East: Colin Teevan's War Trilogy	139
VIII. Voices from Two Theatrical Others: Labor Issues in the Theatres of Ireland and Taiwan	155
IX. Samuel Beckett in Taiwan: Cross-cultural Innovations and Significance	177
X. The Irish at Home and Abroad: Transnational Practices	199
Bibliography	221
Index	237

Acknowledgments

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the many debts I have incurred during the course of researching and writing this monograph on Irish drama.

First and foremost I would like to extend my gratitude to Professor C.L. Innes, whose abundant knowledge of postcolonial literature has led me to view Irish drama in a global context, following on from my doctoral studies at the University of Kent. Although my thesis was mainly on the Irish novel in the mid-twentieth century, many ideas and observations accumulated that led to the inspiration for this book. Her constant encouragement and friendship are the foundation stones of the current work.

I am also in debt to many colleagues and friends who have long supported me in ways that took one form or another. The discussions I had with them during different phases of the writing, as well as the laughs and parties that occasionally came my way, have added profoundly to enriching this book in many thought-provoking ways. My inspirers (as well as cheerleaders) to whom I owe many thanks are Li-ling Tseng, Kun-liang Chuang, and Yu-chen Lin, Cecilia Hsueh-chen Liu, Belen Sy, Joseph C. Murphy, Raphael Schulte, and Luisa Shu-ying Chang. My graduate students at National Taiwan University and Fu-Jen Catholic University contributed to developing ideas during class discussion and individual consultations. Eamonn Hughes's encouragement of my research in Irish studies has been uplifting.

I am particularly indebted to John Welford, who read most of the early drafts of my articles and patiently helped me with more than just the language editing. I always benefited from the critical comments that he generously made on the drafts.

Participants in the annual conferences of the International Association for the Study of Irish Literatures (IASIL) and at the JM Synge Summer School for Irish Drama are to be credited for their inspiring remarks on my research.

I wish to record my gratitude to the Ministry of Science and Technology of Taiwan and National Taiwan University for their financial support over the years. Without that support, my research could not have been properly carried out.

Alongside many library staff at Trinity College Dublin and my own university, my student assistants, Che-wei Wu, Tak-kei Lai, Chun-wei

Tsai, Chen-wei Han, and Pei-hsuan Chen, significantly facilitated my research. Further, I wish to thank Prof. Marc Maufort, general editor of the series, as well as Emilie Menz, commissioning editor, and Alice de Patoul, Audrey Louckx, Gregory Watson for their editorial advice.

In this book, some of the chapters of this book have previously been published in journals. The comments received from the anonymous reviewers have significantly helped in sharpening my arguments and ideas. I therefore gratefully acknowledge the editors' and publishers' permission to reprint these works: "Transnational Ireland on Stage: America to Middle East in Three Texts" from *Transnational Literature* 6.2 (2014); "A Russian Mirror to Ireland: Migration in Tom Murphy's *The House* and Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*" from *Fu-Jen Studies* 46 (2013); "South Africa, Racism and Irish Sectarianism in Dolores Walshe's *In the Talking Dark* and Damian Smyth's *Soldiers of the Queen*" from *English Studies in Africa* 54.2 (2011); "Peace and Beyond in the Middle East: Colin Teevan's War Trilogy" from *War and Cultural Studies* 7.2 (2014); "When Incest Is Not A Taboo: Desire and the Land in Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* and Marina Carr's *On Raftery's Hill*" from *Journal of Theater Studies* 5 (2010); "Voices from Two Theatrical Others: Labour Issues in the Theatres of Ireland and Taiwan" from *Taiwan in Comparative Perspective* 4 (2012); "Samuel Beckett in Taiwan: Cross-cultural Innovations and Challenges, and Controversies" from *Journal of Beckett Studies* 15.2 (2006). Part of "Migrant Workers on Stage: Tom Murphy's *Conversations on a Homecoming* and Jimmy Murphy's *The Kings of the Kilburn High Road* appeared in *Notes on Contemporary Literature* 44.4 (2014). Part of the critical introduction was translated from "The Irish Theatre in the Era of Post-globalization," published in Chinese in *Reflexion* 20 (2012).

Finally, I would like to extend special gratitude to my parents and sister whose gracious support and assistance gave birth to this book. Janet Hui-chuan Kao and Adam Pettit, my brother-in-law, have been great hosts whenever I visited the USA for conferences and research – on both the eastern and western coasts of the country.

Ultimately, this book is dedicated to Jihwen Wu for the most open-handed care that I have been privileged to receive.

Introduction

Migrations and cultural fusions have characterized Ireland for centuries. Before James Joyce introduced Leopold Bloom as having been born in 1866 to the mixed parentage of a Hungarian Jewish father and an Irish Protestant mother, the Emerald Isle had already accommodated generations of migrants.¹ Although it is impossible to trace in detail how the Celts, Normans, Vikings, English, Spanish, Scots and Huguenots affected the development of the island's culture, these historical newcomers probably created, over some length of time, ethnic quarters similar to what is now dubbed Little Africa in Moore Street and Parnell Street in Dublin.² These people became settlers and contributed to a culture that is distinctive if not positively outlandish in the eyes of outsiders.

In the second half of the twentieth century, Ireland sheltered many asylum seekers who left their home countries out of fear of being slaughtered, including many from Hungary in the 1950s, Chile and Vietnam in the 1970s, Iran in the 1980s (members of the Baha'I faith), and Bosnia and Uganda in the 1990s.³ Regardless of whether they arrived in smaller or larger numbers, they have quietly yet significantly diversified Ireland into a multi-cultural state, and their descendants have prompted the island to reach out to many parts of the globe through mixed marriages, wars, religious missions, commerce and migration.

These factors point out how Irishness has become a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and global concept since the turn of the twenty-first century, particularly as a result of the experiences of migrants and the returned Irish. Specifically, changes in the demographic landscape of Ireland and its economy – which has experienced many ups and downs in recent years – have given the country a brand new yet unsettling face.

¹ It should also be remembered that some parts of Portobello were called Little Jerusalem before the 1940s, since Jewish refugees from Lithuania started to make their way there from the 1870s.

² Parnell Street in Dublin and Barrack Street in Cork are also given the appellation of "Little Africa." Interestingly, some people call the Moore Street area Little Shanghai or Little Riga. This area may be seen as an epitome of a globalized Ireland with not only native Irish street vendors but "a Russian delicatessen, an Afro-Caribbean Superstore and the Talk Is Cheap International Call Shop, where a bulletin board advertizes jobs and rooms-to-let to the fast-growing Chinese" (McGuire 26).

³ More details about the experiences of these immigrants to Ireland can be found in Jean Ryan and Michael Hayes's *Postcolonial Identities: Constructing the "New Irish"* (78-79).

However, the desire of Irish playwrights to tackle the implications of the evolving notion of what it means to be Irish has not abated. They have sought to capture them faithfully either through writing new works directly relating to those themes, by adapting foreign/classic works which are relevant to contemporary Irish experiences, or by setting their plays in overseas locations in order to appeal to a wider market. Significantly, globalization has favored the production of Irish plays in other countries, which has impacted local artists and audiences.

Although some researchers have focused on the inter-cultural, inter-ethnic and global factors found in contemporary Irish theatre, a more thorough examination of how Irish plays counteract or absorb exotic/foreign influences is called for.⁴ By comparing selected historical events and Irish experiences with their counterparts in other cultural scenarios, this book aims to offer an alternative historical, yet perhaps more inspirational, perspective that projects the Irish past and present on to the world stage.

Globalization and Drama

Although the term “globalization” has increasingly been used since the mid-1980s,⁵ its inception can be traced back to the Age of Exploration, in which Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) and his contemporaries

⁴ Although there are many individual journal articles and book chapters on Irish drama, globalization and multiculturalism, the number of monographs and collections of essays on relevant topics is still limited, in contrast to works that feature either an individual Irish playwright or issues that do not refer in particular to an international scenario. To date, notable essays exploring contemporary Irish drama in a wider European or global framework include Heinz Kosok's *The Theatre of War: The First World War in British and Irish Drama* (2007); Mária Kurdi's *Codes and Masks: Aspects of Identity in Contemporary Irish Plays in an Intercultural Context* (2000), and her *Literary and Cultural Relations: Ireland, Hungary, and Central and Eastern Europe* (2009); Patrick Lonergan's *Theatre and Globalization: Irish Drama in the Celtic Tiger Era* (2009); Victor Merriman's 'Because We Are Poor': *Irish Theatre in the 1990s* (2011). Edited collections include *Druids, Dudes and Beauty Queens: The Changing Face of Irish Theatre* (ed. Dermot Bolger, 2001); *Irish Theatre on Tour* (eds. Nicholas Grene and Chris Morash, 2005); *Drama Reinvented: Theatre Adaptation in Ireland and Irish Drama* (ed. Thierry Dubost, 2007); *Cultural Perspectives on Globalisation and Ireland* (ed. Eamon Maher, 2009); *Irish Drama: Local and Global Perspectives* (eds. Nicholas Grene and Patrick Lonergan, 2012), among others.

⁵ Although the term Global Village was popularized after Marshall McLuhan, a Canadian cultural critic, described its genesis in his book, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (1962), the word globalization did not become a frequently used word until the mid-1980s. According to the Google Ngram Viewer, which charts the frequency of certain words used in over 5.2 million books digitized in its database up to 2012, the use of “globalization” has rated statistically high only since the mid-1980s. See <https://books.google.com/ngrams>.

set out to prove that the earth was a globe, so as to obtain spices and other commodities from the East by sailing west. Although Columbus and his crew never reached the East, his voyages opened up not only flows of capital and population but began a new era in Europe's colonial development.

European territorial expansion, from the late fourteenth century onward, facilitated constant cultural and economic exchanges from one country/continent to another, with controversies arising over how it "facilitate[d] new forms of agency" and brought forth "oppressively homogenizing effects of cultural globalization ... [which] can blind us to the nature of local circumstances, practices, and needs" (Jay 2). This is doubtless true to some extent, as the phenomenon of globalization has assimilated "the surface appearance and institutions of modern social life across the globe" (McGrew 74).

In other words, globalization has been even more influential than colonization in promoting not only the exchange of commodities (recent examples include the iPhone, MacDonald's and Louise Vuitton) but also information/values through the operation of transnational media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp). While the protection of human rights and the practice of democracy, for instance, have become almost universal as values to be striven for, globalization also strengthens "an increasing concentration of power, knowledge, information, wealth and decision-making authority" (McGrew 75). Few countries can effectively resist the subjugation of this new world order, in which the flow of capital triggered by transnational corporations and global financial institutions can easily cross national boundaries.

Nevertheless, globalization also enables cross-cultural dialogues in the arts on a wide scale, given that such dialogues used to be silenced by former colonial empires through "established narrations of cultural practice" (qtd in Hall 558). Notably, by embracing "mutually opposed tendencies," globalization has been "a contingent and dialectical process" that invigorates "contradictory dynamics" (Giddens 64).

In contrast to commodities that can be appraised and traded between one country and another, the stage can be both a mirror of relevant phenomena and a platform of resistance that "simultaneously encourages particularization by relativizing both 'local' and 'place'" (McGrew 74). By particularizing selected fragments of life or incidents, the performative nature of drama boldly tackles the problematic nature of the power structure of a center/periphery model in an age of globalization, by unveiling the uneven rate of development between the first and the third worlds. In addition, drama, as a cultural artefact pertaining rather "to a hybridization than a homogenization," showcases a platform on which the

audience can witness or experience “the plurality of centres from which globally diffused cultural elements emanate and point to the great variety of their local adaptations” (Robertson 26-27).

Taking Ireland as its departure point, this book will therefore demonstrate how one culture can transform another or hybridize it. Such process entails profound consequences that alter the perception of Irish drama in an intercultural context.

Globalization and the Migration of Irish Drama

Ireland, having been affected by all the gains and losses to which globalization has given rise since the last few decades of the twentieth century, offers a privileged vantage point to examine how a country can be transformed by such a radical force in human history. Because of globalization, not only was the demographical landscape changed rapidly within a short period of time but Irish popular culture was diluted by foreign influences – partly due to immigration.

Statistically, in 1997 only one foreign student – a boy from Angola – was enrolled in a Dublin secondary school, whereas in 2003, the peak of the Celtic Tiger economy, 25% of the student population across the country was foreign-born.⁶ It was the moment when “the country of 4 million people [was] absorbing nearly 50,000 immigrants a year” despite the high deportation rate of asylum seekers (McGuire 26). The large and fast-growing number of immigrants even made the country find it “hard ... to catch its breath,” as observed by Piaras MacEinri, an Irish immigration expert (qtd in McGuire 26).

Interestingly, the global economic storm of 2008 significantly reversed the migration trend. Between April 2010 and March 2013, according to the Central Statistics Office of Ireland, “nearly 20,000 people moved from Ireland to the US ... more than double the figure for the three previous years” (Lewis para. 13). Presumably, these people left due to disappointment with the Celtic Tiger and its sagging economy; moreover, the emigration included the foreign capital that used to guarantee prosperity and job opportunities in Ireland.

Nevertheless, the migration to Ireland has caused irreversible repercussions to Irish culture and identity. The latter are undergoing constant (re)creation and (re)construction. Honor Fagan once argued that if “Ireland did not already exist, globalization theory would have to invent it” (133). That is, if Irishness is an invented concept, it has to be redefined alongside the changing notion of the “imagined community” in

⁶ For details, see McGuire’s “Ireland’s New Face: A Surge In Non-EU Immigration Has Transformed A Once Homogenous Nation.”

Ireland.⁷ In the era of globalization, Ireland can no longer cling securely to the ideal of a fabricated, isolated Gaelic Eden nor embrace a Catholic nationalism that has implicitly underscored racial divides and discounted political and religious dissenters.

The new essence of Irishness in the global community should be openly recognized. For Terry Eagleton, Ireland is a signifier that highlights “roots, belonging, tradition,” while it also spells “exile, diffusion, globality [*sic*], diaspora” as markers of Irish identity (11). Consequently, when attempting to define Irish cultural identity in post-Celtic Tiger Ireland, diasporic experiences, including those of people moving in and those moving out, should be taken into account. This would constructively reflect a multifaceted, if not imagined, community with “all of the hybridity, syncretism, and even arguably the post-modernism typical of the cultural political economy of globalization” (Fagan 137).

It is equally important to examine Irish migration from a broader perspective. Ostensibly, the experience of the emigrant has been to transport Irish customs and traditions to a foreign country to satisfy one’s nostalgia and reconfirm one’s Irish roots. Of more profound interest is the fact that artistic/theatrical innovations also migrate – not necessarily taken abroad by a migrant artist but often through works that inspire a creative mind somewhere else in the world.

One of the most notable examples of this phenomenon is J.M. Synge’s *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907), a canonical Irish comic masterpiece that has been translated and performed in many languages and adapted as films, operas, and musicals.⁸ Recognized by Declan Kiberd as a work corresponding to Franz Fanon’s ideal of a decolonizing text, this play has also inspired Mustapha Matura, a Trinidadian playwright. He translated it into a Caribbean version, *The Playboy of the West Indies*,

⁷ Benedict Anderson defines a nation as “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (224). The “inherently limited” imagination of an Irish identity unfortunately forbids the emergence of an authentic, yet not always pleasant Irishness. However, it allows the dissemination of “soft-focus commercials selling mythical Ireland-of-the-welcomes” to tourists (Laners 44).

⁸ In 1912 it was translated into German as *Der Held des Westerlands* and performed in Berlin, Vienna and Münster. It was made into a film in 1962 and shot in County Kerry. A 1994 television adaptation by Lee Gowan, *Paris or Somewhere*, set in rural Saskatchewan in Canada, is about an American young man’s killing of the daughter of a local store owner. Two operatic adaptations were based on this play, these being Giselher Klebe’s *Ein wahrer Held* (A True Hero) in German in 1975, and Mark Alburger’s English adaptation in 2007. There have been two musicals in English, namely Kate Hancock and Richard B. Evans’s version in 2005, and Peter Mills’s *Golden Boy of the Blue Ridge*, which premiered in 2009 in New York.

in 1984.⁹ This adaptation includes characters who migrate from County Mayo at the turn of the twentieth century to a small fishing village in Trinidad. This play, which was premiered at the Oxford Playhouse in the UK, was so well-received that it soon toured to major cities in the United States. Its theatrical success prompted the playwright to adapt this Trinidadian version of an Irish comedy for BBC2 television in 1985. In 1993 the adaptation was revived at the Lincoln Center in New York.

Of even greater significance, the migration of *The Playboy of the Western World* in the past few decades has started to accommodate alternative interpretations due to globalization. Two notable productions were mounted by Pan Pan Theatre in 2006 and by Bisi Adigun and Roddy Doyle at the Abbey Theatre in 2007.

Premiered in Beijing with an all Chinese cast, the former transposed the setting from a remote village on the coast of Mayo to a whorehouse/massage parlor on the outskirts of modern Beijing.¹⁰ The audience was unsettled not so much by the story *per se* but by the shortness of the miniskirt worn by Sha Sha, who played the character of Sarah Tansey: the male audience reacted strongly during the performance. Two policemen were therefore called in for security reasons on the following nights. Although this play aimed to challenge the boundaries of decency and caused the “Playboy Riots” in Dublin in 1907, the Chinese audience’s emotional reaction towards the visibility of female bodies and undergarments illustrated the clash between modernity and tradition. It revealed concerns about womanhood in a communist society under the clout of capitalism. The adaptation also proves that globalization has contributed to intercultural processes by integrating contemporary urban Chinese subculture and an Irish classic, and redefining a typically Irish experience in a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic setting.

Another example of this intercultural mechanism operating through a dramatic text is Bisi Adigun and Roddy Doyle’s adaptation of *The Playboy of the Western World*, in which an African actor plays the part of Christy Mohan. Mounted by the Dublin-based theatre company Arambe Productions in 2007, this adaptation is set in a suburb of west Dublin

⁹ Kiberd’s postcolonial reading of this play can be found in his *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (185-188).

¹⁰ According to Emer O’Toole, Director Gavin Quinn at first preferred Xin-Jiang, China’s troubled Sino-Muslim province, to be the setting of this adaptation, but he was advised that this choice of location and the staging of Uyghur Muslims could inflame ethnic sensitivities in China and would not pass the Chinese state censorship. It can be argued that to set the adaptation in Xin-Jiang would lead to a very different yet controversial interpretation of the play. See O’Toole’s “Cultural Capital in Intercultural Theatre: A study of Pan Pan Theatre Company’s *The Playboy of the Western World*.”

with the lead character, Christopher Malomo, being a Nigerian refugee.¹¹ This production reveals the implicit anxiety of Irish society over the large number of Africans travelling to Ireland either as refugees or economic migrants.¹² Christy Mohan's fake story about how he was abused by his father symbolizes the asylum seekers' desperate search for a convincing reason to gain permission to stay in Ireland. Nevertheless, the black audience found it difficult to accept the comic moments inherent in the original version. Indeed, the abuses and prejudice suffered by a black migrant would be perceived as "more of a prophecy than a comedy," according to Adigun, the Nigerian playwright/adaptor (83).

These two adaptations – one meant for a Chinese audience in Beijing and the other for a mixed local/migrant Dublin audience – have the power of drawing public attention to the minorities in question and their predicament of racial and gender discrimination. Thus, *The Playboy* has become a platform on which pressing social issues can be expressed and minorities can give voice to their otherwise suppressed needs and desires.¹³

In addition, the performances by non-Irish actors pointed to the re-contextualization of a dramatic text from the regional to the global level. They lent an exotic touch to an Irish text. Moreover, they introduced perspectives testifying to the universal issues likely to interest audiences both inside and outside Ireland, even in a non-English-speaking part of the world. If intercultural adaptations of *The Playboy of the Western World* has "cultivate[d] a widest possible audience," the examples to be discussed in this book will further demonstrate how Irish drama can effectively "entertain and enlighten across the boundaries of cultural inscription" (Weitz 225).

¹¹ Arambe Productions, established in 2003, has produced many contemporary plays by African and Irish dramatists. In 2006 it staged Jimmy Murphy's *The Kings of the Kilburn High Road* (2000) with a full African cast; and in 2007, Ama Ata Aidoo's *Dilemma of a Ghost* (2007) by Ama Ata Aidoo, set in Ghana, was introduced to an Irish audience.

¹² Reportedly, "there [had been] about 30,000 Africans ... living in Ireland [in 2004], compared to a couple of thousand about three years ago.... Nigerians are in the majority" (Adigun 82).

¹³ As the number of essays discussing these adaptations of *The Playboy of the Western World* is considerable, I shall explore texts that have not yet received much attention. For more information on these two adaptations, see Bisi Adigun's "Arambe Productions: An African's Response to the Recent Portrayal of the Fear Gorm in Irish Drama" and "Re-Writing Synge's *Playboy* – Christy's Metamorphosis, A Hundred Years On"; Emer O'Toole's "Cultural Capital in Intercultural Theatre: A Study of Pan Pan Theatre Company's *The Playboy of the Western World*"; Sarah L. Townsend's "Cosmopolitanism at Home: Ireland's Playboys from Celtic Revival to Celtic Tiger"; Nicholas Grene's "Synge in Performance"; and Patricia Byrne's "Traveling with J. M. Synge."

Contemporary Irish Theatre: Transnational Practices

To further demonstrate this phenomenon of intercultural inscription, this monograph will study a collection of Irish plays which focus either on foreign nationals in Ireland, on the experiences of immigrants or on the lives of people marginalized on the fringes of society. It will examine various Irish playwrights, both established and emerging, while identifying and comparing common themes in their works and those by playwrights of other nationalities. This monograph not only aims to document the global factors that influence the modern Irish psyche as evidenced in relevant theatrical productions, but also to examine how Irish dramatists profoundly impact theatre practitioners of non-English speaking countries and enrich their theatrical aesthetics.

The first chapter, “When Incest Is Not A Taboo: Desire and the Land in Eugene O’Neill’s *Desire Under the Elms* and Marina Carr’s *On Raftery’s Hill*” will illustrate the intertextual links between two plays inspired by Greek tragedy. O’Neill, the American playwright, whose Irish father immigrated to the U.S., can be studied alongside Carr, a contemporary Irish woman playwright. Indeed, the Irish heritage of both playwrights is manifest in their works. They also share an interest in the incestuous relationships so typical of Greek tragedies. Admittedly, their plays are far removed from the grand scale of *Phaedra* or *Oedipus*. However, O’Neill and Carr dramatize the incestuous lust of their countrymen in *Desire under the Elms* (1924) and *On Raftery’s Hill* (2000). Incestuous passion, however, is not simply, as Sigmund Freud suggests, an expression of natural but suppressed sexual love between family members. It is also mixed with desire for the legitimate inheritance of land and self-recognition.

Although O’Neill and Carr both analyze these tragic family affairs from the perspective of social ethics, they introduce an unconventional, albeit not necessarily celebrated, presentation of incest, so as to challenge this taboo and the patriarchal violence which the father figures of both plays impose on their families. In other words, the incestuous love in *Desire under the Elms* between a young stepmother and her son might not have ended disastrously, if the community had been matriarchal, or had not been entirely conditioned by social class differentiation; the female protagonist, Abbie Putnam, might not have had to marry a man forty years older than herself to secure a farm. On the other hand, in *On Raftery’s Hill*, Dinah Raftery’s incestuous intimacy with her violent father, a widower, is portrayed as a noble act, meant to protect her younger siblings. Carr’s reinterpretation of incest in an Irish setting questions the stereotypical, often male-centered depiction of resentful female victims in Greek tragedies. This chapter will therefore examine how these two playwrights – with Irish connections abroad and at home – dramatize the

Oedipus and Electra complexes of the characters. Attention will also be paid to the playwrights' interrogation of the social mechanisms to which their characters are subjected. This intertextual study of the two plays – written in different social contexts of the twentieth century – offers a new understanding of this unspeakable but potentially intimate family taboo.

Noel Ignatiev, the author of *How the Irish Became White*, argues that Irish immigrants, although suffering a marked degree of ethnic discrimination in America due to poverty, unemployment, and lack of education, gradually received social privileges like other Caucasian immigrants from Europe, by distancing themselves from African Americans. Although Irish immigrants, like their African peers resided in slums, only the Irish slowly gained the upper hand in merging with mainstream society. The success of the alliance, however, was not entirely due to the color of their skin but also to the tactics which the Irish developed, sometimes unconsciously but unavoidably with a condescending attitude, in sharing the social devaluation of their colored siblings. What has been ignored is the exact process through which the Irish – mostly through their own efforts – unsettled the stereotype of the “stage Irishman” ridiculed in the theatre and other public media: they acquired the colonial mentality of earlier settlers against colored peoples. A series of plays discussed in the second chapter – Dion Boucicault's *The Shaughraun* (1874), Edward Harrigan's *The Mulligan Guard Ball* (1879), Sebastian Barry's *White Woman Street* (1992) – written over a span of nearly one century, depict the neglected poor Irish immigrants in New York in the late nineteenth century and in the countryside of Ohio in 1916. By contrast, Irish republicans in the motherland were advocating the Home Rule and were later overwhelmed by the consequences of the Easter Rising. The experiences of the Irish diaspora are largely disregarded by most historians, whereas these plays present their real-life dilemmas in terms of interracial conflicts, class struggle, political profiteering, and gang violence in the new world. The three plays recall the deep-rooted prejudice that the overseas Irish suffered at the turn of the twentieth century, which may significantly provide food for thoughts as, in the era of globalization, the Irish are trying to accommodate racial minorities, refugees from Africa and Eastern Europe, as well as economic immigrants.

To more closely observe the changing faces of Ireland and the new challenges it is confronted with, the third chapter will compare and analyze Tom Murphy's *Conversations on a Homecoming* (1985) and Jimmy Murphy's *The Kings of the Kilburn High Road* (2000). Notably, Ireland, as an “emigrant nursery” from which, in the nineteenth century, the Irish departed in the hope of helping their families, or to fulfill their dreams by seeking foreign employment, has left its people with an “unhealable rift” that Edward W. Said characterizes as one “forced between a human

being and a native place, between the self and its true home” (49). This metaphorical “rift” is not unique to those who moved abroad, but is also felt by those existing on the fringes of society, and those whose lives were perturbed by political turbulences in Ireland, economic austerities and the more recent transformations of the ethnic landscape. While both plays portray the trials and tribulations of Irish migrant workers, the former focuses on a returned emigrant whose American dream has been destroyed. The latter play, centering on five Irish laborers in London, shows the extent to which their Irish roots have withered. The intertextuality of these two plays can be examined through their critical and significantly different depictions of the Irish Diaspora and its frustrations in two dream-like locations of world powers.

The fourth chapter, “A Russian Mirror to Ireland: Migration in Tom Murphy’s *The House* and Anton Chekhov’s *The Cherry Orchard*,” aims to examine Chekhov’s work and Murphy’s adaptation in an Irish context. *The House* (2000), using the recurring theme of the search for home, reflects not only the identity crisis but also the fractured sense of belonging that people from the Emerald Isle experience under the impact of immigration and rapid globalization. Colonial history has also turned the immigration in/to/from Ireland into a shift within social strata and their political powers. The forced episodes of migration in Irish history – the result of several man-made and natural causes, and the rapid globalization of the past few decades, have inspired the playwright, Tom Murphy, to use overtly humanistic themes in order to dramatize the class struggles and the economic deprivation related to Irish immigration. The nomadic experiences enacted in the two plays could be regarded as illustrations of how Chekhov reconsidered the serious nature of comedy as the traditional centers of power, lifestyles, and social conventions of his times were being challenged. Not only is each individual forced to accommodate a new, mentally or geographically nomadic lifestyle, but dramatic conventions are also critically revised. To explore the soothing comical effects of *The Cherry Orchard* and *The House*, this chapter will also focus in depth on how the nomadic elements of the plays are presented through an unconventional approach in cross-cultural contexts.

Playwrights have been quite sensitive to the changing landscape of ethnicity in an Ireland characterized by an increasing number of immigrants and asylum seekers. They have therefore been prompted to examine the bitter sectarian violence which South Africa has gone through in the past few decades as an instance of cross-national experience. The traumas of South Africa under apartheid can be examined alongside the similar experiences of partition in Ireland and *vice versa*, opening up new understandings of human conflicts, bigotry, and insularity in our global village. By analyzing two Irish plays in reference to the period of

apartheid and to the Anglo-Boer War in South Africa respectively, the fifth chapter, “South Africa, Racism and Irish Sectarianism in Dolores Walshe’s *In the Talking Dark* and Damian Smyth’s *Soldiers of the Queen*,” intends to examine racism and political sectarianism in Ireland from an inter-cultural perspective. Dolores Walshe’s *In the Talking Dark* (1989), set against the backdrop of the end of apartheid in the 1990s, reminds audiences of sectarian violence in Ireland and the erasure of female subjectivity in a highly militant and divided society similar to that of South Africa in the last century. Damian Smyth’s *Soldiers of the Queen* (2002), contrasting the identity crises of Irish soldiers enlisted in the British army overseas against the similar predicament of those serving as Volunteers for the Boers, recalls the antagonism between the communities of different political and religious persuasions in Ireland. The racial conflicts of South Africa, the ambivalent and difficult position of the Irish under British imperial control, and the traumas suffered by both Black and White communities, thus provide Irish audiences with the critical distance necessary to understand their own troubled history, and most significantly, the changing face of Irish ethnicity in the twentieth-first century.

British imperialism had once channeled Ireland into becoming not only a subjugator of non-white colonies while itself subjugated, but also a transnational agent that nestled exceedingly well between cultural homogenization and differentiation. The sixth chapter, “Transnational Ireland on Stage: America to Middle East in Three Texts,” will deal with Sebastian Barry’s *White Woman Street* (1992), Frank McGuinness’s *Someone Who’ll Watch Over Me* (1992), and Colin Teevan’s *How Many Miles to Basra?* (2006). This chapter will put into an ethical conversation these dramatic texts that either question the ambiguity of the Irish role in international politics or unveil the ignored experiences of Irish exiles and their interactions with ethnic Others in a distant land. To differing degrees, these Irish plays resist the normative impositions of a globalized worldview, and present a hybridized yet unsettling facet of Irish diasporic life in America, France, and the Middle-East, mediated with the difficulties of changing concepts of space and time in a transnational landscape. The discussion of the three works will illuminate not only the commonality of ethical problems in general, but also how the individual playwrights reflect on the emerging ethical crises through Irish people’s own historical experiences and the contemporary Middle-East conflict.

The seventh chapter, “Peace and Beyond in the Middle East: Colin Teevan’s *War Trilogy*,” will illustrate a notable breakthrough in Irish theatre in recent decades. Indeed, many playwrights are now keen to expand the “moral compass” of Irish drama. Their works deal not only with domestic matters but also with subjects of global interest. Some of these playwrights are even directly engaged with ongoing international

crises. Colin Teevan, born in Dublin in 1968, belongs to the generation that has witnessed rapid social and economic changes and has enriched Irish theatre with new material on the global stage. His war trilogy comprises *How Many Miles to Basra?* (2004), *The Lion of Kabul* (2009) and *There Was A Man, There Was No Man* (2011), set respectively in Iraq, Afghanistan and Jordan (all premiered in the UK). It mirrors the improved status of Ireland in international politics: from a state struggling on the political margin to one that casts doubts on the anti-terrorist policies of the United Nations and other world powers. Based on the tradition of the critique of social phenomena, Teevan's war trilogy exemplifies how the Irish theatre has evolved from an exclusive focus on national border and identity issues to a consideration of crises beyond Ireland's confines or within borderless non-governmental organizations. Apart from human rights issues in the Islamic world, the concerns dramatized in these three plays can be listed as follows: justice under different circumstances, authenticity of war news, religious and cultural clashes between Islam and Christianity, historiography and racism. More significantly, Teevan, although not always writing explicitly about Irish concerns in Middle-East troubles, offers a retrospective view based on the tangled relationships between Ireland and Great Britain now and in the past, in an attempt to induce more effective dialogues between East and West and to move beyond ideologies.

The similarities between Ireland and Taiwan as two island nations are striking in terms of their political and economic relationship with their respective mainlands. The former is proud of being a "Celtic Tiger," while the latter is a member of "four little dragons in Asia," along with Korea, Singapore, and Japan. Nevertheless, their rapid economic growth, to a significant extent, stems from the contribution of the working class, while the voices of this social stratum are often silenced, due to the attention mass media on more captivating global and national issues. The subject of how these lower-status people identify themselves politically and culturally, justify ethnic conflicts, and heal historical scars, has therefore suffered much neglect. Under the influence of globalization and transnational capitalism, it could be argued that the working class, as a social Other, is still, or even more, exploited and marginalised by large or giant enterprises. This remains true despite the fact that within their own sphere, the blue-collared share a kinship derived from their subjugation by economic powers. The eighth chapter, "Voices from Two Theatrical Others: Labor Issues in the Theatres of Ireland and Taiwan," will therefore study contemporary Irish plays that address labour issues, in an attempt to show how playwrights, such as Fred Ryan, Sean O'Casey, Brendan Behan, John Arden, Margaretta D'Arcy, and Frank McGuinness, use the theatre as a medium to counteract the domination of these exploitative

powers. This chapter will also compare these playwrights with their Taiwanese counterparts, for instance, Jian Guo-xian, Song Fei-wo, Peng Ya-ling, Chung Chiao, who deal with power struggle not only among different classes but within minority communities. Across national boundaries, then, these playwrights concern themselves with those at the very bottom of society, those who are most easily manipulated, least able to resist exploitation, and who experience the most knotty and intractable of human predicaments.

The ninth chapter, "Samuel Beckett in Taiwan: Cross-cultural Innovations, Challenges, and Controversies," is a study of how Beckett and his (post-)modern legacies have *migrated* across the globe and have inspired a number of Asian playwrights. This chapter will explore one of the major controversies in Beckettian studies, i.e. whether the dramatist's Irishness can be discerned in his plays, many of which were first written in French. Although the debate remains unsolved, scholars such as Vivian Mercier, Sighle Kennedy, and Eoin O'Brien have argued that the playwright used a kind of humor and satire dear to the Anglo-Irish mind. The help of these aesthetic devices had previously been enlisted by Jonathan Swift and Oscar Wilde to introduce cynical comments on Irish and British issues. Moreover, like James Joyce and many of his Irish contemporary, Beckett had lived in exile on the European mainland. In the view of the critics cited above, Beckett, following in the wake of this satirical tradition, renovated it in a minimalist and absurdist fashion. Accordingly, a number of scholars have endeavored to point out the playwright's disillusion with, or criticism of, religion, life, and politics. More specifically, his sense of Irishness in his works was re-conceptualized in such a way that no longer confined it to the highly politicized and insular definition favored by local activists. In order to accurately delineate how Beckett's Irishness has created a dialogic platform both for Irish and world theatre, this chapter will exemplify the way in which Taiwan's theatre groups have adapted and contextualized his plays in a post-modern Asian society, which is not less politically divided than the Emerald Isle. Beckett's drama, consequently, provides Asian directors with an ideal way to approach not only issues of identity and language but also the complex predicament that triggers Gogo and Didi's despair in *Waiting for Godot*. The intertextuality of Beckett's drama and its re-adaptations for Taiwan's audiences thus illustrate how the notion of Irishness can be made significant from a cross-cultural perspective. The skepticism and obscurity of Beckett's works becomes more apparent by observing how Asian directors, often trained in Western institutions of higher learning, have produced these plays as vehicles of their own cultural and political agenda. These directors have also considered these works as a means to connect Taiwan's modern theatres with European ones in an age of globalization. Their productions demonstrate the extent to which