

# Universalizing the abstract

Theatre that bridges cultural gaps in the modern  
and the postmodern

Dissertation by: Phoebe Moore

Dissertation supervisor: Dr. Nicholas Johnson

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*Theatre, culture and society exist in mutual collaboration. Art reflects life, but how well does life reflect or respond to art? In Ireland this interdependence can initially be seen in the theatre of William Butler Yeats, whose plays aimed to bring about cultural unity to an otherwise divided country. This became less and less of a priority as his once powerful tenure and position as a member of a particular sub-culture in Ireland began to wane, and his theatre also began to reflect this change. In the contemporary, particularly post-Celtic Tiger Ireland, many examples of political or socially-engaged theatre also aim to break down cultural boundaries. These may be based on class, religion, nationality, gender etc. This thesis will explore whether certain contemporary styles are more successful in their aims to create a responsive audience, and in doing so to bridge cultural gaps. It will lean on sociological theorists Max Weber (1864-1920), a modern sociologist and Ulrich Beck (1944-2015), a post-modern sociologist. The examples of contemporary or 'post-modern' theatre used are a mixture of Irish and international work with all international examples having an audience, at one stage, within the island of Ireland. Taking examples from further afield but positioning them within the Irish context helps to illustrate and explore Ireland's new position as a 'global village' with international as well as national responsibilities and relations.*

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## **Introduction**

A division of cultures and the subsequent play out of hate, a social-drama<sup>1</sup> of sorts, has become increasingly prevalent in today's society. This intercultural performance and tension is not new, however the frequency at which it takes place, very much is. Globalization\* can bring cultures together through advances in technology and opportunities for contact, but it can also fuel conflict and animosity, much more rapidly than ever before. It is clear that 'bridging points' must be found in order to continue and evolve as humans living on a common planet, a metaphorical stage. This dissertation begins in a moment of conflict specific to Ireland's social history, when culture, in the form of religion, became political: Ireland's colonial past with England. The understanding of this remains tied to the religious sectarianism that arose between Catholic Ireland and Protestant England and the Anglo-Irish Protestant identity which became its legacy. The first section of this dissertation examines the relationship of this identity to William Butler Yeats and his theatre, positioning him within a 'sub-culture' present in Ireland at the time. His plays\* will be analysed in relation to his social and political motives and, above all, his position within the Anglo-Irish subculture which remains crucial to the understanding of his work. The modern sociologist, Max Weber, will be drawn upon, particularly in relation to Yeats's play *The Countess Cathleen*. His ambition to create a unifying theatre with the ability to bridge a cultural divide will be questioned and critiqued. The second section of this dissertation explores more contemporary examples of culture including 'queer culture' and subsequent issues of homophobia, resulting in a

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<sup>1</sup> Victor Turner. "Social Dramas and stories about them". *Critical Inquiry*. Vol. 7, no. 1 (1980) p. 153 [https://www.jstor.org/stable/1343180?seq=13#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/1343180?seq=13#page_scan_tab_contents)

‘cultural gap’; Islamophobia, a current trend exemplifying another religious ‘cultural gap’ and finally ‘cultural violence’ in modern warfare. These examples of cultures in conflict have been tackled in recent examples of theatre shown in Ireland, namely *Silent* by Pat Kinevane, *Guerrilla* by El Conde de Torrefiel and *The Circus Animals’ Desertion* by Brokentalkers. These productions will be discussed in light of their cultural basis and analysed through the lens of the postmodern sociologist, Ulrich Beck. All but one of the examples of theatre used in this research are Irish; my decision to extend the discussion to beyond our national borders, while still within Europe, relates to our understanding of Ireland in the contemporary as ‘a global village’: “a local, communal space that has become displaced and is no longer anchored within the boundaries of the nation”<sup>2</sup>. By this argument, our position must be examined in light of our position on the world stage.

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\*Globalization is defined by Manfred Steger as the social condition ‘globality’ “characterized by the existence of global economic, political, cultural, and environmental interconnections and flows that make many of the currently existing borders and boundaries irrelevant.” Manfred Steger “Toward a definition of globalization” in *Globalization: A very short introduction*. (London: Oxford University Press, 2013) P.7

\*Due to the vast scope of work, I have been unable to include and make reference to all of Yeats’s dramas, instead I have chosen the following, which I felt best illustrated my points: *At The Hawks Well*, *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, *Purgatory* and *The Countess Cathleen*.

<sup>2</sup> Ondrej Pilny and Clare Wallace. *Global Ireland: Irish literatures for the new millennium*. (Ann Arbor: Litteraria Progensia, 2005) p.1

## Section 1

### **2. Yeats's theatrical bridging**

#### **2.1.1. The Anglo-Irish subculture in 20<sup>th</sup> century Ireland**

Grand houses, built to emulate the luxury and pomp of European Palladian architecture, characterised the Irish landscape in the twentieth century. The style of house is 'Georgian', named after four Kings, who ruled over an entirely different country. These are the 'big' houses: the iconography that feature in literature, art work and the landscape as stark reminders of Ireland's bitter history and relations with its larger neighbour, England. These are the houses that were inhabited by the wealthy Protestant stock in a country otherwise Catholic. They are large houses for a contrastingly small section of the population.

'The Ascendancy', as they came to be known, ruled over Ireland politically, economically and socially from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Their Anglo-Irish roots originate with the first colonisation of Ireland by the English in the 16<sup>th</sup> century\*. Settlers were placed in the country in order to effectively control Ireland according to English and later British law. They were loyal to the English crown and by the 17<sup>th</sup> century had become the new ruling class, managing to replace the Irish Catholics in positions of influence. The settlers were Protestant, meaning that, as well as being a religion, it represented a nation: England.

The Anglo-Irish period of influence was punctuated by events resulting in an uncomfortable authority, particularly from the 1790's onward as the Ascendancy

became painfully aware of their instability within the country they, by now, called ‘home’. W. B. Yeats, our focal point throughout this period, grew up during this time of social upheaval. The events included but were not limited to, the rebellion of 1798 organised by the United Irishmen with French support<sup>1\*</sup>; the election of Daniel O’Connell to government in 1830, which, according to David Fitzpatrick, intensified “the identification of nationalism with Catholicism”<sup>2\*</sup>; the land war between 1879- 1882<sup>3</sup> (W.B. Yeats was fourteen at this time)<sup>4</sup> ; The burning of the ‘big houses’, organised by the IRA between 1921 and 1923, an act of symbolic as well as literal violence to big house owners/ Protestants; and finally, the partition of Ireland into North and South/ republic and union in 1925. By 1937, the south of Ireland was named a republic and Anglo-Irish power was called seriously into question, with the majority of Protestants living in the North.<sup>5</sup> The Anglo-Irish position is described by Turtle Bunbury as “a hyphenated existence” where one sits somewhere on the hyphen between ‘anglo’

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\* Irish lands were confiscated and handed over to English settlers.

<sup>1</sup> “Conflicts in Ireland: the 1798 rebellion” The Tipperary group. Accessed 13<sup>th</sup> December 2016. <http://homepage.tinet.ie/~tipperaryfame/rebel798.htm>

\* The aim of the 1798 rebellion was for Catholic emancipation, and many Irish Protestants were killed during its onslaught.

<sup>2</sup> David Fitzpatrick. “Prologue: Protestant descendency in Ireland” in *Descendency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) p. 13

\* Daniel O’ Connell was the first Irish MP since 1689.

<sup>3</sup> “The famine, the land war & 19<sup>th</sup> century resistance-why is it not happening today?” Workers Solidarity movement, accessed 13<sup>th</sup> December 2016, <http://www.wsm.ie/c/famine-land-war-19th-century-resistance> vg

\*This was organised by a tenant organisation named ‘The Land League’ and effectively challenged landlords (generally wealthy Protestants) over their right to own and control land.

<sup>4</sup> R.F. Foster. “introduction” in *W.B. Yeats. A Life.*(Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998) p. xxvii

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 163

\*The Protestant population in Ireland experienced massive migration from south to north between the years 1911 and 1926 with a decline of 26% for Presbyterians, 29% for Episcopalians and 31% for Methodists.

and ‘irish’ with your choice of position not always free: In England, you are an Irishman; in Ireland, you are a Protestant. <sup>6</sup>

### **2.1.2. WB Yeats ‘cultural nationalism’: all for the romance?**

Nationalism, however, was not just limited to Catholics, if the Irish literary revival of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was anything to go by. This upsurge in nationalist writing was spearheaded by William Butler Yeats, a Protestant poet and playwright born in 1865 to a wealthy land-owning family in Co. Sligo. His mother was Susan Pollexfen, raised in a conservative Ascendancy family from Sligo, and his father, John Butler Yeats was a struggling painter<sup>1</sup>. Although educated in England, he was firm in his identity as Irish, and this influenced much of his art, providing fire for his literary revival and later Irish theatre movement. Both of these movements were unified and bred by a desire to “bring back dignity to the image of Ireland, both at home and abroad.”<sup>2</sup> The Irish National Theatre which Yeats set up with Lady Augusta Gregory in 1904 aimed to bring about “deeper emotions”<sup>3</sup> and bring to the stage something other than a ‘stage Irishman’. Much of Yeats’s early work is credited as being extremely nationalist and patriotic; Edward Said saw him as one of the “great nationalist artists of

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<sup>6</sup> Conor Cruise O’Brien “Passion and Cunning: an Essay on the Politics of WB Yeats” in *Passion and Cunning and other essays* ed. Conor Cruise O’Brien (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988)

<sup>1</sup> R.F. Foster. “The Artists children” in *WB Yeats: A life*. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998) pp. 6-16

<sup>2</sup> G.J. Watson. *Irish Identity and the Literary Revival: Synge, Yeats, Joyce and O’Casey* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994) p. 90

<sup>3</sup> The Abbey Theatre “The Abbey’s cultural role and value”  
<https://www.abbeytheatre.ie/behind-the-scenes/article/the-abbey-s-cultural-role-and-value>

decolonisation”<sup>4</sup>. One obvious example of this patriotism is his play *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, which was written in 1901 with Lady Augusta Gregory. This was first performed in 1902 in the Abbey Theatre with Maud Gonne playing the title role of the old woman, ‘Kathleen’, positioned as the personification of Ireland itself. The choice to cast Maud Gonne owes much to Yeats’s romantic connection to her: he proposed to her four times and was reputedly infatuated by her\*. <sup>5</sup>

*Cathleen ni Houlihan* was dedicated to Gonne, as was an earlier play, *The Countess Cathleen*. Gonne was an ardent republican and founder of the ‘Inghinidhe na h’Eireann’ meaning ‘daughters of Ireland’ which aimed to secure complete independence for Ireland. Gonne, like Yeats, was also a member of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy but seemed to prefer a more radical form of nationalism than Yeats’s poetic and romanticised gestures: seeing true patriots as having “poems in their heads” as well as “guns in their hands”<sup>6</sup>. Yeats was inspired, most likely, by Thomas Davis (the poet and one-time member of ‘Young Ireland’) who believed that poetry was inherently nationalistic and crucial for nourishing those forces. <sup>7</sup> It was through an introduction to John O’ Leary that Yeats was first set upon the path of Nationalism; the meeting was so significant, that by the end of his life he still professed himself a “nationalist of the school of

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<sup>4</sup> Edward Said as cited by Stephen Regan in “W.B Yeats, Irish Nationalism and Post-Colonial theory”. *Nordic Irish Studies*. Vol. 5, (2006). P. 89 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30001545>.

\*He wrote her poems and plays writing poems as well as plays, professing the distraction she offered him from his poetic duties: “All things can tempt me from this craft of verse /One time it was a woman’s face”

<sup>5</sup> WB Yeats. “All things can tempt me”. In *Responsibilities and Other Poems* (New York: The Macmillan company, 1916)

<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Cullingford. *Yeats Ireland and Fascism*. (London: The Macmillan Press, 1981) P. 6

<sup>7</sup> Ibid P. 9

John O’Leary”.<sup>8</sup> Through O’ Leary, he became a member of the I.R.B. (The Irish Republican Brotherhood), an organisation dedicated to achieving Ireland’s independence as a republic. Despite his involvement in genuine political as well as poetic or artistic organisations for Ireland’s cause, Yeats was primarily attracted to the *romantic* side of the republican tradition which, according to Watson, “meshed with a genuine romantic idealism in Yeats himself”.<sup>9</sup> This can be seen in his tendency to aestheticize the peasant, becoming problematic when he fails to see them as real people, casting them not “in social or political terms, but as a romantic phenomenon.”<sup>10</sup> His idealisation of the peasant was possibly inherited from his involvement with ‘Young Ireland’, a movement set up by O’ Leary and home to many Irish poets wishing to remember and pay homage to ancient tales and memories. Although the result may have been an overly romanticised and unhelpful outlook based on past traditions and rural ways of life, it stemmed from a very liberal urge to create art for many rather than the few who “have grown up in a leisured class”.<sup>11</sup> The traditional Irish peasantry were, after all, viewed as “guardians of a purely Celtic culture”.<sup>12</sup>

The term ‘Romantic nationalism’ seems appropriate for Yeats as well as historically accurate given nationalism’s origins as a “cultural twin”<sup>13</sup> of

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<sup>8</sup> *ibid.* P.1

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p. 90

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid* p.94

<sup>11</sup> WB Yeats. “The School of John O’ Leary” in *Yeats, Ireland and Fascism* by Elizabeth Cullingford. (London: The Macmillan Press, 1981) p.9

<sup>12</sup> Richard H. Taylor. *A Readers guide to the plays of W.B. Yeats*. (New York: St. Martin’s Press inc., 1984)

<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth Cullingford. *Yeats Ireland and Fascism*. (London: The Macmillan Press, 1981)P.1

romanticism, originating with Rousseau's linking of "the nation" with "the people"<sup>14</sup>. The two connect through a belief that nationalism, as well as working for a nation's freedom, also offers individual sovereignty, denying complete authoritative power of the state and subsequent suppression and denial of individual voices. Yeats liked to self-style himself as the "last romantic"<sup>15</sup>. This calls into question his ability to unify a divided Ireland when his attention seemed so drawn to a romanticised version of a Celtic, mythologised Ireland, inaccurate at best and damaging at worst.

### **2.1.3. A Unifying Nationalist theatre: recollection of old themes**

The resurfacing of old themes that Yeats tended to employ in many of his plays, can be seen as more than just a romantic gesture. Rather, it stems once again from Yeats's position within the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy and his belief in Nationalist ideals. These two contradictory points of reference could only urge him on his quest to prove that "Nationality was not a thing of race or creed, every man born here belonged to the nation"<sup>1</sup>. Yeats attempted to establish this through his art by reminding his audiences of a country that was once united rather than divided: a time of faeries, of heroes and Celtic traditions. For Yeats these served as more lasting and binding sources of nationalism than trends based on very "modern hatreds"<sup>2</sup> which were a little too close for comfort for a man seen to be standing on the wrong side of the line. These 'modern hatreds' were religious, yet their

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p.1

<sup>15</sup> Cheryl Herr "The Strange reward of all that discipline" in *Yeats and Postmodernism* by Leonard Orr (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1991) p.156

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Cullingford. *Yeats Ireland and fascism*. (London: The Macmillan Press, 1981) p. 8

<sup>2</sup> G.J. Watson. *Irish Identity and the Literary Revival: Synge, Yeats, Joyce and O'Casey* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994) p. 94

basis was nationalist: Protestants, like Yeats, were seen as English and therefore a common enemy. The ancient myths and legends woven into many of his plots, served almost protective purposes: Yeats held a certain indebtedness to the past, a historical moment which managed to erase and forget his problematic contemporary position. A break from the imaginary world of his plays would have signalled a reminder for audiences that they were watching a play penned by a continuing presence of their colonial history, the ascendancy writer. The theatre, for Yeats, offered refuge and the plays we will examine illustrate this.

*Cathleen ni Houlihan*, written in 1902, adumbrating the Easter rising of 1916, has origins in folk tale and myth from a pre-Christian Ireland, a time when the intervention of supernatural figures was not uncommon<sup>3</sup>. In Yeats's version, a young Irish man named Michael, who is soon to be married, decides to desert house and home to follow the old woman or, to young men such as him, a woman with "the walk of a Queen"<sup>4</sup>. This play certainly serves as Yeats's most overtly nationalistic offering, professed as making "more rebels in Ireland than a thousand political speeches or a hundred reasoned books"<sup>5</sup>, an ode to the political potential of theatre. Yet, it is a nationalism which would serve his own mission to re-embed himself into the country. The play is set in 1798, a year synonymous for many with the rebellion fought by the United Irishmen seeking Catholic

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<sup>3</sup> Richard H. Taylor. *A Readers guide to the plays of W.B. Yeats*. (New York: St. Martin's Press inc., 1984) p. 33

\*The figure of Cathleen was dominant in the legend of 'Hanrahan and Cathleen, the Daughter of Houlihan'

<sup>4</sup> W.B Yeats and Lady Augusta Gregory. *Cathleen ni Houlihan in Modern and Contemporary Irish Drama*. Ed. John P. Harrington. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 1991) p.11

<sup>5</sup> Lennox Robinson as cited by Nicholas Grene "Strangers in the House" in *Modern and Contemporary Irish Drama*. Ed. John P. Harrington. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 1991) p.427

emancipation. Its leader was Theobald Wolfe Tone, famous for his status as an ardent nationalist as well as, crucially, his over-arching aim, like Yeats, in uniting Catholics and Protestants “under the common name of Irishmen”<sup>6</sup>. The placing of this play within this period and the connotations of Wolfe Tone’s name was not coincidental, and it certainly would not have been lost on the audience. Yeats admired Wolfe Tone who, like O’ Leary, was an example of a true nationalist hero, a recent Cú Chulainn and a standard that Yeats used to measure all modern heroism against.<sup>7</sup> This play served a dual potency: a nostalgic ode to heroism dead and gone as well as a battle cry for modern heroes.

*At The Hawks Well* (1916) set in “the Irish heroic age”<sup>8</sup>, recalls a time older than the audiences’ memories. We are faced with the character of Cú Chulainn, called initially ‘young man’ but who introduces himself by name later. This play, although very much rooted in Irish traditions and history, marks the beginning of Yeats’s more aristocratic leanings and interpretations\*. <sup>9</sup>It is inspired by Noh drama; Yeats wrote “with the help of Japanese plays (...) I have invented a form of drama (...) an aristocratic form”<sup>10</sup>. The highly formal structure, dancing and

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<sup>6</sup> Theobald Wolfe Tone. 1793 as cited by in *Romantic Ireland: From Tone to Gonne; Fresh perspectives on 19<sup>th</sup> century Ireland*. Ed. Paddy Lyons, Willey Maley and John Miller. (London: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013) p. 193

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Cullingford. *Yeats Ireland and Fascism*. (London: The Macmillan Press, 1981) P. 4

<sup>7</sup> Ibid P. 9

<sup>8</sup> W.B. Yeats. *At The Hawks Well* in *Modern and Contemporary Irish Drama*. Ed. John. P. Harrington. (New York: W.W Norton, 2009) p. 20

\*Noh theatre, to Yeats, offered an opportunity for which “an elite audience was a requirement rather than a disadvantage” .

<sup>9</sup> R.F. Foster “*At The Hawk’s Well*” in *Modern and Contemporary Irish Drama*. Ed. John. P. Harrington. (New York: W.W Norton, 2009) p. 433

<sup>10</sup> W.B. Yeats. 1916 as cited by Maren Sands in “The influence of Japanese Noh theatre on Yeats” (Colorado State University, 2005) <http://writing.colostate.edu/gallery/phantasmagoria/sands.htm>

use of masks are all nods toward the inspiration of the Orient.\*<sup>11</sup> Cú Chulainn is paired against the character ‘old man’ who remains unnamed throughout the play. Both characters wear masks which, from the point of view of the audience, evokes a sense of universality between the two, a feeling that Yeats was keen to create.<sup>12</sup>

Ritual in this play is omnipresent\*<sup>13</sup>: through the musicians folding and unfolding of the cloth at the beginning and end of the play; the accompaniment of movement with the musical, rhythmic beat of gong or drum to the hawks’ ritualistic dance. It manages to signify a sequence of events completely cut off from everyday life and characters, a return to source and roots of ancient Ireland. Ritual, after all, belonged to a pre-Christian and therefore pre- anti Protestant Ireland. His investment in this ‘removal’ from everyday life was in order to prevent the circumstances that may “remind the audience of anything in their own lives”<sup>14</sup> . ‘Their own lives’ were taking place within a particularly turbulent reality of Ireland. The ‘blanket of protection’ that Yeats found in bygone Ireland, nonetheless, contained holes, as we will explore in the following section.

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<sup>11</sup> Glenda Leeming. “Poetic Drama and the Twentieth century” in *Poetic Drama*. (London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1989) p. 3

\*Yeats’s use of this exotic form of theatre parallels with his own position within a Catholic country- he was ‘exotic’ in his own right. He assimilates non-Western themes in order to explore contextually Irish material. This act prevents viewers and scholars from addressing performances from their own immediate social, political and cultural realities, in this case, Japan. It does nonetheless provide clues to the nature of the author himself and his tendency to glorify both the past and ‘the other’.

<sup>12</sup> Richard H. Taylor. *A Readers guide to the plays of W.B. Yeats*. (New York: St. Martin’s Press inc., 1984) p. 4

\*“any action in everyday life can be performed as ritual if it is performed with ceremonial gestures and speech inflections” in

<sup>13</sup>Richard H. Taylor. *A Readers guide to the plays of W.B. Yeats*. (New York: St. Martin’s Press inc., 1984) p. 4

<sup>14</sup> Glenda Leeming. “Poetic Drama and the Twentieth century” in *Poetic Drama*. (London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1989) p. 17

#### **2.1.4. Weber's Protestant work ethic: a spanner in the works?**

Of Yeats's varied opinions, beliefs and stand points, one constant serves as an underpinning for much of his work: his hatred of the modern world and capitalism. This fed his fury toward the 'middle classes'. When Yeats refers to "mobs" he writes not of the working class but the materialistic middle classes.<sup>1</sup> His real love, it seems, was kept for the artists and the 'visionaries'. He once remarked of his childhood growing up in England, that he "did not think English people intelligent or well-behaved unless they were artists"<sup>2</sup>. This childhood opinion of English men becomes poignant later when one considers his association of England with "crass materialism" and of Ireland with "the spirit"<sup>3</sup>.

The sociologist perhaps most associated with capitalism and therefore useful to our understanding of Yeats, is Max Weber (1864-1920). In *The Protestant work ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber links the Protestant religion, specifically Calvinism, to the creation of capitalism. Weber defines capitalism as "the rational organisation of formally free labour", necessarily distinguished from mere "pursuit of wealth"<sup>4</sup>. This corollary between religion and economic activity began with his observation that it was predominantly Protestants in positions of business leadership, ownership of capital and as personnel of enterprises. He wanted to

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<sup>1</sup> Marjorie Howes. "When the mob becomes a people: nationalism and occult theatre" in *Yeats Nations: Gender, Class and Irishness*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) p.96

<sup>2</sup> R.F. Foster. *WB Yeats: A Life, Book 1*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998)

<sup>3</sup> Stan Smith. *W.B. Yeats: A critical introduction*. (London: Palgrave, 1990) p. 14

<sup>4</sup> Anthony Giddens "Introduction pt. 2 "The themes of the Protestant work ethic" in *The Protestant work ethic and the spirit of Capitalism*. Max Weber. (New York: Routledge, 1930) p. xi

discover why. This connection between Protestantism and success is reminiscent of the situation in Ireland as Yeats knew it.

Weber argued that the answer lay in differing religious beliefs: Catholics believed in salvation through the Church and Sacraments, while Protestants and Calvinists did not- they believed in predestination, that God had already decided who would be saved and who would be damned. Their belief system gave them no way of predicting their position in the afterlife. This put great importance on “ascertaining the state of grace of the individual.”<sup>5</sup> One method of discovery was through “worldly activity”, whereby the world and everybody in it existed to serve God and his commands. Performing duties efficiently indicated social advancement through pleasing God. The logic was: “labour in the service of impersonal social usefulness appear(s) to promote the glory of God and hence to be willed by Him”.<sup>6</sup> Individuals had to act in complete certainty that they were chosen (for the afterlife). This self-confidence was possible through intense worldly activity. As “the spirit of capitalism”<sup>7</sup> took off, it no longer needed a religious foundation. The seed had been sown.

WB Yeats’s play *The Countess Cathleen* is particularly useful for exploring this dynamic of ‘worldly calling’ and Protestantism. It is set during a time of famine: food and money are both scarce. The first scene opens on a peasant family discussing their next meal. The father appears to have lost faith in God and his ability to save them: “pray, if you have a mind to. It’s little that the sleepy ears

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<sup>5</sup> Max Weber “The religious foundations of worldly Ascetism” in *The Protestant work ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Routledge, 1930) p.66

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 64

<sup>7</sup> ibid. p. 116

above care...”<sup>8</sup> He does not display the self-confidence necessary for worldly success that Weber applies to Protestants. The family are called upon by a Protestant countess, named Cathleen, who cannot find her childhood home. Before she departs, she leaves the family with the coins in her purse.<sup>9</sup>

The cottage is later visited by two figures who appear as ‘Eastern Merchants’. It seems that they are not as they claim, arriving shortly after Shemus summons for “nothing human”<sup>10</sup> to enter the cottage. The merchants offer gold in return for the human spirit. Shemus and Teig spread the news to all neighbouring families, including the countess, who is distressed and orders them to return to the merchants with “twice or thrice”<sup>11</sup> the money they offered in order to reclaim their souls. The crux of the play occurs when Cathleen visits Shemus Rua’s cottage, where the peasants are bartering their souls in return for bags of money. She approaches the merchants stating her price of five hundred thousand pounds in return for her soul and the condition that they must also set free all other souls that had been bartered.<sup>12</sup>

The confidence Cathleen displays in the worth of her soul is akin to the Protestants that Weber describes in his study: they have a “duty to attain certainty of one’s own election”<sup>13</sup>, a duty to display assuredness in their position in the

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<sup>8</sup> WB Yeats. *The Countess Cathleen*. Scene 1. (Project Gutenberg, 2004) E book. Accessed 12<sup>th</sup> November 2016, <http://www.archive.org/stream/thecountesscathl05167gut/cntsc10.txt>

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> WB Yeats. *The Countess Cathleen*. Scene 2. (Project Gutenberg, 2004) E book. Accessed 12<sup>th</sup> November 2016, <http://www.archive.org/stream/thecountesscathl05167gut/cntsc10.txt>

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Max Weber “The religious foundations of worldly Ascetism” in *The Protestant work ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Routledge, 1930) p.67

after-life. The play ends as Cathleen dies; an angel is present to guide her blessed soul through “the gates of pearl”<sup>14</sup>. It is made clear to the audience that Cathleen has been granted access to heaven. She has led a life of ‘worldly activity’ and has therefore pleased God. She is ‘deserving’. As the Angel carries her body, it professes that “the light of lights looks always on the motive not the deed”<sup>15</sup>. Cathleen had a worthy motive: to save those less fortunate. This eclipsed the otherwise sinful act of selling her soul to the devil. Cathleen was rich in capital as well as in spirit and by living an ascetic life on Earth, she gained herself a privileged position after death. This parallel phenomenon is the basis for Weber’s explanation of how the capitalist spirit became, in his eyes, locked into place.

This association between the sociological theories of Weber and *The Countess Cathleen*, may be more consequential than a mere likeness: Cullingford argues that “anticipating the more celebrated speculations of Weber and Tawney, Yeats linked capitalism and the protestant ethic”<sup>16</sup>. Writing his 1902 essay, *Edmond Spenser*, the poet had an epiphany that “the coming of allegory coincided with the rise of the middle class”<sup>17</sup>. With this statement, Yeats links the ‘earnest spirit’ with literature whereby the two combine to create puritanism and with it, the pathway to capitalism.<sup>18</sup>

Although the two texts were written during separate time periods, with Yeats’s play initially published approximately twelve years before Weber’s first German

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<sup>14</sup> WB Yeats. *The Countess Cathleen*. Scene 5. (Project Gutenberg, 2004) E book. Accessed 12<sup>th</sup> November 2016, <http://www.archive.org/stream/thecountesscathl05167gut/cntsc10.txt>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Cullingford. *Yeats Ireland and Fascism*. (London: The Macmillan Press, 1981) P. 22

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p.22

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p. 22

publication, the themes are undoubtedly similar. Notable is the Puritan movement which, as well as being the basis of Calvinism and the focus of Weber's work, is also known for its stance against Catholicism, its starting point being to 'purify' the Church of England from Catholic practices. The connection to Ireland's religious history is undeniable when one considers the plantations of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and King Henry VIII's attempts to make Ireland a Protestant or 'puritan' nation. Notable too is Yeats's own defence of immortality and his stance on the importance of belief in the phenomenon, "arguing that confidence in it is necessary to human survival"<sup>19</sup>. If one interprets immortality using a religious perspective, it becomes the equivalent of the after-life: the possibility of continued survival after death, albeit in a different state. Yeats's adamant belief in a post-death survival becomes akin to Weber's observance of the Calvinist requirement for confidence in the afterlife and furthermore, their position in it, as crucial to their own sanity. The fact that the heroine of Yeats's play is a Protestant and portrayed as deserving of an after-life becomes notable, given Yeats's own position within the Protestant faith. It suggests an elitist attitude, positioning his own sect as more deserving than others, specifically, Catholics.

This elitist attitude is also prevalent in his late play *Purgatory*, written in 1938. The play is set on a bare stage with only the presence of "a ruined house and a bare tree in the background"<sup>20</sup>. The house alluded to throughout the one act play is not a cottage but a mansion owned, at one stage, by an Ascendancy family. Two characters feature in the play: an old man and a boy. The old man's

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<sup>19</sup> Richard Ellman. "Association without doctrine" *The identity of Yeats*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1954). P. 40

<sup>20</sup> WB Yeats. *Purgatory in Modern and Contemporary Irish Drama*. Ed. John P. Harrington. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009) p. 29

mother owned the house and she married, 'below' her status, to "a groom in a training stable"<sup>21</sup>; the boy is the old man's son. As is suggested by the relationships of these characters, the play is about lineage and the passing of traits, sometimes negative ones: "I killed that lad, he would have (...) passed pollution on"<sup>22</sup>. Here, Yeats's interest in eugenics becomes apparent as well as his opinion on the burning of Ireland's Ascendancy houses: "to kill a house where great men grew up (...) I here declare a capital offence."<sup>23</sup> Yeats nods to Puritanism once more in the lines of the old man: "study that tree. It stands there like a purified soul"<sup>24</sup>. This line occurs in connection with the old man's mother; as he sings of her, everything is in darkness, but the tree remains illuminated.<sup>25</sup> Once again, Yeats has intentionally evoked Protestants and by association, the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy class, whilst conjuring up images of purity and goodness.

One might surmise that despite his best efforts, an internal snobbery within Yeats tended to assert itself. It led him to position his 'own kind' above Irish Catholics on the social ladder, believing that they "had not the good taste, the household courtesy and decency of the Protestant Ireland I had known".<sup>26</sup> It is through inconsistencies like this that Yeats's nationalist façade is punctured and his ability to bridge a cultural gap becomes questionable.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p. 30

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p. 34

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p.31

<sup>24</sup> Ibid p.34

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 34

<sup>26</sup> G.J. Watson. *Irish Identity and the Literary Revival: Synge, Yeats, Joyce and O'Casey* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994) p. 87

## Section 2

### **3. The Postmodern condition**

#### **3.1.1. Yeats in the Post-modern: *The Circus Animal's Desertion* and Postmodern culture**

We now depart from Yeats's modern period and enter the postmodern.

Modernism and postmodernism are two terms frequently used in cultural and sociological thought yet remain shrouded in ambiguity. Postmodernism first entered the lexicon to coincide with post-industrialism, when it became clear that society could no longer be understood in the same traditionalist viewpoints as before. The need for a term such as 'postmodernism' signifies the incapability of 'modern' to fit and accurately make sense of the contemporary world as we know it. A new word was sought for the increased level and depth of knowledge in developed societies. Francois Lyotard posits that "the status of knowledge is altered as societies enter (...) the post-industrial age and cultures enter (...) the postmodern age"<sup>1</sup>. Crucial to this thesis, is the postmodern rejection of culture as the natural foundation of any being, recognising it instead as unstable and constructed<sup>2</sup>. This is linked to the postmodern "incredulity toward

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<sup>1</sup> Francois Lyotard as cited by Rekha Mirchandani in "Postmodernism and Sociology: From the Epistemological to the Empirical" Department of Sociology, Bowling Green State University (2005), [http://www.cj-resources.com/CJ\\_Sociology\\_pdfs/postmodernism%20and%20sociology%20-%20Mirchandani%202005.pdf](http://www.cj-resources.com/CJ_Sociology_pdfs/postmodernism%20and%20sociology%20-%20Mirchandani%202005.pdf) accessed 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2016. P. 88

<sup>2</sup> Martin Irvine "Approaching the main questions" Georgetown University. Communication, Culture & Technology Program. Available at: <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/pomo.html>. Accessed 10th April 2017

metanarratives”<sup>3</sup> as Lyotard asserts. According to Rekha Mirchandani, it was not until the 1960’s and 70’s that ‘the postmodern’ entered into social theory. It first came about due to perceived changes in the arts as early as the 1940’s and 50’s.<sup>4</sup>

When investigating theatre in this postmodern period, I will continue to use sociological theory to examine the link between art and society. The sociologist Ulrich Beck (1944-2015) is known particularly for his research around ‘risk society’, his term to describe our globalizing and modernizing world. He defines risk, not as destructions already taking place, but "the intermediary state between destruction and security"<sup>5</sup>. Where Max Weber may have been useful in section one, his modern, rational principles do not translate when dissecting more contemporary issues. Beck refers to Weber, arguing that his “concept of ‘rationalization’ no longer grasps this late modern reality”<sup>6</sup>. Another drawback of using Weber in the contemporary period is his narrow and subsequently limited view of culture and the role it has in society. He was reluctant to bridge the realms of culture and politics, seeing them instead as belonging to different fields, to be judged and analysed separately. Interestingly, he keenly noted the role that culture can play in human relations and actions, prompting him to see its part in religion and the spread of Western capitalism. Beyond this he did not see it as a

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<sup>3</sup> Jean Francois-Lyotard “Introduction” in *The Postmodern condition: A report on knowledge*. Trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. (Manchester: Manchester Up, 2004 [1979]) p. xxiv

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 89

<sup>5</sup> Ulrich Beck. “Risk Society Revisited: Theory, Politics and Research Programmes” in *The Sociology of Risk and Gambling Reader* ed. James F. Cosgrave (New York: Routledge, 2006) p. 63. Accessed: 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2016 . [https://books.google.ie/books?hl=en&lr=&id=o3-LDOMu5eUC&oi=fnd&pg=PT73&dq=becks+risk+society&ots=9sZVudXY7U&sig=TYQ3-O1PCGpCCLWolw4TcgPx1BE&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.ie/books?hl=en&lr=&id=o3-LDOMu5eUC&oi=fnd&pg=PT73&dq=becks+risk+society&ots=9sZVudXY7U&sig=TYQ3-O1PCGpCCLWolw4TcgPx1BE&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false)

<sup>6</sup> Ulrich Beck. *Risk Society: Towards a new Modernity*. (Munich: Sage Publications, 1992) p. 22

legitimate player in power relations.<sup>7</sup> In contradiction, it is due to the intertwined nature of society and art that drama can prove a fascinating tool for analysis. This is supported by Victor Turner's work on 'social drama', his term for a conflictual social interaction. He contends that 'social drama' is intrinsically related to stage dramas; crucially, he notes the "reintegration"<sup>8</sup> that occurs in social dramas between the social/cultural groups after the initial conflict arises.

In contemporary Ireland, cultural gaps exist in many more forms than merely religion. The play *The Circus Animals' Desertion*, acts as a perfect stepping stone between Yeats's Ireland of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the Ireland we know today. The play's title is owed to one of the last poems Yeats wrote before he died, in which he famously appeared to mock his career as a dramatist.<sup>9</sup> As the name suggests, the play (performed and devised by the experimental theatre company 'Brokentalkers') takes its inspiration from the work and political ideologies of Yeats, but is nonetheless inescapably current, exploring poignant and raw issues that circulate today. Taking Yeats at its root, the performance reminded their audience of a time when, 'the nation', for Ireland was not something citizens could call their own. The idea of nation and nationhood inspired Yeats in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and, in the past decade has, once more, entered strongly into the social imagination and political discourses. National boundaries may hold less

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<sup>7</sup> Alan Swingewood. *Cultural Theory and the problem of modernity*. . (London:Macmillan Press. Ltd., 1998) p. 29

<sup>8</sup> Victor Turner. "Social Dramas and stories about them". *Critical Inquiry*. Vol. 7, no. 1 (1980) p. 153 [https://www.jstor.org/stable/1343180?seq=13#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/1343180?seq=13#page_scan_tab_contents)

<sup>9</sup> "what can I but enumerate old themes" part 2 line 1. "players and painted stage took all my love, and not those things that they were emblems of" part 2 line 23, 24. W.B. Yeats. "The Circus Animals Desertion" (poem). <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/43299>

relevance, but they continue to exert power. This apparent paradox can be explained by pointing to the interdependencies across the globe, which can facilitate, simultaneously, both nationalism and ‘globality’\*<sup>10</sup>. Manfred Steger uses the example of ‘purist’ terrorist organizations\* which spread their partisan, insular messages via global media platforms: “our global age with its obsession for technology and its mass-market commodities indelibly shaped the violent backlash against globalization”<sup>11</sup> .

Benedict Anderson suggests that the nation can act as a fraternity whereby (this fraternity) “makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings”<sup>12</sup>.

The relevance of this line is seen in the play’s themes of radicalism and nationalist sentiment, both in the time of Yeats’s Ireland, and now: an Ireland within an even broader ‘imagined community’—Europe. Gary Keegan, the artistic director, explained that during the devising process, the topic moved from a very Irish question, to a broader “European question”<sup>13</sup> as the subjects encountered whilst researching Yeats as a political figure and writer proved starkly relevant today. Keegan commented that, it seemed “providence”<sup>14</sup> that the show happened when it did. This relationship to time and place illustrates the

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<sup>10</sup> Manfred Steger. “Globalization: A contested concept” *Globalization: A very short introduction* (London: Oxford University Press, 2013) P. 7

\*he uses the example of such as Al Qaeda; nowadays, one could include ISIS in this observation.  
\*Steger describes ‘globality’ as “the social condition characterised by the existence of global economic, political, cultural and environmental interconnections and flows that make many of the currently existing borders and boundaries irrelevant.”

<sup>11</sup> Manfred Steger. “Globalization: A contested concept” *Globalization: A very short introduction* (London: Oxford University Press, 2013) P.7

<sup>12</sup> Benedict, Anderson. “Introduction” in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. (London: Verso, 1983) p. 12

<sup>13</sup> Gary Keegan. Skype conversation with author. 14<sup>th</sup> February 2017

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

accuracy of Walter Benjamin's thesis that art is unique to its time, and the resulting significance it holds as subject to its position in history.<sup>15</sup>

W.B. Yeats and other cultural nationalists "mourned, (...) what was being lost" and "believed in a sense of place"<sup>16</sup>. Now, current political figures do the same, with a rejuvenated faith in the importance of enduring nationalisms. Neil Fligstein argues that "growth of the EU's institutions and competencies has led some citizens to view that growth as a threat to national identity and autonomy"<sup>17</sup>; this has been made evident recently with the U.K's decision to leave the EU, in the form of 'Brexit'. The suggestion that the concepts encountered in the show are still prevalent is reinforced by the image of a young woman wearing, throughout the show, a mask with the face of an old man. A visual representation of the mantra 'an old head on young shoulders' served to remind the audience that 'older struggles' remain very much relevant today. Issues such as racism, fascism and xenophobia have not gone away.

Where Yeats's form of nationalism was inward looking, seeing himself and his elitist brethren as suitable revolutionaries, *The Circus Animals' Desertion* looks to a current form that stems from a very outward fear, a fear of 'the other' which is commonly seen today in the form of refugees. The play itself used abstract,

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<sup>15</sup> Walter Benjamin. "The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction" *Illuminations*. Trans. Harry Zohn. Ed. Hannah Arendt. (New York: Schocken, 1968) pp. 217-52, p. 220

<sup>16</sup> Declan Kiberd "After Ireland" *The Irish Times*. August 29<sup>th</sup> 2009, accessed 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017. <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/after-ireland-1.728344>

<sup>17</sup> Neil Fligstein et al. "European integration, Nationalism and European identity". *Institute for Research on Labour and Employment. UC Berkeley*. September 2011.p. 4 Accessed 8<sup>th</sup> February 2017 p.108 <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1468-5965.2011.02230.x/pdf>

visual methods to represent this feared group, namely through the imagery of cats, whereby certain members of the cast wore giant cat heads. Keegan cites cats as suitably representative of the Middle East and uses the example of Egypt, “where they are worshipped as Gods”<sup>18</sup>. They are also figures of oppression: in W.B Yeats’s, *A Vision*, he claims they “belong to the oppressed races.”<sup>19</sup> A more obvious pointer toward the Middle East occurred when the appearance of a cat-headed actor on stage, coincided with an audio recording of a monologue in Farsi, the most widely spoken language of Iran. The English translation of this speech was projected behind the cat, for the audience’s benefit. The message was simple, self-reflection: “from childhood, you are taught that you are superior ( . . . ) that you have a god given right to dominate ( . . . ) You, want to destroy us. ( . . . ) The endgame is our extermination ( . . . ) we are not the aggressor”<sup>20</sup> The language used, as well as the Farsi dialect, held immediate connotations for audience members of immigrants and refugees: the West’s treatment of them, the influence that this exerts on European foreign policy and the consequent Islamophobia present within Irish and other European countries today. The fact that cat *heads* were used in the play, as opposed to other limbs, relates once more to Yeats and his literature, specifically his play *The Green Helmet* in which the enemies of Cú Chulainn are called ‘The Cat headed men’.\*<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Gary Keegan. Skype conversation with author. 14<sup>th</sup> February 2017

<sup>19</sup> W.B. Yeats. “A Vision: The revised 1937 edition,” *The collected works of W.B. Yeats*. Ed. Catherine E. Paul, Margaret Mills Harper. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1937) p. 311

<sup>20</sup> Broken Talkers. *The Circus Animals Desertion*. Live Performance. (Dublin Theatre Festival: Samuel Beckett Theatre, Dublin. Oct. 5<sup>th</sup> 2016)

\*Broken talkers’ creative decision to use images of animals throughout the play was further supported by their research into *Mein Kampf*, in which Hitler referred to the interbreeding of races, in terms of animals: “the stork with the stork, the field mouse with the field mouse”<sup>21</sup>, supporting the notion ‘one nation, one people’.

<sup>21</sup> Adolf Hitler. *Mein Kampf*, cited by Gary Keegan. Skype Conversation with author. 14<sup>th</sup> February 2017

Ulrich Beck makes a useful analysis, whereby ‘the other’ comes to be ‘the unknown’ and their “unintended consequences come to be a dominant force in history and society”<sup>22</sup>. He further suggests that risks in ‘late modernity’ (read as our post-modern world) are generally invisible and are often based on “causal interpretations” in which institutions such as “the mass media and the scientific and legal professions in charge of defining risks become key social and political positions”<sup>23</sup>. In Ireland, this can be seen, according to Ronit Lentin, through the media and the government who progressively discredit immigrants, producing “common sense racisms”.<sup>24</sup> He uses the example of the 2004 citizenship referendum in which the right to Irish citizenship by birth on the island, was repealed. The referendum was approved, entitling people to citizenship by birth, only if one of their parents was also Irish. According to Lentin, this constructed the non-national mother as “threatening the purity of nation”.<sup>25</sup>

Brokentalkers, successfully visualised and articulated the ‘invisible fears’ that grow in strength within Ireland and Western societies today.

Following the cat’s speech in Farsi, the violence of the show increased in tempo, and the piece took a more outward focus with the attention switched to the audience. A man dressed entirely in red and wearing a balaclava addressed the audience directly, breaking the fourth wall and the illusion of safety that it

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<sup>22</sup> Ulrich Beck. *Risk Society: Towards a new modernity*. Trans. Mark Ritter (London: Sage Publications, 1992) p.22

<sup>23</sup> Ibid .p.23

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.p. 2

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 2

carried. The audience was asked to repeat the lines: “Human kind is degenerating” “The modern world is degenerating”<sup>26</sup>. When queried about the relevance of these chosen lines, Keegan referred to political and, in particular, fascist rallies, in which crowds of people find themselves caught up in movements bigger than themselves. Rather than visualising, the show, this time, opted for inclusion, which articulated and made true the hypnotic effect of political propaganda and the subsequent *exclusion* that it causes. The success of this theatrical tool also worked in part due to the social constructions inherent in the theatrical, and therefore public, event. Audience members often forget their own autonomy and ability to react; this passivity worked in favour of the piece as the audience blithely repeated lines, so reminiscent of eugenics and elitism. Broken Talkers had turned the audience members, unconsciously, into political *not* passive bodies.

The piece ended by revealing to the audience the meta-theatricality of the performance: The actors were stripped of their headpieces, revealing the person and the individual under them. This method of meta-theatre faced the audience with a realisation that the ‘fiction’ of the play was in fact reality dressed-up. In the final scene, members of the cast disappeared inside the body that had been present in the first act. The audience was left to wonder what this body represented; was it W.B. Yeats? The body of Christ? Or was it a metaphor for the state body that this time around, manages to incorporate true heterogeneity of its members? Through abstract and keenly visual methods, this performance asked

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<sup>26</sup> Broken Talkers. *The Circus Animals Desertion*. Live Performance. (Dublin Theatre Festival: Samuel Beckett Theatre, Dublin. Oct. 5<sup>th</sup> 2016)

for dialogue to take place off stage, rather than on. It asked for a renegotiation of the popular discourses offered through the media and in doing so supported Beck's call for a "reflexive modernization" in which citizens actively inform themselves, "where criticism, self-criticism, irony and humanity play a crucial role".<sup>27</sup>

I believe that the possible 'success' of *The Circus Animals' Desertion* in 'bridging' a cultural gap lies in their initial step of making an audience aware of a gap that needs to be bridged. By nodding toward an Ireland of the past, it looked at what needs to change for the future. As Miriam Haughton suggests, "the pastiche of such characteristics in contemporary practice is often employed as a direct motive by theatre makers to question their dominance and function"<sup>28</sup>. Where issues of representation could have potentially caused problems, these were avoided through masks which provoked and questioned the dominant narratives and crises around identity. Visual traits and markers, usually used to "fix" individuals into cultural spaces, were removed. The masked bodies remained, in the words of Peggy Phelan, 'unmarked'<sup>29</sup> and free to reside in any cultural space.

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<sup>27</sup> Ulrich Beck. "Risk Society Revisited: Theory, Politics and Research Programmes" in *The Sociology of Risk and Gambling Reader* ed. James F. Cosgrave (New York: Routledge, 2006) p. 80 Accessed: 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2016 [https://books.google.ie/books?hl=en&lr=&id=o3-LDOMu5eUC&oi=fnd&pg=PT73&dq=becks+risk+society&ots=9sZVudXY7U&sig=TYQ3-O1PCGpCCLWolw4TcgPxIBE&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.ie/books?hl=en&lr=&id=o3-LDOMu5eUC&oi=fnd&pg=PT73&dq=becks+risk+society&ots=9sZVudXY7U&sig=TYQ3-O1PCGpCCLWolw4TcgPxIBE&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false)

<sup>28</sup> Miriam Haughton. "Flirting with the postmodern: moments of change in contemporary Irish theatre, performance and culture" *Irish studies review*. Vol. 22. Issue 3 (August 2013) p. 381 available at:

<sup>29</sup> Peggy Phelan. "Broken Symmetries: memory, sight, love" in *The Feminism and visual culture reader*. Ed. Amelia Jones. (New York: Psychology Press, 2003) pp. 105-115

### 3.1.2. Guerrilla theatre in *Guerrilla*

The Spanish theatre troupe 'El Conde de Torrefiel' brought their production of *Guerrilla* to The Dublin Theatre Festival in 2016. Due to its international status at the festival, it offers useful comparisons to Ulrich Beck and his stance on globalization, making its relevance within this research clear. Beck writes, "the growing insight that we live in an interconnected world that is getting out of control, creates the novelty of the risk society"<sup>1</sup>. He argues that as risks know no boundaries, the instruments of control likewise lose their legitimacy and "liability"<sup>2</sup>. The progress that brought with it modernization and globalization also brought with it risk and 'unknowingness'. The status of the 'other' and the global in a discussion based on cultural gaps, make it imperative that an example from outside of the Irish national border was included. Ulrich Beck's comments on the now globalized nature of risk is also reflected in *Guerrilla's* themes of violence and warfare.

The production began with the company first creating short and experimental thirty minute sequences, whereby pieces of text were projected behind participants carrying out actions in unison. The final *Guerrilla* project is the result of three of these sequences selected as "the most dramaturgically consistent/coherent"<sup>3</sup>. The final selections were: a conference, a tai chi class and an electronic rave. Its name indicates its style as that of *Guerrilla Theatre* which, according to Richard Schechner, is "sociologically or politically motivated"<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Ulrich Beck "An Interview with Ulrich Beck on fear and risk society" Interview by Joshua Yates. *The Hedgehog review*. November 2003.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Pablo Gisbert. Email interview with creator of *Guerrilla*. 24<sup>th</sup> January, 2017

<sup>4</sup> Richard Schechner. "From Ritual to Theatre and Back: The structure/process of the Efficacy-Entertainment Dyad" Schechner, Richard. "From Ritual to Theatre and Back: The

This style of theatre attempts to appeal to “group consciousness”<sup>5</sup> as opposed to more traditional theatrical modes, preoccupied with the individual, and preferring to use “psychodramatic techniques”<sup>6</sup>. Schechner's thoughts on theatre and its 'efficacy' are useful when applied to this performance: he states that, no matter how socially concerned *Guerrilla* or ‘political theatre’ intend to be; that they are, above all, examples of “aesthetic theatre” and not “social drama”<sup>7</sup>. For this reason, they can never be truly authentic. ‘Efficacy’ is the ability to produce an intended result and, to Schechner, this differs from ‘entertainment’, yet he concedes that the two can “form a binary system, a continuum”<sup>8</sup>. He contends that a performance can achieve ‘efficacy’ by paying “attention (...) to the procedures of making theatre”<sup>9</sup>. This can *ritualize* performance by “finding in the theatre itself, authenticating acts”<sup>10</sup>.

I believe that one of the ‘authenticating acts’ in *Guerrilla* lies in the company’s decision to incorporate volunteers into their shows, and by extension, non-actors. The show has toured to six cities: Brussels, Gronigen, Graz, Athens, Zurich and Dublin. In each city it uses the same text, yet remains specific to each place by incorporating some of their participants’ stories, focusing particularly on those with “past tales relating to a military conflict”<sup>11</sup>. Each conflict differs depending

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Structure/Process of the Efficacy-Entertainment Dyad." *Educational Theatre Journal* 26, no. 4 (1974): 455-81. doi:10.2307/3206608. P. 466

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. P. 466

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. P. 466

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.* p. 464

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.* 467

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid* 468

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.* 468

<sup>11</sup> Pablo Gisbert. Email interview with creator of *Guerilla*. 24<sup>th</sup> January, 2017

on the location of the performance\*. This combination of the personal with the political is seen by Schechner as an innovation within avant-garde art.<sup>12</sup>

The theme of violence is universal and so is the personal human emotion and grief experienced in its wake; it “extends far beyond religion, countries and cultures”<sup>13</sup>. *Guerrilla* managed to explore the intercultural aspect of their text and the violence it described by staging it in different socio-cultural contexts<sup>14</sup> but allowing the script and the content to remain largely the same. Despite its immediacy, *Guerrilla* is set in the future, the year 2019. It is a time when, according to the surtitles projected above the action, Russia and China are united allies against the Arab states, the U.S. and Europe. The text describes an atmosphere of terror within Europe: "Given the climate of constant terror, the generalised economic unrest, and the never-ending instability, by 2023, practically all European democracies have moved to the far right"<sup>15</sup>. The language of the text is reminiscent of Beck's theory of 'Risk Society'. A creator behind the performance, Pablo Gisbert, supports this analysis, stating that "yes (...) fear has become globalized"<sup>16</sup>.

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\* The Spanish civil War, The World Wars, The Irish War of Independence, The Yugoslav War etc. have all been included, depending on the location/city.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Schechner “The five avant-gardes or...or none?” in *The Twentieth century performance reader*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Ed. M Huxley and N. Witts. (London: Routledge, 2002) p. 346

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Rustom Bharucha. “Introduction” in *Theatre and the World: Performance and the Politics of Culture*. (London: Routledge, 1993) P. 5

<sup>15</sup> El Conde de Torrefiel. *Guerrilla* (Dublin Theatre Festival: Project Arts Centre, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2016)

<sup>16</sup> Pablo Gisbert. Email Interview with creator of *Guerrilla*. 24<sup>th</sup> January 2017

Beck's stance on the power of the media and political discourses defining risk is also pertinent when applied to this performance: he states that "ultimately it is cultural perception and definition that constitutes risk. 'Risk' and the public definition of risk are one and the same"<sup>17</sup>. This is suggested in the surtitles above the audience with a quote from a fictionalized sociologist, Johann E Schwarzschild which reads: "For years the idea that we are at war has been repeated, insisted on and aired, both in casual conversations and in the media. (...) the idea of war has finally been drummed into the collective unconscious."<sup>18</sup> The projected text proceeds to inform the audience that this quote was posted on Facebook and "got 702 shares"<sup>19</sup>. This seemingly banal piece of information, in fact, further enhances the currency of this piece of theatre, grounding it in the contemporary period of political 'slacktivism'\* that takes place as a result of social media. The off-hand nature of this line serves as a reminder of the alienation and disenchantment present in a mediatised society, ironically shown on another screen. The important difference, however, remains in the fact that this is a piece of theatre, and therefore it maintains a quality of liveness and immediacy that differs radically from the saturation afforded by the mass media. Particular to *Guerrilla* is the fact that the 'live' performance includes an element of mediatization, the projection screen, which becomes "constitutive of the live

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<sup>17</sup> Ulrich Beck. "Risk Society Revisited: Theory, Politics and Research Programmes" in *The Sociology of Risk and Gambling Reader* ed. James F. Cosgrave, 61-81, New York: Routledge, 2006. p. 63

<sup>18</sup> El Conde de Torreíel. *Guerrilla* (Dublin Theatre Festival: Project Arts Centre, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2016)

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

\*'Slacktivism' refers to the phenomenon of online activism prevalent at the moment in which an illusion of activism may be maintained through online presence but no real change or engagement is actually exerted.

event itself”<sup>20</sup>. It appears that *Guerrilla* uses and manipulates the very thing that it attempts to critique; possibly in response to their 21<sup>st</sup> century audience who, according to Patrice Pavis, have demands and tastes for theatre that are influenced by television<sup>21</sup> with “reactions at live performances (...) so programmed as to seem canned”<sup>22</sup>. Nonetheless, there remain moments for subversion and surprise which *Guerrilla* uses advantageously: the text is deliberately “polemic”,<sup>23</sup> and during ‘the Tai Chi scene’, the text describes the instructor’s conversation with her friend, ‘Marcus’ the night before. In this conversation, Marcus describes the working class: he says that they are “disgusting”, “miserable” and “perverse” and should return from “being citizens to slaves once again”<sup>24</sup>. Gisbert sees the artist’s role as one that can be “incorrect” at times, with a script “seeking to iron out concepts and attack them”<sup>25</sup>. The controversial language contrasts with the calm and serene movements taking place on stage for the Tai Chi class. The audience, even one ‘so programmed’ to certain reactions, is made unsure, through deliberate alienation techniques, how it is supposed to behave. The result is similar to Brecht’s *Verfremdungseffekt* or “alienation effect”<sup>26</sup>, which intends to

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<sup>20</sup> Philip Auslander. “Live Performance in a mediatized culture” in *Liveness: Performance in a mediatized culture*. (London: Routledge, 1999) p. 25

<sup>21</sup> Patrice Pavis as cited by Philip Auslander in *Liveness: Performance in a mediatized culture*. (London: Routledge, 1999) p. 25

<sup>22</sup> Ethan Mordden as cited by Philip Auslander in *Liveness: Performance in a mediatized culture*. (London: Routledge, 1999) p. 25

<sup>23</sup> Pablo Gisbert. Email Interview with creator of *Guerrilla*. 24<sup>th</sup> January 2017

<sup>24</sup> El Conde de Torrefiel. *Guerrilla* (Dublin Theatre Festival: Project Arts Centre, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2016)

<sup>25</sup> Pablo Gisbert. Email Interview with creator of *Guerrilla*. 24<sup>th</sup> January 2017

<sup>26</sup> Bertold Brecht “A short organum for the theatre” in *Brecht on Theatre: 1947-1948*. Ed. John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1966) p.192

make the audience “transform the field itself”<sup>27</sup>. After all, as Schechner states, “transformation is at the heart of theatre”<sup>28</sup>.

The intended effect of *Guerrilla* seemed to be a universalising one, attempting to make the audience realise that despite cultural differences there remain constants within humanity. A question posed in Scene 1, ‘the conference scene’, remains significant: “I wonder what people in the year 4000 will think when they see Obama asking for world peace in the name of God (...) attacks in the name of Allah (...) will they think we still live in a dark and superstitious era filled with holy wars?”<sup>29</sup> The reply to this question is also supplied in the text “the bigger themes of humanity aren’t born and don’t die. Only we are born and die and in each lifetime we inevitably have to rethink the same eternal subjects”.<sup>30</sup> *Guerrilla* does not attempt to create answers, instead, through imagining a world in the future, it asks the audience to deliberate how this future can be prevented. *Guerrilla* seems to postulate what it enacts: “when the art world starts taking the piss, there is going to be a bloodbath”.<sup>31</sup> The question is, how it can be stopped?

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p.190

<sup>28</sup> Richard Schechner. “From Ritual to Theatre and Back: The structure/process of the Efficacy-Entertainment Dyad” Schechner, Richard. "From Ritual to Theatre and Back: The Structure/Process of the Efficacy-Entertainment Dyad." *Educational Theatre Journal* 26, no. 4 (1974): 455-81. doi:10.2307/3206608. P. 458

<sup>29</sup> El Conde de Torrefiel. *Guerrilla* (Dublin Theatre Festival: Project Arts Centre, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2016

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

### 3.1.3. A not so 'silent' *Silent*

Pat Kinevane's production, *Silent*, produced by Fishamble Theatre Company and held most recently at The Peacock stage in Dublin, is fundamentally an issue based drama. It covers social problems such as homelessness, mental health and homophobia through the eyes of the fictional character 'Tino McGoldrig'; a homeless man in Dublin, originally from Cobh in county Cork. The show is solely performed by Kinevane, who aims to "work against elitism in theatre"<sup>1</sup>. With this in mind, the audience are not allowed to forget their own importance, the theatre, after all, "is an event which relies on the physical presence of an audience to confirm its cultural status"<sup>2</sup>. Kinevane consistently breaks the fourth wall; asking first for the names of two audience members in the front row and from this point on, calls upon them throughout the performance for reassurance: are they still there? Are they listening? A reminder of "how fully bound we are to even the most forgotten, the most silent in our world"<sup>3</sup>. A duty of care as an audience *and* a society.

Touching on personal issues with an aim "always to stir compassion"<sup>4</sup>, Kinevane at one point asks the audience outright for comments and experiences regarding

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<sup>1</sup> Joan Fitzpatrick Dean "Pat Kinevane's Forgotten and Silent: Universalizing the Abject" in *Irish theatre in Transition. From the Late nineteenth to the early twenty-first century*" ed. Donald E. Morse. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) p. 206

<sup>2</sup> Susan Bennett. "Culture and the idea of the theatrical event" in Susan Bennett. *Theatre Audiences: A theory of production and reception*. (London: Routledge, 1997) p. 86

<sup>3</sup> Joan Fitzpatrick Dean "Pat Kinevane's Forgotten and Silent: Universalizing the Abject" in *Irish theatre in Transition. From the Late nineteenth to the early twenty-first century*" ed. Donald E. Morse. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) p. 215

<sup>4</sup> Pat Kinevane. Email interview with author. February 13<sup>th</sup> 2017

mental health, thus encouraging conversation on issues often silenced. On its tours, it has been shown to audiences made up of people who are homeless or rehoused as well as vital services who work specifically with the homeless crisis<sup>5\*</sup>. This can be seen as Kinevane's attempt to "cultivate non-traditional theatre audiences"<sup>6</sup> which differs radically to Yeats's form of theatre; made with a specific, educated audience in mind.

Particularly interesting for analysis in this show is its portrayals of queerness: In Kinevane's tale, McGoldrig's brother, "Pearse, the faggot"<sup>7</sup> grew up in 1970's Cobh, eventually committing suicide in 1987 by jumping in front of "the quarter past five train from Cork to Cobh"<sup>8</sup>. Taking the gay identity as a sub culture in its own right, the choice to have it enacted in a theatre, takes full circle when one considers that, in the late seventeenth century "the theatres were the meeting places of sodomites"<sup>9</sup>. Placing homosexuality centre 'stage' in a performance once held in a Church\*, a symbol of conservatism and hegemonic power, further helps to frame the gay identity as successfully bridging a gap with an Ireland which outlawed homosexuality until 1993<sup>10</sup>. Kinevane's choice to play multiple characters, including: homeless 'Tino', 'faggot McGoldrig' and his mother, by

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

\*(Charities, Mental Health Professionals, Councillors, Nurses, Front Line rough sleeper teams and volunteers etc. )

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Pat Kinevane. *Silent*. Dublin Unitarian Church. 20<sup>th</sup> December 2016

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Rictor Norton "The Birth of the Subculture" in *Subcultures I* . ed. Ken Gelder (Oxon: Routledge, 2007) p. 41

\*On the 20<sup>th</sup> December 2016, *Silent* was performed in Dublin's Unitarian Church, St. Stephen's Green.

<sup>10</sup> Brian Singleton "Quare fellas" in *Masculinities and the contemporary Irish stage* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) p. 96

playing in drag, suggests the latent “theatricality of all gender identity”<sup>11</sup> and, by extension, sexuality, as it parodies the idea of ‘masculinity’ tied to heterosexual ‘maleness’.

The bridging of cultures within *Silent* is not only done through its content, but also through style: blending Japanese Kabuki theatre with Irish style storytelling allows, according to Kinevane, issues that are often stigmatised “to maintain their dignity at all times”<sup>12</sup> owing to Kabuki’s grace and stylization. Unlike Yeats, who also turned to the East for inspiration by using ‘Noh’ theatre, I see Kinevane’s endeavour as less problematic owing to a complete hybridization of use, which Bennet suggests can “offer a hope for some elaboration of exchange”<sup>13</sup>. By using effects from a culture often seen as ‘Other’, it draws attention to western forms of othering, thus preventing cultural hegemony, as both East and West exist on a platform of intersection and bridging between different cultures and subcultures. Importantly, Kinevane also references his ‘borrowing’ of theatrical techniques<sup>14</sup>, thus allowing the audience to see, and to potentially take issue with, the representation. The arguable success in overcoming the issue may also be by

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<sup>11</sup> Judith Halberstam “Drag Kings. Masculinity and Performance” in *Subcultures IV* ed. Ken Gelder (Oxon: Routledge, 2007) p. 120

<sup>12</sup> Pat Kinevane. YouTube Interview. 4<sup>th</sup> November 2011. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jw59sKK8MPU>

<sup>13</sup> Susan Bennett “Intercultural exchange” in *Theatre Audiences: A theory of production and reception*. (London: Routledge, 1997) p. 198

<sup>14</sup> Breda Shannon “Silent and Forgotten” Irish Theatre Magazine. 18<sup>th</sup> February 2011. Available at: <http://itmarchive.ie/web/Reviews/Current/Silent---Forgotten.aspx.html>

virtue of *Silent*'s position in "the postmodern thought value mode"<sup>15</sup> which holds an awareness for the "significance of respecting difference and otherness"<sup>16</sup>.

I find *Silent*, with its focus on 'sub-cultures'<sup>17</sup> infinitely related to Beck's 'sub-politics' whereby "agents outside the political or corporatist system are allowed to appear on the stage of social design"<sup>18</sup>. *Silent* takes a satiric look at the 'duty bound' mainstream institutions ("Hello and welcome to the Mental Health hotline. If you are obsessive compulsive, press 1 repeatedly")<sup>19</sup> and as such suggests that change must come from alternative sources. Nonetheless, Kinevane doubts as to how soon this will happen, Tino laments: "I'd love to be a small little baby and maybe somebody would give a fucking shit".

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<sup>15</sup> Haughton. Miriam. "Flirting with the postmodern: moments of change in contemporary Irish theatre, performance and culture" *Irish Studies Review*. Vol. 22. Issue. 3 (August 2013) available at: <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=ae0d2f41-087b-40ca-bc00-b237ad150dae%40sessionmgr105&vid=0&hid=120> accessed on: 15<sup>th</sup> October 2016 p. 381

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Sub cultures are defined by Ken Gelder as "groups distinguished from normative or 'mainstream' values because of what they are, what they do and where they do it" They are "a sub division of a national culture".

In *Subcultures I and II* ed. Ken Gelder. (Oxon: Routledge, 2007) p.1 & 89 respectively

<sup>18</sup> Ulrich Beck et al. *Reflexive modernization: politics, tradition and aesthetics in the modern social order*. (New York: Stanford University Press, 1994) p. 22

<sup>19</sup> Pat Kinevane. *Silent*. Dublin Unitarian Church. 20<sup>th</sup> December 2016

## 4. Conclusion

A report carried out in 2014, which aimed to evaluate societal engagement with and attendance of the arts in Ireland, found that 78% of the population agreed with the statement, “Arts from different cultures give us an insight into the lives of people from different cultures”<sup>1</sup>. The same report found that 37% of the population agree with the statement, “The arts make a difference to my area”. Clearly, attendees of the arts, of which theatre is included,\* find its contribution important to their understandings of other cultures, lending possibilities to future bridging of cultural gaps. It remains vital, therefore, that performances remain conscious of their roles as meaning makers.

Jeffrey Alexander contends that, “Drama is fundamental to the search for meaning and solidarity in a post-ritual world”,<sup>2</sup> whereby theatre can effectively integrate “particular groups”<sup>3</sup> to achieve “whole collectivities”<sup>4</sup>. Based on its position as contingent to, rather than separate from society; theatre must attempt to replicate or make true, the ‘wholeness’ of the community it wishes to engage with. Rather than falling short, as Hans Lehmann believes, commenting that drama and society fail to unite in ‘the postdramatic form’<sup>5</sup>; I believe that

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<sup>1</sup> The Arts Council. “The Arts in Irish Life” October 2013-May 2014. Available at: <http://www.artscouncil.ie/Arts-in-Ireland/Strategic-development/The-Arts-in-Irish-Life/>  
\*29% of the population attended plays at some point in 2014

<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey Alexander available at: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0263276413506019?hwshib2=authn%3A1476175985%3A20161010%253Af977e030-63ad-4f3f-9445-e34140c51ef3%3A0%3A0%3A0%3AcEFVwXYpED31y4%2B2np1dww%3D%3D&>

<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey Alexander. “cultural pragmatics: social performance between ritual and strategy” *American Sociological Association* . Vol. 22, No. 4 (Dec., 2004), pp. 527-573. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3648932> p. 528

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Hans Lehmann as cited by Jeffrey Alexander in “The fate of the dramatic in modern society: social theory and the theatrical avant-garde” *Theatre, Culture & Society*. Vol. 3(1) (2014) P. 5

postmodern and avant-garde performances have taken this in their stride. Despite radical differences between the three contemporary performances in this study, I suggest two points of junction in their attempts to generate meaning accessible across cultures: all three used the human body as a site that moved beyond the physical to the conceptual, recognising it as a political and social entity in its own right; and all attempted to create a rupture within the traditionally understood notion of ‘audience’: *The Circus Animal’s Desertion* was a piece of dance theatre<sup>6</sup> which broke the fourth wall when the man in the balaclava asked for lines to be repeated by the audience; *Silent* employed *Kabuki* theatre to switch between characters and create a hybridisation to combine with Irish tropes. Kinevane asked his audience questions throughout the performance and conversed with chosen individuals; *Guerrilla* put silent bodies on stage, allowing their physicality and presence to create an understanding that their projected text alone could not convey. The company meshed with the community they performed in by inviting people that lived in the host city to take part in the piece and unconsciously change the make-up of the show each night.

Through methods of engagement with their audiences, these performances have all attempted to break from the theatrical artificiality and illusion present in realist drama, or indeed, Yeats’s more abstract and modernist theatre. Instead, they ask for a communicative and reflective audience, recognising its heterogeneity as composed of individuals from different cultures with correspondingly different ways of perceiving action on stage. This differs from modernism “which stands

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<sup>6</sup> “The Circus Animal’s Desertion” Dublin Theatre Festival, accessed 6<sup>th</sup> April 2017. [https://www.dublintheatrefestival.com/Online/The\\_Circus\\_Animals\\_Desertion](https://www.dublintheatrefestival.com/Online/The_Circus_Animals_Desertion)

for logic and (...) speaks with a unified voice to a unified audience”<sup>7</sup>. Perhaps this trait existed as one of Yeats’s flaws: the re-fusion he attempted to achieve was to serve his own advancement and to re-embed himself into a society which he looked on from a distance. His methods, therefore, could not paint a sociologically accurate picture; the audience was not made up of his own mirror image. Declan Gorman offers, that “art is defined by artists and their relationship to the public”<sup>8</sup>. The question of a performance’s efficacy cannot truly be resolved without the aid of audience surveys, questionnaires and studies; its attempts to include its audiences, can be however. All performances will undoubtedly harbour an element of bias and one way of limiting this bias is by ensuring that the message will be absorbed into a multi-cultural space, allowing for a varied and critical dialogue. An audience should exist *not* as a unified group but a diverse public, with no gauge ever truly able to accurately represent thoughts and feelings of a whole group. To achieve unity within its surroundings, art and theatre must remember the role of its audience within the ritual of exchange that it represents.

So what would Yeats have made of all this change? Just as he characterised the paradox of the “terrible beauty”<sup>9</sup> of the 1916 Rebellion, he would surely acknowledge both the reality of Beck’s Risk Society and the exciting possibilities

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<sup>7</sup> John Freeman. “No Boundaries here: Brecht, Lauwers and European Theatre after postmodernism” *New Theatre Quarterly*. Vo. 29. Issue 3. August 2013 (220-232) p. 221

<sup>8</sup> Declan Gorman. “Art matters: careering through the arts” *RTE* October 6<sup>th</sup> 2016. Accessed 24<sup>th</sup> October 2016. <http://www.rte.ie/culture/2016/1005/821650-art-matters-a-life-in-the-irish-theatre/>

<sup>9</sup> WB. Yeats. “Easter 1916” *The Poetry foundation*. September 25<sup>th</sup> 1916. Accessed. 17<sup>th</sup> April 2017. Available at: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/resources/learning/core-poems/detail/43289>

of risk *taking* in theatre today, which exists, like culture in a “constant state of construction and reconstruction.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Kenneth Gergen as cited by John Freeman. “No Boundaries here: Brecht, Lauwers and European Theatre after postmodernism” *New Theatre Quarterly*. Vo. 29. Issue 3. August 2013 (220-232)

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