

W. B. Yeats's *At the Hawk's Well* and the Easter Rising

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In W. B. Yeats's ritualistic play, *At the Hawk's Well*, an Irish legendary hero, Cuchulain, and an Old Man fail to take a drink from a holy well, which sporadically emits water, and is supposed to sanction the quality of immortality. Because of their failure, the play was once accused of being a defective play with the tragedy of the playwright's inability to properly imagine a ritual. Do Cuchulain and the old man simply make for an abject failure? Did Yeats unwittingly fail to creating his own aesthetic ritual on the stage? If not, then how can we interpretatively cope with the play that is seemingly full of failure? This paper is to frame these questions. In order to do so, we need investigate the play from the viewpoint of the concept of anticipatory suggestion. By "anticipatory suggestion", I mean a suggestive mapping of society and the nation to come, with which the Irish theatre has sometimes effectively and expectantly provided the audience. The play was not a prophesy, but, as we shall see, the playwright heavily charged the play with his fervent expectancy for an ideal mentality, which he expected the audience, as a constituent of the nation, to fulfill in their everyday life.

Whereas Yeats delivers his esoteric vision through *At the Hawk's Well*, especially through the idea of a holy well where the water of immortality sporadically comes, it is noteworthy that he adds unpredictability and the idea of failure to the play. In most rituals in any community, every detail of the rituals is known to attendants as well as celebrants. Nothing should be unknown, nor unattainable. The celebrants have their own full knowledge of the rituals and can carry them out endlessly with absolute precision. In *At the Hawk's Well*, however, neither Cuchulain nor the Old Man knows when the miraculous water will come. They cannot drink the water and, as a matter of course, cannot transcend their current lives. They cannot unite with the power of the well nor embody whatever the holy water may bring. The play is full of failures. Thus *At the Hawk's Well* was once criticised for not being a ritual because "the supernatural cannot be controlled, and it was assumed that Yeats created "the tragedy of his inability to imagine a ritual."¹ As far as the relationship between the well and Cuchulain or the Old Man is concerned, this conjecture is partly reasonable. Every detail of a ritual must be under control, which assures the endless repetition of the ritual, whereas the eruption of the holy well in the play is completely unpredictable. This argument, however, probably obscures the relationship

between the play and the audience in that, although the play deals with the supernatural as its chief constituent, the performance of the play is constantly under control and Cuchulain's and the Old Man's failure is ceaselessly secured, and presented to the audience as such. What has to be noticed is that Yeats was fascinated with the idea of failure. *At the Hawk's Well* is not a failure of ritual but a ritual of failure.

Yeats's fascination with the idea of failure was the product of long contemplation and his accumulated experience. It is expressed in his paradoxical idea of tragic ecstasy, such as in 'Anima Hominis', where Yeats argued that a poet finds and makes his mask in disappointment, a hero in defeat, and the desire that is satisfied is not a great desire. For him, masks are personas with which one can fit himself/herself for the role he/she chooses as his/hers. Heroes in Yeats's plays and their masks are inseparable because it is through their masks that the heroes can overcome themselves. Yeats considered that masks of heroes are a form created by passion to unite them to themselves, and that total unity comes from the masks. In the philosophy of Yeats, Unity of Being is supposed to be brought by failure, whether it is their personal disappointment or heroic defeat.

In the first chapter of *On the Boiler*, Yeats says that he had greater luck than any other English-speaking dramatist because he aimed at tragic ecstasy throughout his career as a dramatist and because he actually saw it superbly played on the stage. In his essay, "The Play, the Player, and the Scene" (published in the 1904 issue of *Samhain*), Yeats explained that the arts were at their greatest when they sought for a life passing into its own fullness and that the attainment of the fullness would be made possible through the perfection of tragedy, when the world itself would slip away in death. No wonder that Yeatsian heroes are often doomed to suffer failure in order to attain their fullness. They are role models in which we can find individuals confronting their own fate, grave danger, or crushing difficulties, individuals attaining subconscious gaiety and achieving a permanent transformation.

For Yeats, the link between the idea of heroes and failure was heightened by the death of J. M. Synge in 1909 and the first performance of Synge's last play *Deirdre of the Sorrows* in 1910. Yeats admitted that the performance acted out the tragic ecstasy which was "the best that art, perhaps that life, can give."² He remarked that Deirdre

on the stage was a creature of a noble mind, and that the audience touched, felt, and saw the embodiment of the sublime. Here Yeats underscores the esoteric effects of tragic joy upon the audience. For him, tragic joy in the play was what could carry the audience beyond time to where passion could become ultimate wisdom.

Yeats's plays, as D. E. S. Maxwell points out, assert the quality of the tragic.³ Yeats celebrates the spirit who confronts failure and loss through his plays, such as *The Death of Cuchulain* and *Deirdre*, both of which end with the hero's death at the hands of unworthy opponents, and *The Dreaming of the Bones*, which ends with the heroic lovers still locked in their doom. The heroes in his plays, just as Yeats put it, "no longer need [...] the submission of others." (EI 62). What makes the protagonists in his plays truly heroic is their pursuit of self-fullness through their tragic joy, which is heightened primarily through their failure. Confronting failure and attaining tragic joy, the heroes in Yeats's plays "rise above the ordinary nature of man." (EI 73)

Although Yeats had never seen any professional production of Japanese Noh plays in his life, he adapted the Noh style for his writing dramas under a direct influence of Ezra Pound's fascination with Japanese Noh dramas translated by Ernest Fenollosa.⁴ Yeats was also acute enough to grasp a critical essence of them, esoteric intimacy between the theatre and the audience. R. F. Foster argues that the intimacy in the Japanese Noh plays was what W. B. Yeats "had already established at the centre of his ideal drama."⁵ Indeed, creation of close relation between a play and the audience, and psychological unification between a stage and an auditorium was almost Yeats's obsession since one of his earliest plays, *Cathleen ní Houlihan*. Yet, the impact of the Noh on Yeats consists not only in its revitalization of his old ideal but also in a new phase which it brought, as we shall see, in his dramaturgy, especially in his elaboration of stage effects to transfer his ideal to the audience's heart.

One of the contemporaries of W. B. Yeats, Paul Claudel, whose play *The Annunciation* taught Yeats that one human mind flows into another human mind,⁶ had once said "Play, it's where something happens; Noh, it's where someone appears."⁷ Claudel apparently emphasizes the structure of the Noh stage and its theatrical effect, where a short bridge connects an antechamber and its adjacent dressing room with the main stage, and the bridge deliberately gives the audience deep expectations that someone is coming towards them. The bridge is a device to welcome guests from the otherworld or the past. Once the cloth curtain at the end of the bridge is rolled up by a bamboo pole, the audience can see the characters (wandering priest, men of the shadowland and so on) suddenly appear

on the bridge. The audience sees their anonymous ancestors face to face and confronts an ancient philosophy of life and actions, which are handed down from generation to generation and thus flow into the human minds of the following generations.

Half adapting the cloth curtain of the Japanese Noh stage, Yeats made drastic changes in *At the Hawks Well*. Instead of fixing it at any spot on the stage and rolling it up with a bamboo pole, the musician brings it to the stage in his hands. In the beginning of this drama, the First Musician goes to the centre of the stage and stands with "the folded cloth hanging from between his hands".⁸ As the two other musicians unfold the cloth on which the audience sees a gold pattern of a hawk, the musicians "go backward a little so that the stretched cloth and the wall make a triangle with the First Musician at the apex supporting the centre of the cloth." (CP 136) The action of the Second and the Third Musician who unfold and fold the cloth not only visualizes the triangular relationship of the Guardian of the Well, the Old Man, and the Young Man, but also suggests the up-and-down movement of the curtain in the Noh dramas foretelling that ancestral spirits will supernaturally appear in front of the audience soon. Although this invention (a holy utensil for starting the Yeatsian ritual) was derided by Sean O'Casey as too fanciful to make the people's theatre possible in untheatrical space,⁹ Yeats managed to free himself from the Noh style and the restrictions of the conventional Noh theatre, and turned into his long-cherished touring theatre, which could wander, as Yeats put it, "from village to village in some country of our dreams" (EI 221), and make possible wherever the play was performed an intimate confrontation between the audience and ancient Irish heroes with ancient abiding values.

Highlighting this sense of theatrical freedom, Yeats completely abolished the bridge of the Noh plays. In his stage directions of *At the Hawk's Well*, he says "An Old Man enters through the audience" (CP 138) and "Young Man [who has entered through the audience...]" (CP 139). Both the Old Man and Cuchulain appear among the audience as if they were a part of it, chosen from the audience which is thus tempted into an unreal world. Yeats's production gives a feeling that the same thing could happen to any audience at any time in the theatre. Yeats's Noh drama seems to have established an intimacy between the play and the audience, the stage and the auditorium, and the audience and the playwright quite tactfully.

In *At the Hawk's Well*, Yeats not only illustrated aptly the triumph of failure but also tried to convey it effectively to the minds of the audience. In order to invite the audience into an esoteric realm and shift his personal vision directly

into its mind, Yeats charges his words with enchanting power. In the beginning of the play when the musicians unfold the cloth, the Second and the Third Musician stand at the two base angles of the triangle and chant the verse towards the audience and consequently towards the First Musician, the apex of the triangle. The verse says:

I call to the eye of the mind
A well long choked up and dry
And boughs long stripped by the wind [...] (CP 136)

These opening lines of the play enable us to get a glimpse of Yeats' expectation of the awakening of the audience' mind and its serious involvement in his theatrical imagination. Here the audience is supposed to listen to the two different voices chant the verse written in the first person singular "I". This introduction can give the audience the impression that different voices share the same mind; the impression that multiple voices share one mind may be heightened by "a square blue cloth" (CP 137) on the stage, which represents a well. The blue cloth is the centripetal force for all the characters in the drama, and it absorbs the attention of the audience as well. All the minds in the same space and time converge upon the blue cloth, which can serve as a device to create intimacy and tension between the characters in the drama and the audience. This square cloth can be read as a drastically condensed form of, and therefore metaphorical reference to, a square Noh stage, where a communal solidarity of deep emotions appears.

Just after the Guardian crouches beside the square blue cloth, the musicians chant a magical verse:

First Musician [singing].
The boughs of the hazel shake,
The sun goes down in the west.

Second Musician [singing].
The heart would be always awake,
The heart would turn to its rest. (CP 137)

The quivering boughs of the hazel works as an inducement to sleep, just like in *The Wandering of Oisín*, where a hazel branch shakes and all fall into one hundred years of sleep, and the sinking sun exteriorizes sleep, which makes a contrast with an awakening heart. Here these two musicians share one poem, one mind, and one idea of a suspension of consciousness. The First Musician conveys the idea in the description of the landscape. The Second Musician reacts to the verse chanted by the First Musician, and renders it into a description of the inner world. This is another invitation into an esoteric realm of

mind. Yeats tries to lead the audience into a poetic trance between sleep and wakefulness, encourages the audience to share one mind in a mesmerizingly nonlogical way, and to undertake a journey together from the external world to the inner world, in which Yeats's idea of the triumph of failure is revealed.

Moreover in the closing lines of the play, Yeats actively anticipates the transformation of the Irish society through his play, where he orients the eyes of the audience's awakened mind back towards their everyday life. After the Guardian of the Well and the Young Man go out, the Musicians chant the last verse towards the audience, unfolding the black cloth and hiding the Old Man. The Musicians say "Come to me, human faces" and "Among the desolate places" in the first stanza, "Among indolent meadows" in the third stanza, "Where a hand on the bell/Can call the milch cows/To the comfortable door of his house" in the fourth stanza, and then "married and stays/By an old hearth, and he/On naught has set store/But children and dogs on the floor" in the last stanza (CP 144-45). By the playwright, the mind's eye is adroitly shifted from a battle field of Cuchulain to more and more domestic scenes, in other words, from the spiritual quest within the play to the daily life of the audience. Thus Yeats expected a vision to be carried forward from the theatre to the audience's life.

Yeats's idea of glorious failure reached its culmination in April 1916 when *At the Hawk's Well* was performed in front of the British crown heads,¹⁰ in the very same month of the Easter Rising, where the republican rebels were ruthlessly crushed, yet they carried out their triumph of failure in front of the British soldiers. The play ends with a distraction from the quest for the waters of the well. Cuchulain crosses the boundary of an ordinary man not by gaining the holy water of immortality but by failing to drink it. In *At the Hawk's Well*, Yeats illustrates how defeat and failure can be a transcendental triumph on a long-range basis and how individuals, confronting their fate, can achieve paradoxically their own fullness, like a tragic failure of the Irish rising for freedom. This paradoxical concept of fullness in failure was what Yeats conveyed to the audience through the movement of the mind's eye in the play, which is conjured at the beginning, and is shifted, at the end of the play, from a battle field of a tragic hero to more domestic scenes that the audience encounters in their everyday life.

What should be noted here is that the movement of the mind's eye in *At the Hawk's Well* is the reverse of that in the first stanza of Yeats's famous poem 'Easter 1916'. In 'Easter 1916', the poet witnesses determined rebels calmly and nonchalantly "coming [...] from counter or desk among grey [...] houses"¹¹ and rising from their casual

everyday life to a military maneuver, going into their battlefields, which was, as Declan Kiberd argues, a street theatre celebrating itself in metaphors of drama written by Yeats.¹² In the last sequence of *At the Hawk's Well*, the audience is expected to follow the reverse process, namely, bring the idea of the triumph of failure, high self-esteem in enormous hardship and serene dignity in overwhelming difficulty, from the theatre to their everyday life, from the battlefield of Cuchulain to their home. Here is Yeatsian combination of "the very spirit of a race for ever defeated and for ever insurgent against defeat" and a "normal Irish household" that Stephen Gwynn, a poet and politician, shrewdly detected at the first performance of *Cathleen ní Houlihan* at the Abbey Theatre.¹³ With the final verse of *At the Hawk's Well*, the audience is urged to go back to their real world with what they witness within the theatre. It is clear that Yeats hoped the people in the auditorium would bring his anticipatory vision back to their life, and he used his esoteric spell of his theatre to penetrate deep into Irish national consciousness. Only nine days before he privately printed his 'Easter 1916', on the 25th of September, 1916, Yeats published *Certain Noble Plays of Japan* from his sister Elizabeth's handpress publishing company, The Cuala Press on the 16th of September, 1916. The publisher's imprint proudly specified the publication was "in the year of the Sinn Fein Rising". In the introduction that he wrote on the very month of the rising, he explained his idea of intimacy in the Noh plays, and then he added a brief explanation of his own Noh play, *At the Hawk's Well*, saying, "for some weeks now I have been elaborating my play in London [...] it pleases me to think that I am working for my own country. Perhaps some day a play in the form I am adapting [...] may excite once more [...] under [...] ancient memories." (*EI*, p. 236) When he heard about the rising, he must have felt detached from the main stream of Irish history without any information on that available beforehand. Here in this introduction, Yeats subtly tuned *At the Hawk's Well* as if he were trying to put himself back at the centre of the formation of the Irish history. The significance of *At the Hawk's Well* in the year of 1916 seems to reside in Yeats's way of presentation of his long-cherished anticipatory suggestion, the idea of the triumph of failure, and his ambitious attempt to reconstruct the intimate communal solidarity of deep emotions, whose embodiment he had already seen at the Abbey Theatre through his own productions of *Cathleen ní Houlihan*.

Many years before writing *At the Hawk's Well*, Yeats had enjoyed a profound intimacy between his play and his audience in the early stage of his career as a dramatist. Inclined to create a direct contact between his play and the people, he projected his idea of intimacy upon the stage

structure for his very first play *The Countess Cathleen*. Yeats tried to shrink the distance between the players and the audience by materially reducing the height of the platform. But his attempt was premature. After the actual performance of the play, George Moore, who joined Yeats's new theatre movement but preferred more the traditional proscenium arch, denounced Yeats's invention because of "the low platform insufficiently separated from the audience".¹⁴ Yet even after Yeats shifted the play from what Joseph Holloway called "a pretty little miniature stage"¹⁵ to a full-sized stage in the Abbey Theatre, his attempt to gain intimacy with his people was not fully successful. He did not succeed until he wrote *Cathleen ní Houlihan* and was regarded as a national playwright or even as an administrator of a "sacrament" for republican activists.¹⁶ In this context, we may regard Yeats's investigation on the Japanese Noh plays as his attempt to regain that initial intimacy he once had with the people, and his *At the Hawk's Well* served well for his purpose.

The philosophy of anticipatory suggestions of art and literature seems to hold true for Irish dramas. The most persuasive example of it is probably W. B. Yeats's and Lady Gregory's play in 1902, *Cathleen ní Houlihan*. In the play, Yeats and Gregory brought into sharp relief what was missing in Ireland, a national identity, and made it clear that the moribund identity of Ireland should be revived in the near future. Stephen Gwynn, one of the audience at the Abbey in 1902, argued how the Yeats's and Gregory's aesthetic construct could have given an enormous impetus to conceptualization of nationalistic movements among the audience. As a novelist and poet, Gwynn detected that the innovativeness of the Yeats's and Gregory's literary experiment consisted in its integration of a "normal Irish household" into the symbolism of "the Shan van Vocht."¹⁷ Here an esoteric revelation of the revived Irishness as a rejuvenated old queen descends upon ordinary hearts and minds. Thus a conceptual zone, where immediate contributions to restoration of the Irish national dignity are possible, is secured for any individual of the general public. What amazed Gwynn most was the fact that the play not only experimentally depicted a revolution but also demonstrated the potential of aesthetic constructs for intervening into the reality through its anticipatory mapping of a condition of society. His thrill he felt when he observed how "the very spirit of a race for ever defeated and for ever insurgent against defeat" was embodied on the stage and how profoundly it stirred the audience, Gwynn, as a man of real politics, conjectured that the driving force of the literary enterprise could be too unmanageable and intractable to stay within the playhouse, and he wondered if "such plays should be produced unless one was prepared for people to go out to shoot and be

shot.”¹⁸ Yeats retraced the potential of the anticipatory suggestion in the play later in his ‘Man and the Echo’, and wondered, “Did that play of mine send out/Certain men the English shot?” (VP 632) Indeed, the play worked as a scenario for a future to be played out for political activists, such as P. S. O’Hegarty, or Countess Markievicz, who joined the Easter Rising in 1916.¹⁹ “The conditions for theorizing a revolution were”, says Declan Kiberd, “no different from those for starting one.”²⁰ To produce the conditions for visualization of a future is indeed the first step in the process of starting it. In retrospect, *Cathleen ní Houlihan*’s suggestive mapping of society and the nation was harmoniously endorsed by the following event, and its detection of what was yet to come provided an enormous impetus to what did eventually come.

It was Ernst Bloch that underscored, in his utopian attitude, an anticipatory function of art and literature. He believed that cultural development of a society, above all, imagination and creative experimentation of art and literature, can transform the material base of the society and move it toward an improved status. He denounced the pessimism over the likelihood of social betterment, and elaborated his philosophy of revolutionary utopianism, where he believed that, as Jack Zipes tersely recapitulated, as long as aesthetic constructs of art and literature bring to light “what is missing and might still come” in the society, they can “provide the impetus for individual and collective change.”²¹ Bloch cherished Joyce’s *Ulysses* simply because Bloch, who presumed a special type of our consciousness formed by our covert impulse of hope for betterment (namely, the not-yet-conscious as a psychic manifestation of that which has not-yet-become in our society) detected in *Ulysses* aesthetic day-fantasies which are anticipatorily conscious of what the society lacks and of what we need as such.²² He also acknowledged that the stage is not a simple illusion but “it can also be an anticipation of what is to come.”²³ No wonder he, through his career as a philosopher of aesthetic utopianism, repeatedly quoted from an Irish playwright, Oscar Wilde, (“A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not even worth glancing at”²⁴) who is well known for his revolutionary utopianism, such as in ‘The Soul of Man under Socialism’, where Wilde maintains that, attacking the English socioeconomical system, “the full development of personality” of human beings and “the full development of Life [sic] to its highest mode of perfection” are yet to come.²⁵ Wilde detected hindrance to the human soul in his society and he, through the negation of what currently was false, pointed out what should be in time to come, in which humanity would achieve its own fulfillment. Moreover Wilde believed that humanity would, just as an accomplished writer and his/her ardent reader, enjoy itself

in “making beautiful things, or reading beautiful things.”²⁶ In this regard, Wilde’s belief in literature and art as criteria for the quality of the future has affinity to Bloch’s utopian attitude.

We often witness contemporary theatre productions in Ireland coming out to offer timely comments and criticisms on particular domestic and international affairs. Furthermore, just as Yeats’s plays did in the first two decades in the last century, theatre productions have the potential to provide the audience with anticipatory suggestions on society and the nation in a manner that endorses the validity of Bloch’s utopian philosophy or Wilde’s designation of artists as revolutionary utopianists. Today’s theatre world in Ireland often shows its keen sense of engagement with diverse questions, which need prompt and intelligent solutions. When we take into consideration the certain lapse of time that theatre companies have inevitably to employ on every phase of their productions, Irish theatre sometimes displays remarkably quick response to a changing social situation. This is exemplified by Patrick Mason’s production of Frank McGuinness’s *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme* at the Abbey Theatre in 1994, where a successful preview of the production in 1994 was delivered on the very day of a Loyalist’s announcement of a ceasefire, and, by so doing, the play under treatment by the director and the playwright marked a new aspect of the Anglo-Irish peace process.²⁷ Here the 1994 production endorsed a vision an audience at the play’s premiere in 1985 must have had, which, as Hiroko Mikami cogently argues, considered the play to “have anticipated a new era of reconciliation and understanding.”²⁸

The look-ahead potential of theatre of a given nation is not, of course, exhausted in that nation’s revolution of any period of history. Although all plays do not necessarily serve as forms of/for anticipatory imagination, theatre and its narratives can remain a cultural medium of fresh impetus for further future, instead of being a frame for spiritual stagnation, after one vision (that of national freedom) is incarnated. As Bloch succinctly put it, “art retains its anticipatory function even after the revolution.”²⁹ Anthony Roche believes that contemporary Irish theatre should fulfill its potential for imagining and prefiguring the future just as it did in the pre-independence period, and that it should be “the site in which old models can be broken up and reshaped” because “the life narratives offered by Church and State [...] have become increasingly threadbare and inadequate.”³⁰

The concept of the anticipatory function of the Irish theatre was embedded in key texts of the Irish theatre even after the revolution, especially in Yeats’s *At the Hawk’s Well*. The play’s anticipatory suggestion as an art

form has been already argued by the critics. For example, Katharine Worth argued that Yeats produced a new form of a drama, uniting "the resources of the theatre-scene, colour, music, dance and movement" into "a synthesis of the arts" in order to approach fully the subtle depth of human minds. She remarked upon how deeply the playwright anticipated all the process of the theatrical revolutions to come in the future of European drama, from Peter Brook's cruel and ritual theatre to Tadeusz Kantor's experimental symbolism and to the intense physicality of Lindsay Kemp's and the Bond/Henze's theatres.³¹ Yet, the play's anticipatory suggestion in a social context has never been argued. Nevertheless, the Yeatsian Noh play's anticipation of what was yet to come was not limited to its innovation of a new aesthetic form, but was extended to the dynamic reflection of Yeats's quest into human minds upon the audience. In *At the Hawk's Well*, Yeats secured an intimate zone, where direct transference of his anticipatory suggestion into the audience could be possible. The first premiere of the play was received by the audience with admiration mingled with puzzlement, and, therefore, did not cause an instant sensation as *Cathleen ní Houlihan* did in 1902.³² Yet *At the Hawk's Well* was Yeats's elaborate attempt to reconstruct the close interaction between the play and the audience, the theatre and society, which the playwright had enjoyed by his *Cathleen ní Houlihan*.

In retrospect, *At the Hawk's Well* did not cause riotous reactions, unlike Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* and O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars*, but the play must have developed profound intimacy between the play and the audience, the stage and the society, and investigated the audiences' serious involvement in aesthetic artifacts and images constructed on the stage, in other words, the imagination of the theatre.

The anticipatory function of the theatre and its claim for audiences' commitments to theatrical imagination are a legacy from Yeatsian era to contemporary Irish theatre, such as in the McGuinness/Mason 1994 production of *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme*.³³ Serious attempts to imagine a new sort of the audience, society and the nation have been carried out by Irish theatre productions. They displayed the extent to which Irish theatre intervenes in social and cultural conditions that they believe need betterment and effective modification. When the Abbey Theatre sustained no damage from any bullet or cannonballs, which fiercely swished over the theatre between the Liffey and the General Post Office in the Easter Rising, Yeats's boast was that the national theatre was totally detached from the politics of the state. But Yeatsian plays never failed in deep engagement with the reality in Ireland whether the matter was national politics or cultural aspects of the country. That is the case

to all the theatre productions mentioned here. Those productions demonstrated, as producers of anticipatory suggestions on society and the nation to come, the potential of the theatre for conceptual formations of what was yet to come, and have probably taken to the audience's heart the danger of separating aesthetic constructs within playhouses from the reality surrounding the premises.

Notes

- ¹ A. J. Pinnington, "The Failure of Ritual", *Humanitas*. No. 32. Tokyo: The Waseda University Law Association, 1993, pp. 31-59.
- ² W. B. Yeats, *Essays and Introductions*. London: Macmillan, 1961, p. 239. Future references to this edition will be incorporated in the text as *EI*.
- ³ D. E. S. Maxwell, *A Critical History of Modern Irish Drama 1891-1980*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. 37.
- ⁴ R. F. Foster, *W. B. Yeats: A life II. The Arch-Poet*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 34.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 35.
- ⁶ W. B. Yeats, *Autobiographies, The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*. vol. 3. New York: Scribner, 1999, p. 254.
- ⁷ Paul Claudel, *Connaissance de l'Est Suivie De L'Oiseau noir dans le soleil levant*. Paris: Gallimard, 1974, p. 197. The translation is my own. The original text in French is as follows: "Le drama, c'est quelque chose qui arrive, le Nô, c'est quelqu'un qui arrive."
- ⁸ W. B. Yeats, *The Collected Plays of W. B. Yeats: New Edition with Five Additional Plays*, London: Macmillan, 1953, p. 136. Future references to this edition will be incorporated in the text as *CP*.
- ⁹ Sean O'Casey, *Autobiographies*. vol. 2. London: Macmillan, 1963, p. 233.
- ¹⁰ *At the Hawk's Well*, directed by Edmund Dulac under the supervision of W. B. Yeats, was first staged in the drawing-room of Lady Cunard's house in London on the 2nd of April, 1916. See Liam Miller, *The Noble Drama of W. B. Yeats*, Dublin: The Dolmen Press, 1977, p. 227.
- ¹¹ *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach, London: Macmillan, 1957, pp. 391-2. Future references to this edition will be incorporated in the text as *VP*.
- ¹² Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*. London: Vintage, 1996, pp. 203-4.
- ¹³ Stephen Gwynn, *Irish Literature and Drama in the English Language: A Short History*. London: Thomas Nelson & Sons LTD., 1936, pp. 158-60.
- ¹⁴ Augustine Martin, *W. B. Yeats*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1983, p. 35.
- ¹⁵ Liam Miller, *ibid.*, p. 40.
- ¹⁶ Quoted by Declan Kiberd. See Kiberd, p. 200.
- ¹⁷ Gwynn, pp. 159-60.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 158-9.
- ¹⁹ Kiberd, p. 200.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

- ²¹ Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*. Trans. Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg. Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1988, p. xxiii.
- ²² —, *The Principle of Hope*. Vol. 1. Trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1986, pp. 101-2.
- ²³ First quoted by Jack Zipes. See Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*, p. xxvi.
- ²⁴ Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*, p. 17. See also Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*. Vol. 3. Trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1986, p. 489.
- ²⁵ John Carey, ed. *The Faber Book of Utopias*. London: Faber and Faber, 1999, pp. 304-11.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 314.
- ²⁷ *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme*, directed by Patrick Mason and designed by Joe Vanek, delivered its preview on the 13th of October 1994 at the Abbey Theatre and opened on the 19th of the same month. For the director's own reminiscence about the process of the production, see "The Abbey Theatre: the first 100 years...." *Arts Lives*. RTE1. 20 Dec. 2004.
- ²⁸ Hiroko Mikami, *Frank McGuinness and His Theatre of Paradox*. Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe Limited, 2002, p. 13.
- ²⁹ Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*, p. xxvi.
- ³⁰ Anthony Roche, *Contemporary Irish Drama: from Beckett to McGuinness*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995, p. 1.
- ³¹ Katharine Worth, *The Irish Drama of Europe from Yeats to Beckett*. London: The Athlone Press, 1986, pp. 2-3.
- ³² R. F. Foster quoted a letter of Eddie Marsh in which Marsh expressed his excitement and perplexity at the premiere of *At the Hawk's Well* performed at Lady Cunard's house. See Foster, *W. B. Yeats: A life II. The Arch-Poet*, p. 41.
- ³³ *The Other Side* by Michelle Read affords another example (*The Other Side*, written by Michelle Read and directed by Tara Derrington, was first staged at the Project Art Centre from the 12th to the 30th of August in 2003). In the play, two women, confined separately into one side each of the divided stage, cannot see the other side of the stage, which represents a makeshift detention barrack in the midst of a coup d'état. Forced to be in a cell for security reasons, they are, therefore, not allowed to participate in or even evaluate the making of history just as the socially marginalized Mabel in Brian Friel's *Making History*, and they are simply put aside within a society. The point of this play is established in the fact that the auditorium as well as the stage is divided into two so that the audience, just like isolated and marginalized women on the stage, cannot see the other side of the detention barrack or, more significantly, the outside world. As Yeats's plays demanded the audience's positive involvement in theatre imagination, *The Other Side* urges the audience to involve themselves seriously in what is gradually unfolded on the stage, and to share the deep feeling of isolation and dislocation with the two women. Thus the play eventually induces the audience

to consider carefully a national loss caused by absence of women in the process of constant formation of the country, and to ponder what is yet to be overcome to avoid further loss.