Between the Queer and the Normative: Unorthodox Representations of Gender, Power and Desire in W. B. Yeats's and Gabriele D'Annunzio's Drama

by

Zsuzsanna Balázs

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Philosophiae Doctor

Supervised by Dr. Ian R. Walsh and Prof. Paolo Bartoloni

O'Donoghue Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance
School of English and Creative Arts
College of Arts, Social Sciences and Celtic Studies
National University of Ireland, Galway

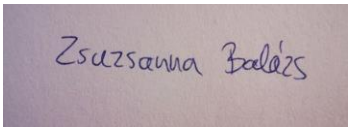
September 2021

Table of Contents

Table of Figures

Declaration

I, the Candidate, certify that the Thesis is all my own work and that I have not obtained a degree in this University or elsewhere on the basis of any of this work.

Signed: 

Date:___28/09/2021_____

Abstract

This doctoral thesis re-examines W. B. Yeats's and Gabriele D'Annunzio's drama through the lens of queer theory offering the novel contention that due to their involvement in queer and feminist subcultures, their plays offer "a rich archive of queer historical structures of feeling" (Love, *Feeling Backward* 24). Yeats's and D'Annunzio's dramatic imagination and ideas of gender and sexuality were considerably shaped by their queer/feminist networks: in Yeats's case mostly by Florence Farr, Eva Gore-Booth, Oscar Wilde, Edward Martyn and William Sharp, while in D'Annunzio's case Eleonora Duse, Sarah Bernhardt, Wilde, Sibilla Aleramo, Irma and Emma Gramatica, Marguerite Radclyffe Hall and Ida Rubinstein. This thesis demonstrates that these people's androgyny, feminist ideas, ambiguous sexuality and sexual tension made Yeats and D'Annunzio more alert to the vicissitudes of marginalised subjectivities in society and created a dramaturgical tension between the queer and the normative in the scripts. This tension reflects the contradictory gender and sexual politics of twentieth-century Italy and Ireland and at the same time it has important implications for understanding the contemporary moment which yet again witnesses the rise of authoritarian regimes. This thesis draws on works by contemporary queer theorists, mostly Jack Halberstam, Heather K. Love, Elizabeth Freeman, Leo Bersani, José Esteban Muñoz, Sara Ahmed and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick as well as works by French philosopher Didier Eribon and visual culture theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff. This research thus takes from Irish studies, Italian studies, queer theory, modernist, postcolonial, comparative as well as performance studies, combining and furthering various approaches and disciplines to open up new avenues of understanding Yeats's and D'Annunzio's drama today.

Acknowledgements

While there is not enough space to thank everyone who assisted me in bringing this thesis to completion, there are a few people to whom I owe an enormous debt of gratitude for their unfailing efforts and encouragement. First of all, I am indebted to my supervisors Dr. Ian R. Walsh and Prof. Paolo Bartoloni whose unceasing enthusiasm, support, attention to detail and knowledge have helped guide this project towards completion. They helped me navigate between the Irish and the Italian studies materials of the project, which often seemed like an impossible task. I thank the staff at the O'Donoghue Centre at NUI Galway for their encouragement, particularly Prof. Patrick Lonergan whose support of this research project at the very beginning inspired me to apply for the IRC Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship 2017. I am equally grateful to Dr. Charlotte McIvor, Dr. Catherine Morris and Dr. Miriam Haughton whose advice at the annual GRC meetings helped shape this project in considerable ways. I am very grateful to Dr. Adrian Paterson with whom I had long conversations about Yeats's queer networks throughout the four years and whose enthusiasm provided an enormous energy for this project. I also thank my external examiner Prof. Susan Cannon Harris and my internal examiner Prof. Patrick Lonergan for their deep engagement with my research, their invaluable suggestions and encouragement, which will help me further develop this project. Many thanks to Prof. Michal Molcho as well for chairing my Viva voce and for her enthusiasm for my project.

My colleagues at NUI Galway and my Yeatsian friends all around the world have my immense gratitude, especially Enea Bianchi, Inés Bigot, Pawan Kumar, Komal Agarwal, Iva Yates, Ashim Dutta, Maria Rita Drumond Viana and Gaby Fletcher: please know that your inspiring company and friendship have increased my passion for this project and filled my life with so many precious memories for which I cannot be grateful enough. I wish to give special mention to my dearest friend Enea, who never let me feel isolated during the lockdowns and kept me motivated through his thoughtful and caring audio messages which meant so much to me during this difficult period.

The life-changing 56th and 57th Yeats International Summer Schools in Sligo provided the primary inspiration for this project. Prof. Alexandra Poulain's and Dr. Ben Levitas's thought-provoking drama seminars made me realise that I wish to conduct a PhD on Yeats's drama in Ireland: their kind words, insightful ideas and encouragement helped me outline the basis for this research, reassess my relationship with Yeats's drama and venture into the area of queer studies. I must give special mention to Prof. Alexandra Poulain from whom I discovered the thrill of Yeats's drama and who encouraged me to shift away from a theoretical approach in the direction of more practical dramaturgical analyses. Her support at the very beginning of my academic career meant everything to me. I am thus deeply indebted to her research and inspiration, which echoes through this thesis. These summer schools have also enriched my life with precious friendships and life-changing encounters for which I cannot be grateful enough. Special thanks goes to John Kavanagh whose friendship, love for Yeats's drama and meticulous commentary on some of my essays helped shape this thesis and inspired me throughout. I am also grateful to all those wonderful Yeats scholars whom I met at unforgettable Yeats conferences in Kyoto, Paris and Barcelona, especially Prof. Margaret Mills Harper, Dr. Charles Ivan Armstrong, Dr. Nial Mann, Prof. Hugh Haughton, Prof. Matthew Campbell and Prof. Séan Golden. I also thank Dr. Lauren Arrington for her support and enthusiasm for my queer readings of Yeats. Special thanks to Dr. Barry Houlihan for his unceasing interest, kindness, expertise, and for drawing my attention to those performance materials in NUI Galway's digital archives which resonated with Irish queer performance and Yeats's drama in some way or another. Many thanks also to my Yeatsian friend Melinda Szűts for allowing me to use some photographs of her production of Yeats's *The Dreaming of the Bones* in this thesis.

Italian studies scholars have also inspired this research, especially Dr. Shirley Vinall, Prof. Ursula Fanning and Dr. Enza De Francisci, who provided encouragement for my feminist and queer readings of D'Annunzio and Pirandello and increased my interest in Italian theatre. I am grateful to the archivists of the Fondazione Il Vittoriale degli Italiani, Alessandro

Tonacci and Roberta Valbusa, who enthusiastically sought and provided every material I needed for my research on D'Annunzio's plays while I was working in the D'Annunzio archive in September 2018 in Gardone Riviera. I also thank Fondazione Giorgio Cini and Istituto per il Teatro e il Melodramma for generously providing photographs for this thesis from the Eleonora Duse Archive.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to all those wonderful scholars who raised and deepened my interest in literature, the arts, and languages through my education, especially Dr. Ildikó Limpár, Dr. Kinga Földváry, Dr. Gabriella Reuss, Dr. Márta Pellérdi, Dr. Zsolt Almási and Dr. Tamás Karáth from Pázmány Péter Catholic University.

A resounding thank you goes to my first Irish friend Michael Geaney, who has been like a father to me since we first met in Budapest in 2013 and who further fuelled my love for Yeats and Irish literature, showing me all the Yeats-related sites in Dublin. I also thank Andrea Balázs, Nóra Lengyel and Henriett Túrós for being such wonderful and supportive friends.

Finally, I would be remiss in not thanking my dear mother who has never ceased to believe in me and who, I know, was fully with me more than anyone else through the ups and downs of this journey, supporting every decision I made and providing emotional support both for the difficulties of my academic path and my coming-out journey. *Köszönöm, Anya, hogy mindig támogatsz, meghallgatsz, gondolsz rám, szurkolsz nekem és biztató szavaiddal segítesz újra és újra felállni egy-egy nehéz időszak során, életem bármely területén.*

INTRODUCTION

"Insult is more than a word that describes. It is not satisfied with simply telling me what I am. … The person is letting me know that he has something on me, has power over me. First and foremost the power to hurt me, to mark my consciousness with that hurt, inscribing shame in the deepest levels of my mind. This wounded, shamed consciousness becomes a formative part of my personality" (Eribon, *Insult and the Making of the Gay Self* 16).

"It is the performative claim of a right to look where none technically exists that puts a countervisuality into play" (Mirzoeff, "The Right to Look" 478).

1. Between the Queer and the Normative

I begin this chapter with the words of two scholars whose ideas have considerably informed the way I approach the tension between the queer and the normative in W. B. Yeats's and Gabriele D'Annunzio's plays in this thesis. Both the performative power of insult coming from normative authorities who dictate what can be seen and the performance of countervisuality by oppressed individuals who claim the right for visibility are central to my critical reading of play texts and to the cultural, historical contexts that I discuss in Chapter 1. Didier Eribon sees insult as a social structure of inferiorisation aimed to consolidate asymmetrical power relations. He reveals, however, that insult can work both as discourse and counterdiscourse (145 and 313). The insulted, in fact, often reverse the strategies of insult to transform its meaning and create a counterdiscourse for themselves, which is one of the main themes that connects Yeats's and D'Annunzio's drama. Nicholas Mirzoeff's idea of countervisuality resonates closely with Eribon's discussion. Mirzoeff contends that visuality[1]

[1] Mirzoeff explains that visuality is an early nineteenth-century word which means primarily "the visualization of history" (*The Right to Look* 2). The authority of visuality thus dictates and controls what can be seen and acknowledged in society and history. It becomes a kind of synonym for normativity which equally defines who and what is worthy of recognition. Visuality is like normative authority: it classifies people, segregates whom it

is always associated with masculinity, patriarchy, and the state: it opposes desire and aims to segregate, label and categorise individuals. Countervisuality, that is the autonomy claimed by the right to look, is always opposed by the authority of visuality, but Mirzoeff warns that "the right to look came first, and we should not forget it" ("The Right to Look" 474). This countervisuality resists segregation, evades categorisation, and it has been depicted as feminine, queer, lesbian, feminist, and trans ("The Right to Look" 475). The stigmatised characters in Yeats's and D'Annunzio's plays all perform countervisuality to claim their right to existence. Moreover, this claim was embodied in performance by queer and feminist actors who indeed were fighting for their rights and visibility at the time, such as Florence Farr, Eleonora Duse and Ida Rubinstein, which I explore in Chapter 1. By portraying stigmatised characters as protagonists embodied by these historically marginalised queer subjects, Yeats's and D'Annunzio's drama allowed the presence of the other on the stage and made "a claim for a different form of visualizing by those who would oppose autocratic authority" (*The Right to Look* 29).

This is a qualitative research which applies a combination of comparative, queer, transnational and dramaturgical approaches to investigate unorthodox representations of power, gender and desire in Yeats's and D'Annunzio's drama. This project is therefore at the intersection between queer and feminist theory, theatre and performance studies and postcolonial theory, exploring the complex relationship between sexual politics and representations of sexuality in Irish and Italian theatre. What interests me primarily is to explore in what ways Yeats's and D'Annunzio's drama can challenge imperialist, nationalist and normative paradigms of gender and sexuality even today. Through the lens of queer theory, this thesis re-explores Yeats's and D'Annunzio's plays to demonstrate the ability of their drama to speak to subjectivities who "cannot inhabit the social skin, which is shaped by some bodies, and not others" (Ahmed, *Cultural Politics* 148). I

---

visualises, counters desire and refuses all emancipatory efforts (3-10). Countervisuality (or the right to look), however, "claims autonomy from this authority, refuses to be segregated, and spontaneously invents new forms" (4).

contend that due to Yeats's and D'Annunzio's increasing involvement in queer modernist subcultures and their experiences of difference from normative sexuality, their plays are able to offer "a rich archive of queer historical structures of feeling" (Love, *Feeling Backward* 24). The thesis thus looks at queer mainly as "a force of disruption that simultaneously draws on historical genealogies of queer and freshly imagines 'queer' in the contemporary moment" (Croft 2).

By exploring how Yeats's and D'Annunzio's drama reflected on authoritarian institutions through the prism of non-normative sexuality and criticism of patriarchy, I wish to fill in the gaps in queering canonical modernist writers to see how they embraced a wide range of sexual and gender possibilities. Yeats's and D'Annunzio's works are often believed to have contributed to forging a unified Irish/Italian national identity—and in D'Annunzio's case, even fascist ideology (Woodhouse, *Gabriele D'Annunzio* 1). However, scholarship over the last twenty years has begun to demonstrate that the Irish and Italian canon is much less conservative than it has been assumed, which I discuss in Chapter 1. As Gary P. Cestaro has stressed with regard to the Italian canon, it is necessary to "challenge the heteronormative bias of so much Italian criticism to date and to affirm the longevity and prominence of queer desire in Italian culture" ("Introduction: Queer Italia" 10). D'Annunzio's works have very rarely been queered in any way so far, as his figure is too deeply embedded in fascist mythology, even though that mythology was forged deliberately by Mussolini[2] (Guerri, *Disobbedisco* 4). With regard to the Irish context, Susan Cannon Harris has pointed out that the new millennium has seen a shift away from nationalism and specialisation in favour of comparative and transnational projects (see *Irish Drama* 4-5). This shift reveals the global significance of Irish drama, yet queer readings of canonical modernist playwrights still constitute a challenging area of discussion. Unlike in D'Annunzio's case, there is now a substantial body of work exploring Irish drama from gender studies,

[2] Whenever I refer to Italian secondary and primary sources which have not been published in English, I quote them in my own translation unless otherwise stated. When I cite directly from these texts, I provide the original text in footnote unless it is a paraphrase.

transnational or comparative perspectives.[3] This thesis combines all these approaches, focusing on the queer potentials of the play texts through the works of contemporary queer theorists. It equally offers a comparative analysis of two modernists who would, I contend, deserve to be called queer modernists in that queer modernism "delineates the sexually transgressive and gender deviant energies that help fuel modernism's desire to thwart normative aesthetics, knowledges, geographies, and temporalities" (Kahan 348).

Despite the comparative aspect of this project, it is not my aim to deal with the similarities between the authors' lives or their influence on one another. What matters for the purposes of this thesis is that both playwrights were embedded in a feminist and queer cultural environment as a result of which their plays began to portray unorthodox sexualities and power relations, which went against the grains of their time's social and sexual politics. This research does not wish to excuse the authoritarian facets of their works, but the queer and anti-normative aspects should also be brought into discussion in order to do justice to their drama's critical engagement with their time's efforts to achieve sexual liberation and emancipation for women. I argue that it is exactly the ambiguous tension between the contradictory dramaturgical impulses of normativity/authoritarianism and anti-normative dissidence that creates spaces for queer readings today and opens up new avenues of understanding their plays. The ambiguity of meaning that characterises their drama bears dramaturgical as well as political significance, given that authoritarian normativity demonises ambiguity in every field of life (Mosse 153). As Patrick Lonergan has pointed out, prioritising ambiguity over precise meaning in drama can indeed offer new ways of talking about gender, sexuality and difference (*Irish Drama* 147). Yeats and D'Annunzio both flirted with their audiences in ambiguous ways, which created several layers of meaning and defied the possibility of a

[3] Thanks to studies by Patrick R. Mullen, Charlotte McIvor, Miriam Haughton, Patrick Lonergan, Anthony Roche, Alexandra Poulain, Ben Levitas, Susan Cannon Harris and Michael McAteer among many others.

single interpretation that homogenising political arenas expected from propaganda literature and art.

The tendency of Yeats's and D'Annunzio's drama to cross boundaries and represent marginalised subjectivities attests to their modernism which is often discussed as an art of excess and extremity. This extremist impulse in modernism is "a desire to cross boundaries, to set off from the center of culture toward its 'freakish circumference'" (Love, *Feeling Backward* 53). Even though this transgressive aspect of modernism is often understood as "an escape from the crumbling center of culture," Heather K. Love stresses that "it was also an era of new social possibilities for a range of marginal or dominated subjects" (54). It is important to acknowledge the difference between dominant and marginal modernisms, even though it is not easy or necessary to draw the boundary between the two. In fact, Clyde Taylor in "Salt Peanuts" argues that all modernism is a reaction to the experience of marginalisation, hence there is a strain of failure that runs through modernist works (Love 56). Love mentions James Joyce as part of dominant modernism, yet because of his Irishness and thus colonised status, he also belonged to marginal modernism (54).

Yeats and D'Annunzio were equally in a liminal position between traditional dominant modernism and the "freakish circumference of culture" (Love 57). They were part of dominant modernism as leading literary authorities of their time—late Victorians and prominent decadent aesthetes— yet they consistently used their theatre to give visibility for marginalised subjectivities. Moreover, both playwrights were subject to marginalisation and refusal despite the cultural and often political authority they enjoyed in their country. Yeats acted as a member of the Irish Senate between 1922 and 1928, thus he was at the centre of Irish life. However, he did not feel understood by his theatre audiences and he was marginalised in Catholic Ireland as an Anglo-Irish Protestant poet, who, as a result, often expressed the Protestant Ascendancy's anxiety of marginalisation in his drama (see Poulain, *Irish Drama* 61 and 226). Moreover, Yeats was equally marginalised in Britain because he was Irish. Even though D'Annunzio was

the most influential cultural and political figure in early twentieth-century Italy, he began to be marginalised and excluded from public affairs when Mussolini seized power in Italy in the early 1920s. Even before that, he chose to live in exile in France because of financial reasons and because he was dissatisfied with Italy's bourgeois theatrical tradition (Woodhouse, *Gabriele D'Annunzio* 250-83). Yeats's and D'Annunzio's plays are transgressive in that they mingle the modern with the "nonmodern," (Love 6) which is manifested in the tension between their concern with tradition and their rhetoric of decadence, decline and melancholia (6). As Love argues, "backwardness is a feature of even the most forward-looking modernist literature" (6), which illustrates how modernist authors grapple with tradition and norms.

Queer, feminist and anti-colonial undertones often overlap in the plays. Clare Croft has explained that queer performance is always in dialogue with feminist, anti-racist and anti-colonial art-making, and it must be deeply tied to feminism, as it is key to address sexism and homophobia together, since the latter one often arises from misogyny[4] (15). Moreover, Geraldine Moane has emphasised that like sexism, "homophobia involves extreme negative images of women" ("Living Visions" 88). In the case of Italy and Ireland, the colonial context further complicates the presence of the homoerotic because "[c]olonialism itself has a gendered power relation and, inevitably, casts the colonizing power as masculine and dominant and the colonized as feminine and passive" (Walshe, "Introduction: Sex, Nation, and Dissent" 5). As a result, "[t]he emergent post-colonial nation perceives the sexually different as destabilizing and enfeebling, and thus the lesbian and gay sensibility is edited out, silenced" (5).

Walshe has highlighted the Cultural Revolution and Oscar Wilde's trials as crucial milestones for the emergence of homoeroticism in Irish literature, since artists like Yeats sought freedom from colonial power in search of a renewed and independent self-image just like gays and lesbians living in

[4] See also Mimi Marinucci's monograph *Feminism is Queer: The Intimate Connection between Queer and Feminist Theory*. 2nd ed., London: Zed Books Ltd., 2010.

Irish society ("Oscar's Mirror" 149). Fintan Walsh contends that even though queer sociality is not specific to Irish culture, its various forms such as cross-dressing, gender-fuck and drag have become well-developed languages: "We might understand this pattern in light of Ireland's rich history of popular theatre, its rigid construction of gender types, or its skill in subversive mimicry, finely honed within the folds of a wider system of postcolonial resistance" ("Touching" 56). Thanks to the works of Sandra Ponzanesi, John Champagne, Gary P. Cestaro, Derek Duncan, Chiara Beccalossi, Gaia Giuliani[5] and many others, the homoeroticism of Italian literature is becoming more widely acknowledged, even though D'Annunzio has never been the focus of attention in this regard. This research thus makes a significant contribution to queer modernist studies, D'Annunzio and Yeats scholarship as well as theatre studies and responds to the increasing need in scholarship to queer canonical modernist writers. As Jack Halberstam has underscored in *Wild Things: The Disorder of Desire*, we need to rethink the modernist archive, including the works of Yeats and T. S. Eliot among many others, and find "new ways of reading canonical authors *against* the great traditions into which they have been placed" (11). This project aims to satisfy this need.

2. Why Yeats and D'Annunzio?: Arguments and Counter-Arguments

What led me to queer two straight male playwrights' drama was that I found it remarkable that even though, based on all evidence, Yeats and D'Annunzio were heterosexual, they explored the theme of queerness in complex and nuanced ways, showing sympathy towards marginalised voices sometimes more explicitly, but more often in code.[6] Since homoeroticism is frequently coded in their works, I became equally interested in the culturally accepted frameworks they had employed to make same-sex intimacies

[5] I engage with their research in Chapter 1.

[6] For more information about the use of coded subtexts and euphemisms to articulate sexually ambiguous content in the early twentieth century see Elisa Bizzotto's article "'Children of Pleasure': Oscar Wilde and Italian Decadence. In *The Reception of Oscar Wilde in Europe*, edited by Stefano Evangelista. New York: Continuum, 2010, p. 132 and Charlotte Ross's article "'La carezza incompiuta': Queer Aesthetics, Desire, and Censorship in Ticchioni's *Il suicidio di un esteta*." *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 111, no. 2, 2016, p. 404 as well as Emma Donoghue's "Noises from Woodsheds: Tales of Irish Lesbians, 1886-1989." In *Lesbian and Gay Visions of Ireland: Towards the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Íde O'Carroll and Eoin Collins. London: Cassell, 1995, p. 163.

appear more acceptable, including Roman/Greek mythology, the Bible, the supernatural, unexplained melancholia, familial bonds and friendships, such as comradeship, brotherhood, sisterhood, which I discuss in my chapters on Yeats and D'Annunzio. Moreover, exploring the queer aesthetics of two heterosexual male canonical playwrights makes the queer potential of modern Irish and Italian drama even more visible, as it demonstrates that heterosexual playwrights can also think queer provided they were embedded in progressive feminist and queer circles that made a life-long influence on their dramatic imagination.[7]

This thesis has benefitted from archival research in Il Vittoriale degli Italiani in Gardone Riviera, Italy, which holds the most important performance materials related to D'Annunzio's plays. This archival research deepened my understanding of the connection between political and gender performance in the life and works of D'Annunzio as well as the pervasive influence of his collaboration with Sarah Bernhardt, Eleonora Duse and Ida Rubinstein on his drama's anti-normative potential. Consultation of D'Annunzio's Private Library has revealed D'Annunzio's interest in Oscar Wilde, Yeats's early tragedies, Irish drama and contemporary studies of androgyny, especially Joséphin Péladan's *De l'Androgyne* (1910) which D'Annunzio copiously annotated in preparation for casting Ida Rubinstein as theatre history's first genderqueer Sebastian. Consulting the digitised Abbey, Gate and Druid archives at National University of Ireland Galway has also been beneficial for my research, as there have been some performances directed by Michael MacLiammoir[8], Raymond Yeates and Frank Convey that experimented with the queer potentials of Yeats's texts.[9]

[7] Calvin Thomas' edited volume *Straight with a Twist: Queer Theory and the Subject of Heterosexuality*. Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2000 explores the question whether straight writers can think queer, and the volume includes a chapter by Joseph O. Aimone which examines Yeats's figure of Crazy Jane as a transvestite homosexual.

[8] MacLiammoir's name is sometimes spelt as Micheál Mac Liammóir or Micheál MacLiammóir. However, I use "Michael MacLiammoir" following Irish scholar Eibhear Walshe's studies on Wilde and MacLiammoir referenced in this thesis.

[9] I provide more details about these performances in my introduction to my chapter on Yeats.

My aim is to bring Yeats's and D'Annunzio's drama closer to contemporary queer and feminist audiences, demonstrating that it reflects the experiences of stigmatised individuals and their fight against the repressive violence of normalcy. I wish to challenge the ways D'Annunzio and Yeats had been taught and perceived for decades in Italian and Irish education and sometimes even in scholarship. This includes the idea that D'Annunzio was merely a fascist ideologue, a racist colonial writer[10], a "notorious hyper-masculine womanizer" (Bizzotto 135) who wrote proto-fascist plays, promoted a virile form of masculinity (Ross, "La carezza incompiuta" 393) and a normative approach to women throughout his life.[11] Even Elizabeth Cullingford—who has argued for Yeats's anti-fascism, queerness and feminism—sees D'Annunzio as a poet who invented a "colourful fascist choreography" (146) during his conquest of Fiume, even though Fiume was in many ways also a highly libertarian and progressive project as I detail later in Chapter 1. Yet Cullingford equally notes that even though Yeats saw D'Annunzio as an epitome of stability and discipline in the 1920s, he was in fact a reckless and unpredictable individualist (146), thus, I would add, also a threat for the order and predictability fascists wanted to see.

Yeats is still often perceived as an anti-feminist[12] and elitist playwright who flirted with fascist ideas[13] and endorsed a eugenic approach to women's

[10] In *Vital Subjects*: *Race and Biopolitics in Italy, 1860-1920*. Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2016, Rhiannon Noel Welch presents D'Annunzio's novels and his Fiuman oratory as representative of post-Unification Italy's literary formulations of race, as those texts are preoccupied with genealogy, progeny and blood belonging (204).

[11] Bizzotto contends that D'Annunzio was always insistent on binary oppositions and shared a *machista* form of virility in line with fascist visions of masculinity (135). Moreover, Barbara Spackman has argued that D'Annunzio was preoccupied with maternity and women's procreative duties just like fascists (17).

[12] Representations of women in Yeats's works are often dismissed as patriarchal in that woman is objectified, dispersed or occluded (see Spivak 77). As to the male characters, while Yeats's male protagonists appear to conform to conventional notions of masculinity, Joseph Valente and Declan Kiberd have demonstrated that there is an inherent androgyny and sexual ambiguity in Yeats's hyper-masculine heroes such as Cuchulain (*Myth of Manliness* 175; *Irish Classics* 414).

[13] Conor Cruise O'Brien reads Yeats as an admirer of Mussolini and the Irish authoritarian politician Kevin O'Higgins who executed seventy-seven men ("Passion and Cunning" 30-1). He recollects that his own father mocked Yeats's fascism by calling him Missolonghi (30), and emphasises that Yeats wrote songs for the Irish fascist movement the Blueshirts (35). Yet Cullingford has pointed out that O'Brien distorted and exaggerated most of Yeats's remarks about fascism. She finds O'Brien's portrayal of Yeats as a self-interested, intermittent Irish nationalist and ardent early fascist highly reductive, given that Yeats's

procreative duties[14] (Howes, *Yeats's Nations* 171). He is sometimes seen as someone who shared a damaging kind of nationalism which promoted blood sacrifice,[15] and whose anxieties about nationalism did not lead him to scrutinise the border between the homosocial and the homosexual[16] (Howes, *Yeats's Nations* 72). In her keynote address at the "Yeats and Eros/Yeats and Paris" conference, Cullingford pointed out that despite frequent associations of Yeats's works with patriarchy, feminists can still read Yeats's works with pleasure ("Yeats and Me Too"). Moreover, Yeats's works are often discussed in terms of the search for the Unity of Being—a combination of national unity and the unity of the self—although I argue that what he created was rather a disunity of being and the idea of multiple, fluid identity. Margaret Mills Harper in her guest lecture at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi also explained that, in fact, Yeats rarely talked about the Unity of Being as something desirable or possible, on the contrary, he found much more attraction in the idea of a disunity of being ("Yeats's Modernist Dancers"). Yeats's interest in discipline, authoritarianism and fascism in a chaotic post-war world and post-partition Ireland are often mistaken for a support for violence and force. Cullingford, however, has offered convincing arguments proving that Yeats's admiration for order and unity excluded any attempt to create unity by force as he knew it would only result in tyranny (*Yeats, Ireland and Fascism* 150).

---

political experience was much more complex and contradictory (*Yeats, Ireland and Fascism* viii).

[14] Even though Howes does not argue for Yeats's fascism and acknowledges the feminist aspects of Yeats's life and works, she demonstrates that Yeats's representations of women can be highly contradictory. She contends that "[w]hile he approved of cultured women, he worried that they would undo the horn of plenty through poor marriage choices" (*Yeats's Nations* 172). Howes continues that like most eugenicists, Yeats was concerned with maternity and the management of women in the pursuit of healthy population, meaning he was afraid that women's poor sexual choices might cause degeneration (171), but he did not want women to be confined exclusively to domestic duties either (173).

[15] Richard Kearney and Seamus Deane have argued that Yeats espoused a particularly damaging nationalism. Kearney has given a very limited account of Yeats's work and has reduced him to a prophet of violence ("Myth and Terror" 133). In *Celtic Revivals*, Deane claims that Irish Revivalists and especially Yeats reproduced a colonialist belief and became colonialists (48).

[16] Given that "homosexual" and "homosexuality" have negative connotations being associated with medical discourses and homophobia, these are not my preferred terms in this thesis. However, scholarship employs them quite often and thus it is sometimes impossible to avoid it. Where possible, I use "gay" and "queer" instead.

Moreover, the poetic and symbolic quality of D'Annunzio's and Yeats's plays tends to create obscurity and becomes an alienating factor for many people, which Cullingford has called "elitist obscurantism" (*Yeats, Ireland and Fascism* 46). But once we realise that the meaning lies exactly in the impossibility of giving only one interpretation to their symbols and plays, their works become more accessible, less abstract and more topical, as in fact, Yeats's seemingly abstract symbols can be seen as embodiments of "all that is marginal in human life" (Bourke 28). As Matthew Campbell has discerned in a conference paper regarding Yeats's use of impenetrable nonsense, the fact that his symbols do not always make sense and that Yeats himself often did not fully understand their meaning, makes them more effective and accessible ("The Yeats family Comedy"). Building the thesis on the playwrights' contradictory political remarks would not offer new avenues of understanding their plays and would lead to further contradictions. Hence I believe the focus needs to be on how the scripts reflect their and our time's anxieties about normative formulations of gender and sexuality.[17] Jahan Ramazani has stressed in *The Hybrid Muse* that when thinking about Yeats's postcolonialism, for instance, one could mention several convincing arguments both for and against it based on what Yeats said or did, but this ambivalence is what makes his works so relevant for postcolonial and queer studies: "The multifarious Yeats is ripe for reconsideration yet again" (21).

Both in Ireland and Italy, there were other artists besides Yeats and D'Annunzio who were producing socially and sexually transgressive works, including queer women such as Lina Poletti, Sibilla Aleramo, Maria Volpi Nannipieri, Eva Gore-Booth, Florence Farr, Teresa Deevy or Kate O'Brien as well as other male playwrights including Edward Martyn, John Todhunter, George Moore, Luigi Pirandello[18], Pier Leone Ticchioni

[17] For a summary of the normative approaches to Yeats, see Jonathan Allison's essay "The Attack on Yeats." *South Atlantic Review*, vol. 55, no. 4, 1990, pp. 61-73.

[18] I have discussed the anti-authoritarian aspects of Pirandello's drama in my article "Ambiguous Supermen: Performance of Power in Some of Luigi Pirandello's and W. B. Yeats's Late Plays." *Pirandello Studies*, edited by Shirley Vinall, vol. 38, 2018, pp. 29-51. For a more general comparative analysis of Pirandello's and Yeats's use of the idea of the multiple self in their theatre see my earlier article "Il teatro dell'*io antitetico*: Lo

d'Amelio, Giacomo Puccini, Aldo Palazzeschi or Giovanni Comisso.[19] However, I decided to write this thesis on Yeats and D'Annunzio in particular, because the preoccupation of the thesis lends itself much more to these two figures than to any other transgressive artists in Ireland or Italy. Their case is striking, given that they were straight playwrights with a vast queer and feminist network which ended up shaping the form and the content of their plays. Alyson Campbell and Stephen Farrier have also underscored in *Queer Dramaturgies* that we need to pay attention to the environment and the culture too in which queer representation happen (15). Acting requires personal courage as it activates subjectivities that are repressed in society. D'Annunzio's and Yeats's queer collaborators and networks helped create feminist counterhistories and political as well as sexual unorthodoxies in the plays. Such collaborations prove that performance and acting are, in fact, ethical action and activism. Given that New Women were highly influential at the time, the fact that they embodied marginalised characters on the stage was a way of creating a discourse of legitimation and sympathy for such stigmatised lives and helped formulate criticism of repressive social and political institutions. Gay Gibson Cima has stressed that even though academic theatre discourse often holds that it is only the male playwright that can generate changes in style, it is often done by the actors (14). Yeats's and D'Annunzio's plays therefore mirror queer experiences today largely because their characters were informed and shaped by the experiences of queer historical subjects, such as Ida Rubinstein, Eleonora Duse, Sarah Bernhardt, Florence Farr, Roger Casement[20], Oscar Wilde, Edward Martyn, and William Sharp among many others.

---

sdoppiamento dell'*io* nel teatro di Luigi Pirandello e in quello di William Butler Yeats." *Verbum: Analecta Neolatina*, edited by György Domokos, vol. 16, no. 1-2. Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, pp. 116-129 and "The Dramaturgy of Embeddings: Übermarionettes in W. B. Yeats's and Luigi Pirandello's Meta-Theatres." *Australasian Journal for Irish Studies*, vol. 17, 2017, pp. 23-46.

[19] I refer to the works of these artists in Chapter 1.

[20] In *Wild Things: The Disorder of Desire* (2020), Jack Halberstam retells the story of Roger Casement with the help of Michael Taussig's ethnography of wildness and the ethos of bewilderment that emerges out of colonial contact. Halberstam calls Casement "a disruption within the histories of sexuality" (34) who articulated "a desire for the wild" (34). However, Halberstam warns that we have to see Casement both as an activist against

3. Methodology

In terms of methodology, my research engages primarily with Heather Love's monograph *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (2007). Love focuses on late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literary texts visibly marked by queer suffering, yet not always written from an explicit queer authorial perspective, including the works of Walter Pater, Willa Cather, Marguerite Radclyffe Hall and Sylvia Townsend Warner. Similar to the plays I cover, in these texts, the representation of same-sex desire is sometimes "achingly unspecific" (4) while other times "thunderously explicit" (4). Such texts, Love argues, can work to "register these authors' painful negotiation of the coming of modern homosexuality" (4) and give accounts of the corporeal and psychic costs of social exclusion through representations of melancholia, loss, shame, despair, regret, nostalgia and bitterness. More importantly, even though Love briefly acknowledges the historical contexts, she focuses on the queer moments in the texts instead of the lives and political affiliations of the authors, which indeed helps open up the texts and makes them more approachable. Love's book proves that literary texts can speak to and about queer subjectivities regardless of the authors' controversial political histories, self-image or sexuality. She demonstrates that it is primarily the text that has to offer spaces for queer readings and these spaces should not be overshadowed by too much focus on historical and biographical evidence, even though contexts are undoubtedly enriching for critical readings.

In this thesis, I do not build on authorial intentions to corroborate my arguments, but cultural, historical and sometimes biographical contexts significantly enrich my critical readings, as "a play is not written in a vacuum" (I. Walsh 21). Also, it is always interesting to imagine the context behind every work of art, especially when queer/feminist networks make straight male playwrights' works critical of patriarchy and normativity. It is of course not to suggest that the experience of heterosexual writers such as Yeats and D'Annunzio could be the same as the experience of, for instance,

---

British rule, an author of early human rights legislation and "as a colonial subject who saw Black and Brown bodies as erotic commodities" (44).

Oscar Wilde who was sent to prison for his sexual orientation—which is a significant difference that needs to be noted.

I realise that there can be points of contention between modernist studies and queer or theatre studies regarding the intention of the author. Given that modernist studies is a much older and traditional field of study, it tends to prefer the intentionalist approach based on detailed biographical evidence to support the analyses. D'Annunzio scholarship has thus far built exclusively on biographical and historical contexts, while Yeats studies has paid more attention to dramaturgical readings of Yeats's plays and the queer aspects of his works. Yet even in Yeats studies there can be resistance to scholarly approaches that go beyond the purely biographical or historical. Queer and theatre studies scholarship of the last two decades, however, tends to focus predominantly on the potentialities of scripts and performance materials, stressing the relevant cultural and historical contexts but without relying on the intention of the author. In queer theory, it is now considered widely acceptable to adopt a queer perspective on the work of writers who in their private lives were heterosexual. Examples of this non-intentionalist approach can be found in queer literary analyses written by Heather K. Love, Jack Halberstam and Sara Ahmed among many others, whose works have informed both my methodology and my critical readings. Since my thesis wishes to become a contribution to modernist as well as queer and theatre studies, I aspire to find some balance between the intentionalist and non-intentionalist approaches, but in this thesis, I always prioritise the potentials of the scripts rather than the authors' lives or intentions. My critical readings will demonstrate that applying a non-intentionalist approach offers more freedom to the texts and the readers, and it opens possibilities for experimentation with the various meanings that the scripts might offer regardless of the authors' lives or intentions.

This non-intentionalist method was encouraged by the dramaturgical approach which disregards authorial intentions but builds on cultural,

historical contexts[21] without reducing the works exclusively to those contexts. I draw on cultural and historical backgrounds to help investigate those spaces within the text which can allow for queer readings and which feature concepts that have been widely discussed by queer theorists. In fact, the queer approach to drama inevitably entails a dramaturgical approach, as the aim of both approaches is to reveal the multiple layers of interpretation within the scripts and their relevance for contemporary audiences. As Ian R. Walsh has explained,

> [t]o over-emphasise the cultural and historical conditions of a play runs the risk of reducing it to a single codified meaning, turning it into knowable object that functions as a museum piece, valuable only as a cultural document. A dramaturgical analysis of plays can counter such a reductive move, by examining the performance effects and potentialities of the play texts. (21)

Yeats's and D'Annunzio's plays have too long been observed and analysed as if they were merely such knowable objects and historical documents. I believe that the most fascinating aspect of their drama is that each of their plays resists one single interpretation and offers a plethora of different but equally valid political and literary meanings, and the queer is one of them. In this respect, my thesis resonates with Patrice Pavis's idea of *mise-en-scène* which, in the words of Walsh, "does not look for a singular correct interpretation of the text but allows for changing interpretations depending on the condition of reception and production of the text" (21).

In order to avoid pinning down the plays to specific historical contexts and to reveal their global potential to criticise homogenising, authoritarian institutions, I decided not to restrict my analysis to the period of Italian Fascism and the Irish Free State. As we shall see in Chapter 1, the rigid separation between gender roles, the scorn of ambiguity, moral prudery, the

[21] For the importance of context to dramaturgical readings see Tracy Davis' article "The Context Problem." *Theatre Survey*. vol. 45, no. 2, 2004, pp. 203-9.

expectation to sacrifice oneself for the nation, obsession with family and reproduction, cult of respectability, disgust for effeminate men and strong women defined Irish and Italian society through most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Moreover, I believe we can call fascism every institution, regime or system which aims to police behaviours and bodies, oppressing, excluding or punishing subversive voices. In light of this, fascism is not restricted to Italian Fascism but to every type of fascist political or religious power demonstration which can come from the state, the Church or other institutions that are ill at ease with spectacles of personal and sexual freedom. It also does not serve the purposes of this thesis to join the debate about the distinction between totalitarianism and authoritarianism or between Fascism and Nazism.

More importantly, I do not wish to join the discussion as to whether Yeats and D'Annunzio were fascist or anti-fascist, or whether their public expressions of interest in fascism and authoritarianism were heartfelt or just opportunistic. Joining this debate would run the risk of over-emphasising the historical and biographical contexts, which would eventually work against the main methodological objective of this thesis, that is to discover the rich queer potentialities of the scripts through dramaturgical readings with limited focus on contexts in the analyses. There is a voluminous literature on these playwrights' political identities including fascism and anti-fascism, which I quote both in the Literature Review section and Chapter 1 to provide the relevant historical background. Although I do not join the extensive scholarship and debate about fascism in the authors' lives and work, this study conveys an important message about fascism with regard to the scripts. I believe that the queer perspective that I employ in my analysis and the queer potentialities that lie in Yeats's and D'Annunzio's scripts can eventually work to combat fascist and totalitarian narratives and ideologies. More importantly, what made these scripts great and complex play texts was the ambiguity and contradictions of the authors' political identities and of the historical contexts including the contradictions of fascism which I elaborate in Chapter 1. It is also the ambiguity and contradiction that lie in the texts (the tension between the queer and the

normative) that eventually make the scripts great performance materials. What is more, as Croft has discerned, it is this contradiction, the friction between various elements in the scripts that produce the queer possibility (10), which eventually resists totalising narratives. My choice to apply a non-intentionalist approach can also be regarded as anti-fascist and anti-authoritarian in terms of methodology, as for fascist and authoritarian regimes, the author's intention is of primary importance when it comes to art.

It should also be noted that between 1922 and 1933, the word fascism had different implications and its connotation was as often positive as negative (Cullingford, *Yeats, Ireland and Fascism* 140). The word fascism is often used as a synonym for Nazism, and carries implications of brutal totalitarianism, genocidal racism and violence "which it never possessed in the twenties" (145), and this linguistic imprecision has been fatal to Yeats's reputation (145), and the same applies to D'Annunzio. Moreover, from the outside, fascist Italy did not look like a brutal dictatorship: instead, it was seen by European tourists as a country of relative sexual freedom where censorship was lax and where Church and monarchy could both survive besides fascism, and it had no anti-Semitic legislation until the 1930s. Hence Cullingford argues that what Yeats read about fascism in *The Irish Times* certainly did not include references to the violence of the squads (145).

In order to demonstrate that gender and sexual unorthodoxy permeate Yeats's and D'Annunzio's dramatic career and it is not simply restricted to one or two works, the plays chosen for discussion deliberately cover their early, middle and late periods alike. D'Annunzio wrote his last plays in the 1910s, but they were often staged in the 1920s in France and sometime in Italy, while Yeats continued playwriting in the 1920s and 1930s as well. I have selected five plays from each playwright. In my Yeats chapter, I discuss *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894), *Calvary* (1920), *The Cat and the Moon* (1926), *The King of the Great Clock Tower* (1935), and *A Full Moon in March* (1935), but I make brief references to other plays as well where it

contributes to the understanding of the selected plays. My chapter on Yeats also includes a short analysis of Edward Martyn's *The Heather Field* (1899), as it helps interpret Yeats's *The Land of Heart's Desire*. In my chapter on D'Annunzio, I re-examine *The Dead City* (1896), *Francesca da Rimini* (1901), *The Daughter of Iorio* (1904), *Fedra* (1909), and *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien*[22] (1911). I opted for these five plays by each playwright, as I have discovered striking affinities between them, especially between Yeats's *Calvary* and D'Annunzio's *Le Martyre*, between *A Full Moon in March* and *Le Martyre* and between *The Land of Heart's Desire* and *The Daughter of Iorio*. These ten plays resonate with each other on so many levels in terms of their progressive representation of women, difference, sexuality, gender and power that I hope my dramaturgical analyses of the scripts helps acknowledge the two playwrights' well-deserved place among queer modernists. In my chapter on Yeats, I discuss the plays largely in chronological order, while the sections in the D'Annunzio chapter follow a thematic arrangement. Even though production history is not my focus in this thesis, I make brief references to some productions and reviews to help elucidate the queer potential of the scripts. Yeats's and D'Annunzio's plays are rarely staged today and earlier performance materials are scarce, hence it would have been too large an undertaking to include detailed performance analyses in both chapters in a balanced way. However, I am keen to explore production histories further in the future.[23]

As regards the structure of the thesis, as part of this short introduction, I will provide an overview of the existing queer readings of Yeats's and D'Annunzio's drama in scholarship ranging from explicit discussions of *homoeros* to less implicit queer approaches, such as works on anti-authoritarianism, excess, strangeness and postcolonialism. In Chapter 1, I

[22] Where possible, I employ the plays' English titles, except for *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien* and *Fedra*, as English and Italian scholarship tend to refer to these plays using their original titles. As regards the names of the characters in the plays, I keep the Italian names.

[23] In the three main chapters that follow, I employ various photographs of artists and performances relevant to the thesis. Most of them are from NUI Galway's digital archives, Il Vittoriale degli Italiani and Fondazione Giorgio Cini with some exceptions. All efforts were made to ask permission to include visual materials in the thesis, but should any queries arise regarding the source of some photographs, do not hesitate to contact me.

build on queer approaches to Italian and Irish culture, history and literature to provide the context for my critical readings and to demonstrate that, in fact, Yeats's and D'Annunzio's drama is embedded in a long queer historical and cultural tradition. The first four sections in Chapter 1 focus on the queerness of the Italian artistic canon and culture; the homoerotic and feminist subcultures created by Eleonora Duse and other Italian New Women, the connection between homosexual tourism in Southern Italy and European queer men such as Oscar Wilde; and D'Annunzio's libertarian and feminist Fiume project. Three other sections in Chapter 1 concern the prevalent homoeroticism of Irish literature, theatre and culture, focusing on the Irish Revival, modernism, the queer and feminist subcultures created by Florence Farr and Eva Gore-Booth, and the influence of occult societies which provided safe space for unconventional thinkers and queer people in Ireland and other parts of Europe. The last two sections of Chapter 1 connect the two countries in terms of their contradictory gender and sexual politics and its relation to colonialism. Finally, I discuss how Yeats and D'Annunzio expressed these contradictions through an increasing interest in physical theatre techniques thanks to the formative influence of the prominent New Woman actors and dancers of the time.

In Chapter 2, I provide queer dramaturgical readings of five plays by Yeats. First, I explore the tension between Sara Ahmed's concept of the "happy family" and non-normative characters in Yeats's *The Land of Heart's Desire* in the context of Martyn's *The Heather Field*. Moving on, I discuss the pressure of patriarchal masculinity and the echoes of Wilde in Yeats's *Calvary*, while in the last section I connect three late plays to demonstrate Yeats's interest in sadomasochism as a means of pointing out the problems with historical distributions of power and gender roles. In Chapter 3, I cover similar themes with the help of queer theory in five plays by D'Annunzio. First, I look at the pressure of moral prudery and closeted incestuous and homoerotic desires in *The Dead City* and *Fedra*. In the second subchapter, I explore the queer aspects and the sadomasochistic dynamics of D'Annunzio's *Le Martyre* which featured Ida Rubinstein as Sebastian. Finally, I look at the pressure of the family and the community in *Francesca*

da Rimini and *The Daughter of Iorio* to demonstrate how D'Annunzio's drama advocated for the freedom of the individual as opposed to the societal and familial duties that posed a threat to this freedom.

In this thesis, I use English-language, Italian-language and at times French-language sources. Due to the multilingual nature of this thesis, the word count exceeds the recommended 80,000-100,000 words. In Chapter 1 and Chapter 3, I have used a significant amount of Italian primary and secondary sources which I had to translate into English. To address this translation issue, I included the original Italian (and sometimes French) texts in the footnotes, which, however, have considerably increased the original word count. Moreover, the translations from D'Annunzio's verse dramas and from Eleonora Duse's writings aim to be accurate rather literary/poetic in this thesis. Reading D'Annunzio's play in original Italian and French often appeared a difficult task due to D'Annunzio's insistence on using archaic French and Italian, obscure symbolism and subtextual references which can make the scripts hard to follow. Some of D'Annunzio's plays have been translated into English but not all of them, hence I decided to provide my own translations to ensure consistency. However, judging by the original English translation of *Le Martyre*, for instance, the English-language editions seem easier to follow for contemporary audiences, hence I believe translating all of D'Annunzio's plays into English would make his drama more accessible for a wider European and global theatre and possibly queer scholarship as well. In terms of secondary sources, English-language scholarship on D'Annunzio is still very limited—this thesis is the first extensive English-language criticism of some of D'Annunzio's most difficult plays and their representation of gender and sexuality.

Besides Love's research, this thesis owes a debt to a long tradition of work on representations of queer negativity by Jack Halberstam, Leo Bersani, José Esteban Muñoz, Didier Eribon, Sara Ahmed, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. Halberstam, Bersani and Love have highlighted the queer potential of failure, and the importance of invoking painful histories and making them affirmative. Halberstam has stressed that connecting queerness

to failure works "to propose a relentless form of negativity in place of the forward-looking, reproductive, and heteronormative politics of hope that animates all too many political projects" (*Queer Art* 106). Their works helped me understand the significance of dramaturgical representations of failure, loss, broken intimacies, discomfort, will to escape, anxiety, impossible love, refusal, and melancholia, which can signal anxieties about repressive constructions of gender and sexuality.[24] In my dramaturgical analyses, I treat such concepts as "queer historical structures of feeling" (24), borrowing Love's phrase for Walter Pater's works. Love calls these feelings "bad feelings" (13) and "feeling backward" (4), and explains that this approach to queerness has often been dismissed by contemporary queer critics. Yet Love highlights the affective power of representations of queer experience as suffering, which is a way of countering stigma by incorporating it: "These feelings are tied to the experience of social exclusion and to the historical 'impossibility' of same-sex desire" (4). Love's analysis of literary texts through the lens of loss reinforced my conviction that Yeats's and D'Annunzio's plays have indeed a lot to tell us about "what it is like to bear a 'disqualified' identity, which at times can simply mean living with injury—not fixing it" (4). These backward feelings also "serve as an index to the ruined state of the social world" (27), drawing attention to the damage totalising political narratives inflict on subjectivities who do not wish to be assimilated into those narratives. Queer theory is equally helpful in "unveil[ing] a queer alterity" (Lapointe, *Between Irishmen* 14) within Irish and Italian male and female subjects in the context of nationalism: "Queer theory assists in foregrounding the importance of the unacknowledged reliance upon diverse sexual and gender categories in manufacturing nationalisms' imaginary communities, while remaining reticent about this debt" (13). Moreover, queer theory helps point out that the boundary between the homosocial and the homoerotic in Irish and Italian nationalisms were in fact highly porous.[25] Finally, as Harris has

[24] For a detailed discussion of normative society's collective failure to ratify masculinity produced by, for and within women see Halberstam's book *Female Masculinity*. Durham and London: Duke UP, 1998.

[25] Sedgwick contends in *Between Men* that the homosocial is, in fact, inseparable from the homoerotic, and the homosocial also belongs to the orbit of desire (2).

observed with regard to Frank McGuinness's drama, "applying queer theory to questions of national identity may help identify new strategies of resistance to both heterosexist and imperialist prescriptions and prohibitions" ("Watch Yourself").

4. Queer Research

Kath Browne and Catherine J. Nash have explained that "'[q]ueer research' can be any form of research positioned within conceptual frameworks that highlight the instability of taken-for-granted meanings and resulting power relations" (4). It is important to acknowledge, however, that "queer" does not always and only mean homosexuality: "queer" implies a taste for salaciousness and provocation; sexual behaviours that deviate from the heterosexual paradigm; boundaries of femininity and masculinity as porous; and shaking of narrative logic, fixed identity and social bonds. Even queer desire is not simply same-sex desire, as Halberstam has underscored: "queerness situates human desire within a wild world of other desires and pleasures" (*Wild Things* 20). In addition, representations of existential *malaise* and unease with traditional family and social roles are equally queer, as queerness implies all kinds of unorthodox behaviours which go against the norms dictated by (hetero)normativity. Or, as Fintan Walsh has phrased it, queerness, mostly in the form of cross-dressing, can disrupt "the illusion of gender and sexual coherence" ("Touching" 57) and reveals the contingency of gender and identity itself (57). It is, however, Patrick R. Mullen's definition of queer that guides my analysis in particular, as he sees queerness as "a capacious index for a series of non-normative desires, people, politics, and cultural expressions and as a term that maintains specific relations, at times contradictory, with the homosexual and the homoerotic" (6). David Halperin's definition is equally seminal to this thesis, who stressed that "[q]ueer is by definition *whatever* is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant" (*Saint Foucault* 62).

This slipperiness of the meaning of "queer" is crucial for this thesis, as "what we mean by queer … is and should remain unclear, fluid and multiple" (Brown and Nash 7). In fact, traces of queerness are "invisibly

visible, unlocatably everywhere" (Bersani 32). Even the meaning of *homoeros* is fluid, as Michael Patrick Lapointe has demonstrated: it implies an emotional and spiritual yearning for another member of the same sex, vexed notions of love and male friendship, and plurality of sexual categories instead of simply meaning explicit same-sex desire ("Edward Martyn" 89). This fluidity, undisciplinarity or multidisciplinarity of queer is what makes it so provocative and threatening for homogenising, totalising systems and institutions. In fact, unity and disciplinarity are techniques of modern power that oppress quirky and original thought: "it depends upon and deploys normalization, routines, convention, tradition, and regularity" (Halberstam, *Queer Art* 7-8). Browne and Nash emphasise that maintaining this fluid meaning of queer is crucial in order to resist a so-called queer orthodoxy in research projects: "Such determinations of 'the' authentic approach to what is 'queer' work to dictate what 'queer' (and in turn 'queer research') can and cannot do" (7). As Love has phrased it, "[t]he semantic flexibility of queer – its weird ability to touch almost everything – is one of the most exciting things about it" ("Queers" 182).

In my dramaturgical readings, the various meanings of queer will continuously comingle and resonate with each other: feminist voices, unexplained melancholia and anxiety, homoeroticism, androgyny, anti-authoritarian temperaments, disobedience, disruption, strangeness, anti-reproduction, and a sense of repressed emotions. Moreover, Halberstam has pointed out that, in fact, the real subversive potential of homosexuality does not necessarily lie in ambiguous homoerotic representations, but mostly in the subversion of traditional social bonds and stability (*Queer Art* 73), which is implied in the above mentioned examples. In fact, it would be misleading to draw a firm line between these various "queernesses". Muñoz contends that the demand for evidences of queerness is a way of policing queer desires: "When the historian of queer experience attempts to document a queer past, there is often a gatekeeper, representing a straight present, who will labor to invalidate the historical fact of queer lives present, past, and future" (65). This resonates with reactions to attempts to queer canonical works of straight authors such as Yeats and D'Annunzio:

evidence of their queerness and of their intention to represent queer experience is often required as a justification of the validity of queer readings.

Queer texts and gestures are often full of what Muñoz calls "ephemeral evidence" (65), which

> is rarely obvious because it is needed to stand against the harsh lights of mainstream visibility and the potential tyranny of the fact. … Ephemera are the remains that are often embedded in queer acts … a lingering handshake between acquaintances or the mannish strut of a particularly confident woman. (65)

Muñoz mentions dance as a perfect example of queer ephemera as it "increases our tolerance for embodied practices" (66), but also the male body moving effeminately, the female body moving confidently, or the ephemeral evidence of gestures (68). These ambiguous and ephemeral moments are very hard to grasp and archive in performance and especially in the scripts. They are, however, detectable in performance reviews which indicated an unease with the way, for instance, Florence Farr's, Eleonora Duse's or Ida Rubinstein's "sexless" body moved on the stage, defying female decorum. Queerness in the texts and in performance tends to be ephemeral also because "queerness itself [is] filled with the intention to be lost. Queerness is illegible and therefore lost in relation to the straight mind's mapping of space. Queerness is lost in space or lost in relation to the space of heteronormativity" (Muñoz 72). As Muñoz further explains: "For queers, the gesture and its aftermath, the ephemeral trace, matter more than many traditional modes of evidencing lives and politics" (81). During my research, I have also encountered the difficulty of proving queerness in the texts with biographical evidence, but queer theory has helped me find the more ephemeral queer moments in the scripts.

As regards queer dramaturgy, I draw on two essay collections in identifying queer dramaturgical moments in Yeats's and D'Annunzio's plays texts: *Queer Dramaturgies* (2016) edited by Alyson Campbell and Stephen Farrier and *Queer Dance* (2015) edited by Clare Croft. Even though these volumes focus on contemporary performance, they can help us understand where the queer moments of modernist plays lie. According to Croft, queer dance implies the pleasure and the difficulties of moving between multiple identities, frustration, diminishment reframed as strength, images that do not immediately make sense, and unsettled relationship between center and margin (1). Moreover, Campbell and Farrier point out that a dramaturgy can be called queer not simply because of their authors or what is included in the text or the production, but also because of the venue and the performers, which resonates with the role queer women played in shaping Yeats's and D'Annunzio's drama: "What makes a dramaturgy queer is complex and contingent, reliant on the interrelationship between makers, venues, processes and audiences" (2). For Campbell and Farrier, queer dramaturgy includes those profound moments on stage and page which allow audiences "a queerly transitory suspension of the regular rules of society" (4) because the spectacle they witness or the text they read is "both indecipherable and full of meaning at the same time" (3). These moments in performance can perturb and provoke audiences, since they are confronted with a spectacle of strangeness but these moments can also allow us to "contemplate other ways of being in the world, play out non-normative identities" (4). Queer dramaturgies, according to Campbell and Farrier, are likewise set against dominant modes of representation (8). Yeats's and D'Annunzio's increasingly anti-mimetic, dance-based drama challenging the norms of mimetic bourgeois theatre at the time could be considered as queer in this regard as well.

5. Contradictions and Terminologies

Before my detailed discussions, I find it important to acknowledge some contradictions that inevitably arise in any queer research. First, homoeroticism, *eros* and homosexuality were all threats to fascist and nationalist institutions. However, some forms of gay eroticism can chime in

with right-wing and nationalist politics, such as comradeship and brotherhood which were central to Irish and Italian nationalisms alike. As Halberstam has explained, political and sexual bonds between men in the fascist era were confused and entwined (*Queer Art* 72). Fascists persecuted homosexuals to maintain the normativity of fascist masculinism, but at the same time they were accused of being homosexual due to their obsession with the male body and gays were sometimes accused of collaborating with Nazis (72). Halberstam continues that queer history will always have to grapple with these overlaps between fascism and homosexuality, and offer an alternative to fascist virility (73). Both Halberstam and Sedgwick have addressed this controversial issue, but their views differ, as Sedgwick denies the connection, while Halberstam stresses that fascist masculinities had some very disquieting overlaps with homosexuality. Italian studies scholar John Champagne also holds that the regime's rigid gender binaries could offer "enough homosociality to encourage Mussolini's male followers to identify with, and even love him, and enough homophobia to ensure that this love remains sublimated as hero worship" (*Aesthetic Modernism* 136). It was thus inevitable that D'Annunzio, who was involved in both queer/feminist and fascist/nationalist circles, ended up representing the contradictions of Italian nationalism in terms of gender, power and sexuality both during post-Unification Liberal Italy and fascism. My discussion in Chapter 1 further contextualises this controversial topic.

It is also true that many gay people were nationalist or proto-fascist, therefore having a non-normative gender or sexual identity does not necessarily deny fascist and nationalist affiliations.[26] In *Vivid Faces* (2014), Roy Foster offers an explanation to this challenging area of discussion. He explains that the Irish radicals—who helped found the conservative and authoritarian Irish Free State—were drawn to (ultra)nationalism because they were looking for new ways of living, including unconventional sexual relationships. Foster mentions here Roger Casement as well, although it

[26] Kadji Amin in *Disturbing Attachments: Genet, Modern Pederasty, and Queer History*. Durham and London: Duke UP, 2017 recognises, for instance, that non-normative sexuality can also be complicit with oppressive power structures.

should be noted that Casement did not intentionally contribute to the foundation of the authoritarian Irish Free State. As Foster explains,

> It might also be supposed that, even if few of Casement's nationalist friends engaged as vigorously in transgressive sex as he did, the instincts of at least some of his companions may have been as unconventional as his own. The desire of young people, often from fractured or troubled home backgrounds, to reject patriarchal and colonial authority, and to make a new untrammelled world in a brotherhood or sisterhood of like-minded souls, may also have carried a strong if unspoken charge of homosocial bonding. (140)

It is not the aim of this thesis to discuss why transgressive writers were interested in fascism and other forms of authoritarianism or nationalism. It is, however, important to indicate that both nationalism and the endeavours to achieve sexual liberation seemed to offer a new way of life, something different from the past, and nationalisms even seemed to allow homosocial bondings through their concepts of nationalist brotherhood and sisterhood.

Furthermore, a difference has to be made between masculinity and hyper-masculinity. The latter one is a forced, toxic, oppressive type of performance of masculinity that aims to demonstrate one's own heterosexuality, maintain patriarchal structures and promote that "real" men can only be strong, muscular, and authoritative. I sometimes refer to this as "normative masculinity" in the thesis. Another important distinction is that heterosexuality is not equal to heteronormativity, as the latter one means an oppressive attitude within the heterosexual world that denies the existence and rights of non-normative individuals, that is, everyone who is not white, male and heterosexual.

Besides the terms queer, *homoeros*, hyper-masculinity and heteronormativity, I sometimes employ other specific expressions, such as anti-authoritarianism, cult of respectability, transgression and fascism of

performance. By anti-authoritarianism, I imply any manifestation on the stage or in public life that ridicules, disobeys or plays with political or religious authorities. The cult of respectability refers to one of the main pillars of middle-class bourgeois societies as well as nationalist politics: it relied on the heterosexual family model, obedience, exclusion of desire, modesty for women and heroism for men. Nationalism and especially the radical nationalism of Fascism could not dispense with ambiguities in any field of life: "Fascism was opposed to what Ezra Pound called an 'indefinite waffle,' whether in social relations, politics, or sexuality" (Mosse 153). Thus "[n]ationalism and respectability assigned everyone his place in life, man and woman, normal and abnormal, native and foreigner; and any confusion between these categories threatened chaos and loss of control" (Mosse 16). I often employ the word "transgression" or "transgressive" to refer to behaviours, representations or manifestations that violate traditional borders of authority, sexuality and gender. I sometime use the term "fascism of performance," "normative power" or "authoritarian normativity" as synonyms for authoritarianism, referring to any speech act or action in the scripts that aim to oppress other voices.

Finally, I often use the phrase "marginalised subjectivities" in this thesis. I realise that this phrase might sound simplistic, as the various marginalised groups in society have different aims and grievances and they can be in conflict with each other. It is far from me to homogenise these groups: I use this term in the thesis as a collective phrase for all those individuals who were stigmatised and oppressed for different reasons in Italy and Ireland in early twentieth century, including women, gays and lesbians, the poor, effeminate men, unmarried people, the disabled, and everyone who violated public morality and respectability with their desires or actions, and thus posed a threat to (hetero)normativity.

6. Why Researching the Past?

One might wonder why it is worth re-examining these plays and their cultural and historical contexts, given that they are rarely performed today. Susan Harris has offered an inspiring explanation to this: we need to search

through the past "looking for ways to spring the traps that have closed on the present" (*Irish Drama* 4). Michel Foucault made a similar observation pointing out that "the most intense point of a life, the point where its energy is concentrated, is where it comes up against power, struggles with it, attempts to use its forces and to evade its traps" ("Lives of Infamous Men" 162). Eribon also stressed that "[t]ravelling through history is the means by which one comes to understand the systems of thought that regulate institutions, by which one undoes the sense of self-evident normalcy that inhabits them, by which one breaks the bars that are installed in people's minds by disciplinary technologies" (263). Yeats and D'Annunzio wrote plays that reveal the traps and oppressive mechanisms of patriarchy, normativity, nationalism and various political manifestations of fascism. The scripts thus draw attention to those subjectivities who cannot identify with such totalising and homogenising narratives. When power tries to hide its strategies and manipulate the truth, theatre and literature can help unveil such processes of manipulation, pointing out the systemic failures that create historical injustices of power distribution, and offer alternatives.

What is more, as Cregan has revealed in his Introduction to *Deviant Acts* (2009), queering the past is crucial in order to illuminate its refusal of the desired homogeneity of burgeoning national identities, to "reveal remarkable theatricality in untraditional spaces" (4), all of which helps shed light on a not-so-conservative past of modern Irish and also Italian drama. Similar to Love's analysis, I follow traces of violence and marginalisation in this thesis, which will "allow us to deflect questions of identity and to acknowledge the losses of both the past and the present" (*Feeling Backward* 51).

7. Literature Review: Queer Approaches to Yeats and D'Annunzio

I have briefly outlined above the more reductive approaches to Yeats represented by Deane, Kearney and O'Brien, who portrayed him as authoritarian, colonial, fascist, elitist and anti-feminist.[27] However, Yeats

[27] Joseph Valente offers an insightful account of the arguments of Yeats's accusers and defenders with regard to fascism, elitism and authoritarianism ("Aging Yeats" 176-8). In addition, Adrian Paterson provides a nuanced discussion of Yeats's controversial ideas of

scholarship over the last twenty years has demonstrated a shift away from such approaches in favour of comparative, transnational, feminist, queer and postcolonial readings.[28] These new approaches do not aim to pin down Yeats anymore to any particular political ideology. Instead, they highlight the ambiguity of his works and its resistance to notions of unity and authority. Despite this new trend in Yeats studies, relatively limited attention has been paid to the relevance of Yeats's drama to queer studies.

Irish scholarship increasingly views Yeats as someone who facilitated the appearance of homoerotic content in Irish literature and whose restlessness and inner turbulence shared affinities with the experience of historical queer subjects. Most famously, Ireland's iconic and most visible queer man Michael MacLiammoir expressed a strong affinity with Yeats's life and works, and he found just as vital messages in Yeats as in Wilde. He positioned Yeats against a very orthodox Ireland which saw Yeats as an unorthodox, heretical figure mostly due to his interest in the occult (97). Moreover, Yeats's name is mentioned multiple times in the *Lesbian and Gay Visions of Ireland* essay volume by Senator David Norris, Eibhear Walshe and Emma Donoghue. David Norris refers to Yeats as an artist critical of heteronormativity in his 1993 speech in Seanad Éireann to mark the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Ireland. Norris quotes from Yeats's poem "Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop" and calls the audience's attention to the fact that when Yeats wrote "But Love has pitched his mansion in / The place of excrement," "he was speaking of heterosexual and not homosexual love" (22). In the same volume, Walshe points out that "the period before Yeats and his cultural revolution is barren place for the Irish lesbian or gay reader" ("Oscar's Mirror" 148). Walshe thus suggests that it was Yeats's cultural nationalism and the emergence of the emblematic figure of Oscar Wilde that created possibilities for the homoerotic to emerge

---

fascism and world politics in the 1930s in his article "'Of war and war's alarms': W. B. Yeats from *On the Boiler* (1939)." *Modernist Non-fictional Narratives of War and Peace (1914-1950),* special issue of *E-rea*, edited by Adrian Paterson and Christine Reynier, vol. 17, no. 2, 2020.

[28] Thanks mostly to the works of Susan Cannon Harris, Alexandra Poulain, Joseph Valente, Jahan Ramazani, Edward Said, David Lloyd, Declan Kiberd, Margaret Mills Harper, Roy Foster, Adrian Frazier, Elizabeth Cullingford, Ben Levitas, Pierre Longuenesse, Neil Mann and Michael McAteer.

in Irish literature but also made it "more threatening in the formulation of an indigenous Irish literary identity" (147-8).

What is more, multiple scholars have addressed the various queer facets of Yeats's works and life, including Susan Cannon Harris, Alexandra Poulain, Roy Foster, Joseph Valente, Adrian Frazier, Jason Edwards, Michael Patrick Lapointe, Patrick R. Mullen, and Elizabeth Cullingford. Their approach to Yeats is predominantly transnational, cross-disciplinary and comparative, which can facilitate unveiling the transgressive potentials of Yeats's works. However, there has been no attempt thus far to close-read Yeats's plays with the help of contemporary queer theorists, hence this thesis hopes to fill in this gap.

There have been other approaches to Yeats which resonate with my queer reading. Edward Said initiated a postcolonial approach to Yeats, seeing him as a poet of decolonisation, which has been further elaborated by David Lloyd[29] and Jahan Ramazani. Acknowledging the contradictions and ambiguities of Yeats's life and works, Ramazani argues that we could call Yeats a "postcolonial colonialist" (22) or a "colonial anticolonialist" (22). Ramazani stresses that because of Yeats's liminal position as an Anglo-Irish Protestant, he was both against English colonisation and condemned Ireland's "lunatic faculty of going against everything which it believes England to affirm" (22). This can testify to Yeats's rejection of both colonial and Irish ultranationalist approaches. Ramazani's postcolonial reading equally proves that Yeats's life-long interest in the occult was not a sign of his elitist politics—rather, it indicated his support of diversity. The occult fascinated Yeats because of its cosmopolitanism and ability to fuse mysticisms of diverse origins—Christian, Jewish, Indian, Persian, Scandinavian, Chinese and so on (43).

Other scholars highlighted Yeats's interest in representations of strangeness in his drama, such as Richard Allen Cave in *Yeats's Late Plays: High Grave Dignity and Strangeness* (1984), Michael McAteer in his article "'Stranger

[29] See David Lloyd's chapter "The Poetics of Politics: Yeats and the Founding of the State." In *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-colonial Moment*. Durham: Duke UP, 1993, pp. 59-87.

in the House': Alienation and History in *The Land of Heart's Desire* and *Cathleen ni Houlihan*" (2007) and Ben Levitas who sees strangeness in Yeats's plays as the manifestation of Yeats's interest in a new kind of anti-realist theatre which subverts norms ("The Dancer and the Heart's Desire" 120). Levitas demonstrates this idea in Yeats's *The Land of Heart's Desire*, where "'the stranger' [the fairy child who seduces the newly wed Mary Bruin] is also a 'strangeness': the unfamiliar, or de-familiarising, form that intrudes into the house of realist narrative and carries with it the power to disrupt the normative materialism of domesticity" ("The Dancer and the Heart's Desire" 120). Levitas has also written on the transgressive potential of modern Irish drama, the dissidence of explicit representations of female sexuality on the stage and the influence of Wilde's *Salomé,* stressing that in Wilde's play "[t]he transgressive display of female sexual power emerges as a short-lived challenge to normative Christian codes of denial and puritan hostility" ("Modernist Experiments in Irish Theatre" 112). Levitas discerns a similar transgressive display of female sexuality in Yeats's plays, especially in his representations of the shape-changing women of the Sidhe ("Modernist Experiments in Irish Theatre" 118).

Excess has been another theme that resonates with queerness, as eccentricity always implies a challenge to established norms while at the same time reaffirms those very norms. Valente has demonstrated the excessive quality of Cuchulain's hyper-masculinity and sexual exorbitancy in Yeats's drama, which both reaffirm and subvert conventional gender roles and render an androgynous quality to Cuchulain (*Myth of Manliness* 175). Moreover, McAteer's book *Excess in Modern Irish Writing: Spirit and Surplus* (2020) underscores that Yeats holds the idea of excess as his counter-reaction to the homogenisation process that bourgeois society in Ireland was imposing on people (3). McAteer claims that excess is "precisely the kind of counter-homogenising freedom of spirit that Yeats regards as the mark of the artist, the aristocrat and the wandering beggar" (5). McAteer outlines three main types of excess in Yeats: Dionysian, Oriental and sacrificial. He also discusses the influence of Wilde's performance of excess on Irish literature

as well as unconventional representations of marriage in Dion Boucicault's melodramas, Shaw and Wilde.

Ghosts constitute yet another theme closely linked to the queer approach, as the invisible omnipresence of ghosts resonates with the position of queer subjects in society and is perceived as a threat to the normative world. Ghosts also recall the homoerotic tradition of Irish gothic fiction which I discuss in Chapter 1, and ghosts in Irish literature constitute an "excess of memory" (McAteer, *Excess* 2). Pierre Longuenesse has addressed the separation of body and voice and the importance of spectres in Yeats's plays in "Playing with Voices and with Doubles," while Katherine Ebury has written on "Science, the Occult, and Irish Drama: Ghosts in Yeats and Beckett." I have also written briefly on the spectralisation of Cuchulain in Yeats's five Cuchulain plays in my article "An Uncanny Myth of Ireland"[30]. Ghosts constitute a central element of Yeats's anti-naturalistic plays, hence the theme of anti-realism could be yet another queer approach to Yeats: among others, Alexandra Poulain, Ben Levitas and Ian R. Walsh have emphasised the anti-mimetic potential of Yeats's drama. Finally, the occult has been another lens through which to approach Yeats's interest in unorthodox sexuality, diversity and transgression, even though for decades this very interest in the supernatural was seen as a sign of Yeats's elitism and rejection of diversity. Valente, Cullingford, Margret Mills Harper, Ramazani and Neil Mann have all linked Yeats's passion for the occult to his interest in transgression.

The theme of disability has been another queer approach to Yeats. In his article, "Aging Yeats: From Fascism to Disability," Valente argues that "[p]erhaps no oeuvre presents a more pertinent and richly layered subject for this 'disability turn' in literary studies than that of W. B. Yeats" (176), even though many of his eugenic remarks suggested his support of the "despotism of ability, which Yeats identified with fascism" (180). Valente

[30] "An Uncanny Myth of Ireland: The Spectralisation of Cuchulain's Body in W. B. Yeats's Plays." *Embodying/Disembodying Ireland*, special issue of *Études irlandaises*, vol. 42, no. 1, edited by Fiona McCann and Alexandra Poulain, 2017, pp. 61-75. https://doi.org/10.4000/etudesirlandaises.5102

mentions *On Baile's Strand* which ends up transgressing the boundary between the able-bodied and disabled characters, as Cuchulain is conversing with the two disabled characters the Fool and the Blind Man "as if to signify how far he has become one with them in the derangement that will propel his combat with the waves" (181-2). Yet considering Yeats's authoritarian and even fascist profile closely linked to ableism, Valente wonders using Tobin Seibers words if we could say that Yeats was engaged in "the aesthetics of human disqualification" of which "disability is the master trope" (qtd. in Valente 184). Valente proposes that we can only say yes to this question if we consider Yeats's late aesthetics strictly as a philosophical proposition rather than a logic governing his literary production (184). Valente warns, however, that "nothing about Yeats … can ever be so straightforward" (185). What is more, since the Nazis prohibited the artistic representation of strangeness and disability, later they ended up denouncing Yeats' entire body of work (185). Even in his poems, the prosodic tools of symmetry such as rhyme, stanza and metre, are deliberately crafted to create not symmetry but discordance (185). We can extend this to Yeats's drama as well which revels in disunity, recalcitrance and dissonance both in its content and form instead of the achievement of harmony and order.

Even though Yeats's public remarks often suggested a ruthless, authoritarian ableism,

> as his body broke down, and his mental well-being grew more precarious, he became aware that the engines of mortality left no body, no mind, intact, rendered impairment, incapacity and degeneration a universal rather than a peripheral dimension of human experience, and were no respecters of elevated intellect or perfectly proportioned physique. (Valente 186)

As a result, he began to identify as moderately disabled and bore of himself a double-vision: sometimes superior, sometimes abject (Valente 186). What is more, in poems such as "Sailing to Byzantium" and the Crazy Jane

poems, disability is no longer a disqualifying factor: it becomes "a qualification in itself" (Valente 187). Yeats's poems suggest that "[f]ar from being a wasteful encumbrance on the normalising community, those disabled bodies thus prove a generative resource. They are the unacknowledged underwriters of cultural norms" (Valente 187). Valente concludes that due to Yeats's quarrel with his own ideas, he ended up representing disability not as inferiority but as "a cultural effect, and, in part anyway, an ironic effect of the ableist imperative itself" (193).

Scholarship has paid more attention to the portrayal of gender, feminism and anti-authoritarianism in Yeats's works thanks to Cullingford's ground-breaking books *Yeats, Ireland and Fascism* (1981) and *Gender and History in Yeats's Love Poetry* (1996). In the latter one, Cullingford's focus is not drama, but it informs this thesis as she offers a very insightful context for the unorthodoxy of Yeats's views of gender and stresses that in the Free State years "Yeats constructed the erotic in opposition to the Catholic sexual ethic, and to censorship" (8). I do not detail the content of this book here, as I engage with it later in the thesis.

In *Yeats, Ireland and Fascism*, Cullingford acknowledges that Yeats was first and foremost a nationalist (vii), but creative achievement has always remained of primary importance to him and his nationalism was essentially libertarian, tolerant and individualist thanks to the influence of John O'Leary (1): Yeats's nationalism avoided nation worship, expansionist aggression and racism (158). Cullingford argues that "[t]he unity he desired was to be literary, philosophical, and political. It was not, however, to be attained by a narrowing of vision, but through the acceptance of diversity" (viii). More importantly, Yeats was trying to find a philosophy throughout his life "to balance diverse extremes without compromising the validity of either" (viii). This resonates with the tension between the queer and the normative forces in his plays, even though in my understanding, his plays eventually reject the validity of patriarchal authorities.

Cullingford emphasises that Yeats could not accept any form of nationalism requesting people to subordinate themselves to the national cause, such as

Arthur Griffith's nationalism: "Yeats could not accept this subordination, nor the surrender to mass emotion characteristic of fascist chauvinism" (1). Yeats himself wondered: "Am I not therefore un-national in any sense the common man can understand? He means by national a mob held together not by what is interior, delicate and haughty, but by law and force which they obey because they must" (qtd. in Cullingford 2). With regard to the British government's public shaming of Roger Casement, Yeats recalled O'Leary's aphorism which said "there are things a man must not do even to save a nation" (CL *InteLex* 6737).[31] Throughout his life, Yeats was striving to reconcile nationalism and liberty, and where he could not do it, he chose liberty (Cullingford 13). What is more, Yeats's nationalism—thanks to O'Leary's influence—emphasised political liberty, the freedom of the individual without racial or cultural cohesiveness: "Nationality was not to be a thing of race or creed, every man born here belonged to the nation" (Yeats qtd. in Cullingford 8). Yeats distanced himself from everyone who put hatred above tolerance. For instance, he condemned his fellow Young Irelander John Mitchel for exalting the hate of England above the love of Ireland (12). More importantly, the only reason why Yeats expressed interest in Mussolini was because he was craving for order in a chaotic post-war Ireland. Also, he thought fascist Italy was individualist and thus put the individual above the national cause, which was "his most striking error" (148). He was indeed interested in authority but envisaged it as "the absence of chaos rather than the presence of jackbooted stormtroopers" (150-1). By the 1930s, Yeats could see the brutality behind European fascism, and when he read about Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia in 1935, his disillusion was complete: "No Irish nationalist, still engaged in conflict with the British Empire, could accept the sacrifice of another small nation to a renascent Roman Empire" (144). When Yeats saw in 1937 that European nationalisms turned extremely violent, he exclaimed "I am no Nationalist" (qtd. in Cullingford 158).

[31] CL *InteLex* refers to the electronic edition of *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*. InteLex Electronic Edition, edited by John Kelly. Oxford UP, 2002. The letters are cited by Accession Number unless otherwise stated.

Thanks to Cullingford's pioneering study, feminist approaches to Yeats have been increasing, yet in order to get a nuanced and comprehensive picture of the feminist aspects of Yeats's works and collaborations, we need to look beyond Maud Gonne. As Cassandra Laity has pointed out, "[s]tudies of the women in Yeats's art have too often been reduced to what Parkinson calls 'Maudism'" (20). Laity has shifted the focus from "Maudism" to Florence Farr and Mrs Patrick Campbell—the highly formative, but less often recognised influences on Yeats. Laity hints at the lesbianism of Farr's role as Amaryllis in Todhunter's *A Sicilian Idyll*, but she does not discuss her queerness. Laity does not deny that the figure of Gonne is also there behind Yeats's heroines, but she holds that their affinity with the New Woman embodied by Farr is much more significant (621).

Gayatri Spivak has also addressed the feminist undertones of Yeats's works in her article "Finding Feminist Readings: Dante-Yeats" (1980). Spivak claims that "feminist alternative readings might well question the normative rigor of specialist mainstream scholarship through a dramatization of the autobiographical vulnerability of their provenance" (75). In this article Spivak explains how she began to read and teach Dante's *La vita nuova* and Yeats's Dante-inspired "Ego Dominus Tuus" and *A Vision* against the grain, highlighting their feminist potentialities, namely their narrative of self-destruction in which woman was often the means (76). She reveals the male auto-eroticism behind over-idealised, platonic representations of love and women, and stresses an important fact about Yeats: he "needed ideal others" (77). In fact, it was this search for ideal others that made Yeats's works so heterogeneous, full of multiple layers of meaning, inclusive of other, even marginalised voices, and resistant to unifying master-narratives.

In *Irish Drama and the Other Revolutions*, Harris discusses the lesbian intimacies in *The Land of Heart's Desire*, which are encoded in the framework of Irish folklore and the supernatural. Her book highlights the influence of London's queer socialism and Florence Farr's androgynous stage presence on the queerness of modern Irish theatre. Harris equally underscores Yeats's willingness to acknowledge a wide range of sexual and

gender possibilities in his drama (50). In fact, Harris is the first scholar who applies the word "queer" to describe Farr's sexuality and social role. She explains that when Yeats, Shaw and Wilde were trying to establish their careers in London at the end of the nineteenth century, they found themselves excluded from what constituted normativity in London at the time, and hence they ended up under the influence of the fight for sexual and social liberation (1). Harris continues that as a consequence, these Irish playwrights developed strategies to negotiate the interchange between social and sexual liberation, and these strategies were soon taken up or contested by other European playwrights (1).

Her earlier monograph, *Gender and Modern Irish Drama* (2002) also addressed Yeats's unconventional representation of women's sexuality and the power of the physical body in *The Herne's Egg*, *Cathleen ni Houlihan* and *The Countess Cathleen*. Harris's discussion of the two plays is important for this thesis, as it reveals how Yeats navigated between nationalist and anti-nationalist ideas. *The Countess Cathleen*, for instance, "explicitly endorses one of the major arguments nationalists were making about the Famine [yet] it also sparked the first confrontation between the new national theatre and its public" (29-30). Yeats showed both the power and the vulnerability of the physical body in his plays, which was perceived as anti-nationalist, since the body made the Irish vulnerable to imperial discourse. As Harris explains, *The Countess Cathleen* was attacked by nationalists due to the fact that Yeats replaced the traditional male martyr with a female martyr and because the play suggested that the needs of the body could not be renounced. These plays, as Harris has put it, went against "the archetypal nationalist denial of the power of the physical body" (24). Since Harris's research constitutes my main point of reference in my chapter on Yeats, I do not detail the content of her books here any further.

Roy Foster's biographical and historical research on Yeats has also proved Yeats's interest in queerness. In his famous biography, *W. B. Yeats: A Life II: The Arch-Poet 1915-1939*, Foster discusses Yeats's close relationship with Lady Dorothy Wellesley and her lovers Vita Sackville-West and Hilda

Matheson around 1935, which coincided with Yeats's vasectomy operation aimed to arrest aging and increase his sexual vitality (499). Besides Yeats's many other sexual radical friends, Wellesley was also "a natural rebel, rejecting all conventions and accepted ideas" (Sackville-West qtd. in Foster 528). Foster observes that Yeats was fascinated with the masculine rhythm of Wellesley's poetry, but Yeats's fascination had to do with Wellesley's "exoticism" as an aristocrat and a well-known lesbian (527). However, this idea risks reducing Yeats's approach and support for queer men and lesbians to mere exoticism. It was undoubtedly part of it, but Cullingford's and Harris's studies have demonstrated that for Yeats it was equally important to give visibility and voice to non-normative subjectivities and social outcasts.

Alexandra Poulain's research equally applies a queer approach to Yeats's drama and her ideas resonate closely with my thesis. In *Irish Drama, Modernity and the Passion Play* (2016), Poulain has explored the tension between nationalist constructions of gender and the spectacle of the dying body in Irish drama including Yeats's *The King's Threshold*, *Calvary* and *The Death of Cuchulain*. She contends that Yeats interrogates the grand narratives of state nationalism, Republicanism, the Catholic Church, patriarchy, modernity and capitalism by exposing the invisible violence of these ideologies and institutions on marginalised individuals and communities in post-revolution Ireland (11). Poulain discerns that

> [d]isplaying the male body as a site of inscription of (usually invisible) violence, the genre of the Passion play depends on, and frequently disrupts, familiar constructions of masculinity and … especially challenges the performance of hypermasculinity condoned by nationalist sensibilities during much of the twentieth century in response to colonial constructions of Irishness as quintessentially feminine. (8-9)

Poulain has equally addressed the topic of queerness with regard to *The Cat and the Moon*: she contends that there is a resistance in Yeats's drama which rejects the play's drive towards unity. She demonstrates that this

resistant element has to do with queer versions of love, especially unproductive sadomasochistic relationships ("Failed Collaborations" 234). Her earlier article, "'Grant me an old man's frenzy': Age and Rage on the Stage" resonates with Valente's article on old age and fascism in that Poulain also links Yeats's anxiety about aging to his increasing engagement with his time's gender politics. She proposes that Yeats "challenges the gender politics of his time, and refuses to endorse uncritically the nationalist ideal of virile self-containment promoted as 'manliness,' allowing instead his unruly, raging old man to claim full visibility and audibility both on and off the stage of the theatre" (28). In a conference paper delivered at the "Yeats and Eros/Yeats and Paris" conference in 2019, Poulain also observed that, for instance, Yeats's *The Dreaming of the Bones* is about people whose otherness cannot be assimilated into sameness, and thus offers an alternative ethical framework to think about theatre, allowing the presence of the other on the stage ("Blue Balls and the Ethics of Spectatorship: Verlaine, Yeats, Beckett"). Poulain's approach to Yeats's drama is very similar to my argument in relation to Yeats, but I focus on specific queer historical structures of feeling with the help of queer theory, thus hoping to further the discussion began by Cullingford, Harris, Poulain and Valente.

The complex relationship between gender and nationalism in Yeats have been explored by Marjorie Howes as well in *Yeats's Nations: Gender, Class, and Irishness* (1996) which offers an insightful biographical and historical analysis of Yeats's highly ambiguous, contradictory representations of women and sexuality. The question of Yeats's political identity has been issue of debate for decades: his *oeuvre* gives grounds for confusion and dispute among scholars, as his ideas often contradict one another. Yeats has been regarded by scholars as an Anglo-Irish Protestant (an elitist and authoritarian), an Irish nationalist, a liberal humanist, an individualist, a poet of decolonisation, a supporter of fascism and also communism, and even an advocate of blood sacrifice in his later works (5). What is more, as regards his nationalism, he has been labelled as a middle-class Irish Protestant, a supporter of the Catholic Irish peasantry, and Anglo-Irish aristocrat, and an advocate of English literary tradition and, at the same

time, someone who is also critical of England. Howes stresses that each of these labels can be true and yet neither of them does justice to Yeats's real political identity. Hence Howes proposes that instead of revolving around these opposing political stances, trying to force Yeats into either of them, it is more fruitful to consider issues of form, quality, and complexity (5). I am also interested in the complexity and ambiguity of meaning in Yeats's representations of power, gender and desire, yet my argument and approach differs from Howes's in that I do not focus on biographical materials, and I believe that it is this ambiguity that makes Yeats's works anti-normative and anti-authoritarian.

Howes draws a relevant parallel between nationality and gender: both are constructed in relation to others, though using different techniques; both have been involved in emancipatory struggles (9). The unifying parallel of Howes's book is the one between oppressed women and the Irish nation: both were marginalised as inferior either to men or to the masculine authority of the British Empire. She explores how Yeats's view of women as romantic, idealised figures became more realistic and focused on bodily desire, which was a means of reflecting on the falseness of postcolonial Irishness and the sexual conservatism the newly created Free State proposed to the Irish people. While Howes contends that Yeats focused on women's sexuality in his later works to stress that tradition and the fate of the nation depends on women's sexual choice (171), I read these representations as an interrogation of the repressive attitude of the Irish nationalist discourse to women. Yet I agree that "[a]nalyzing such female figures as complex national allegories reveals the power struggles, contradictions and ambivalences beneath an apparently unified national tradition" (65).

More importantly, Howes explores Yeats's representations of explicit sexuality in "A Man Young and Old" and "A Woman Young and Old" which were written at a time when the major problem of the Irish Free State was sexual immorality, hence it imposed regulations on women and sexuality. Yeats, however, opposed these regulations and saw them as an oppressive "vulgar form of Irish nationality" (140). Howes stresses that at a time when the Free State thought that desire represented a threat to the soul

and the nation, Yeats downright sacralised desire and suggested that it was not marriage that was sacred but desire (142). Despite all this, Yeats's representations of women were contradictory: "While his critique of the Free State's postcolonial Irishness had explicitly refused to conceptualize feminine sexuality in relation to maternity, Yeats's race philosophy theorized about women in terms of their reproductive capacities" (171).

Another seminal work on Yeats's queerness is Valente's *The Myth of Manliness in Irish National Culture.* Valente holds that *On Baile's Strand*—which dramatises the relationship between three men (Conchubar, Cuchulain and Cuchulain's son)—is Yeats's most masculine tragedy, yet "not … in the sense of asserting Irish masculinity, but rather of interrogating Irish masculinity, in large part by worrying the (re)invention of Cuchulain undertaken in Yeats's own Revivalist sources" (172). Valente suggests that Yeats expressed his anxieties about Irish masculine identity by representing Cuchulain as a specimen of hyper-masculinity as a constant thrill-seeker and boaster (172). Yet Cuchulain is also a specimen of excess: he transgresses the boundaries of manliness and hence Conchubar wants to contain his actions, especially because his attraction to the equally androgynous Queen Aoife implies homoeroticism. Cuchulain exceeds not only the boundaries of masculinity but every related boundary: "boy and man, male and female, hetero- and homosexual. Yeats' characterization invokes this gender exorbitancy as well, with reference to the very standard whereby Conchubar would contain it, that of manliness" (172). Valente thus detects the clash between the queer and the normative discourse in the play: Cuchulain's exorbitancy of sexuality, his gender dissidence and the resulting threat of homosexuality that Conchubar, the representative of authority, "bourgeois code of value" and "chief executive officer as bourgeois paterfamilias" (173) wants to contain. Valente concludes that "in staging the attempt to normalize the rough-hewn, hypermasculine Cuchulain, Yeats manages to turn him into a figure of gender subversion, rather than simply atavism" (173). This way, as Valente further explains, "the drama links Cuchulain's refusal on this score with his position at the (Celtic) fringe of Ulster society, which is also a frontier between masculinity and femininity" (174). Valente

has also discerned the non-normative *eros* that Cuchulain embodies for Conchubar who admonishes him "to embrace the norm of procreative, connubial love" (174), yet Cuchulain claims commitment to a more feral take on *eros*, as he has never known love but as a kiss (174).

This short overview of the queer approaches to Yeats is far from being comprehensive, as I could have mentioned several other scholars' work on Yeats's anti-authoritarianism, internationalism or postcolonialism, which can all offer various queer insights. Due to the limited length of this thesis, I decided to focus on those scholars who have offered more explicit queer readings of Yeats's works thus far. Since Chapter 1 explores the queerness of the cultural and historical contexts of Yeats's and D'Annunzio's time, I refer back to some of the scholars I have mentioned here and I rely on further queer scholarship which focuses less on the authors and more on the contexts.

The above overview has demonstrated that approaching Yeats from a queer and feminist perspective is not new. Yet considering the enormous amount of scholarship on Yeats, queer and feminist readings still constitute a minority, and a comprehensive discussion of the queer potentialities of Yeats's drama is still missing despite the insightful research that Cullingford, Harris, Valente, Howes and Poulain have done so far. The Yeats chapter of my thesis engages mostly with their research in the hope of offering new perspectives.

D'Annunzio scholarship is less advanced than Yeats studies in terms of addressing gender and non-normative sexuality. Depictions of D'Annunzio still tend to focus on his self-fashioning as a virile hero and womaniser, even though he was extremely feminine and gender-bending, and in his mature years he was marked by melancholia and unhappiness.[32] Even those scholars who have addressed representations of gender and sexuality within

[32] Richard Ormrod has drawn a parallel between Hall's invert protagonist Stephen Gordon in *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) and the melancholy D'Annunzio ("Gabriele D'Annunzio and Radclyffe Hall" 843).

Italian studies[33] tend to stress D'Annunzio's virility and objectification of women, and these ideas determine and thus limit the interpretation of the texts too.

This thread of discussion is represented, for instance, by Maggie Günsberg's monograph *Gender and the Italian Stage: from the Renaissance to the Present Day* (1997). This book reiterates mainstream discussions of D'Annunzio's plays by focusing on his "masterful men," heroic supermen and representations of patriarchy as expressions of his own views of social hierarchy. Mary Ann Frese Witt's book *A Search for Modern Tragedy: Aesthetic Fascism in France and Italy* (2001) also stresses the fascist aesthetics of D'Annunzio's plays. Even though Witt claims that she does not wish to dismiss D'Annunzio as a "fascist," she argues that D'Annunzio's works display fascism's "spirit of totalitarianism" (18) and delineate the relationship between the masses and the great political leader (18). She holds that in D'Annunzio "[w]oman represents a corrupting threat to the male will to power and virile virtues" (18). Witt's observations are partly accurate, as these elements indeed appear in the plays, but it does not follow that D'Annunzio wished to promote and reiterate the spirit of totalitarianism, its moral relativism and cult of purity. The presence of these motifs in his drama works instead to point out the destructive mechanism of such totalising systems on those stigmatised individuals who became D'Annunzio's real protagonists.

I believe what is missing from studies on D'Annunzio is an approach which considers historical and biographical contexts as an important background but allows the text to speak for itself. In this endeavour, I wish to join those few scholars of Italian studies who, in some way or another, addressed the transgressive nature of D'Annunzio's plays manifested as feminist undertones, obsession with the physical/sensorial body, difference, excess or anti-authoritarianism. Such studies include works by Luisetta Elia Chomel, Lucia Re, Charlotte Ross, Katia Trifiò, John Woodhouse, Mark Choate, Giordano Bruno Guerri, Maria Giulia Dondero, Barbara Spackman and

[33] Elisa Bizzotto, Barbara Spackman and Charlotte Ross among others.

Mary Fleischer. However, none of these scholars have attempted an explicit queer reading of D'Annunzio's plays. I do not include all of these scholars' works in this review, as some of them are more pertinent to my discussion in Chapter 1. In my view, in order to get a more nuanced picture of D'Annunzio, what needs to be emphasised is not so much D'Annunzio's fascist links, excessive sexual adventures or his attractions to several women but his social and political non-conformism and the non-conformism of his theatrical characters and artistic collaborators. I argue that, in fact, the heroism D'Annunzio was obsessed with was not a hyper-masculine one, but a defiant, anti-authoritarian, anti-imperialist counter-heroism, hence Woodhouse's apposite term "Defiant Archangel" to describe him in his biography of D'Annunzio. Despite D'Annunzio's position as a privileged, white, male heterosexual playwright close to Fascist circles, in his plays he decided to replace the dominant male gaze with the female gaze, and wrote plays which portrayed the toxic mechanism and absurdity of patriarchy. He even chose to work with performers who were looked at with suspicion at the time because of their sexual or religious orientation.

The established critical approaches to the life and works of D'Annunzio have mostly focused on his representations of male heroism, sacrifice, the nation, the influence of fascist ideologies, idealised notions of femininity and masculinity as well as normative and over-sentimentalised, expressions of desire. These approaches, however, risk reducing D'Annunzio's relationship with homosexuality and women exclusively to his lesbian lovers and to his various orgies in Il Vittoriale. It is true that D'Annunzio was infamous for his sexual eccentricity, but this should not overshadow his manifold professional collaborations with feminist and lesbian artists, which relied on mutual respect and admiration, and which had more influence on D'Annunzio's drama than it has been accounted for. Moreover, most of the titles of D'Annunzio biographies idealise D'Annunzio or connect his name to sexual and phallic mastery or refer to him as the founder of Fascism, such as *The Pike: Gabriele D'Annunzio: Poet, Seducer and Preacher of War* (2013) by Lucy Hughes-Hallett, or Michael Ledeen's *D'Annunzio: the First*

Duce (2009), and Giordano Bruno Guerri's *La mia vita carnale* (My Carnal Life, 2013).

However, feminist scholar Lucia Re has written about D'Annunzio's life, collaborations and theatre without going into details about D'Annunzio's sexual intercourses with Eleonora Duse or his yearning for Ida Rubinstein's legs. These details are emphasised in all D'Annunzio biographies—written mostly by men—without doing justice to these powerful women who were obviously much more than just objects of desire for D'Annunzio. Re is the only scholar whose research explores D'Annunzio's role in supporting the fight for sexual liberation and women's emancipation, and thus breathes a needed fresh air into studies of D'Annunzio's drama and theatre. Her article "D'Annunzio, Duse, Wilde, Bernhardt" stresses the social and political importance of great New Woman actors and Oscar Wilde on D'Annunzio. Re underlines that D'Annunzio fashioned himself after these New Women, and as a result, audiences associated D'Annunzio with Wilde and the great actresses of the time (125). Since Chapter 1 is dedicated to queer subcultures and networks, I rely on Re's research more in that section.

Elisa Bizzotto's discussion of D'Annunzio and Wilde sheds a new light on D'Annunzio's perception of queer subcultures in his lifetime and stresses the strong sympathy and intellectual kinship that D'Annunzio nurtured for Wilde (125). Similar to Re, Bizzotto hints at D'Annunzio's effeminacy and homosociality, since D'Annunzio was referred to as a *camerata* which meant militant fascist but also mirrored the late-Victorian use of the word comrade for "homosexual": "D'Annunzio, himself a *camerata*, had been steeped in the Fascist cult of male friendships since his school days, and later cherished a circle of close male friends" (135).

Another queer approach to D'Annunzio has considered the anti-authoritarian, defiant, non-conformist temperaments of his life and theatre. Mark Choate has explained that D'Annunzio in his art defies "[t]raditional classification in ways that are as uncomfortable for scholars as for his contemporaries" ("D'Annunzio's Political Dramas" 367). D'Annunzio's social and political defiance and disobedience has been addressed by

Woodhouse who has demonstrated that D'Annunzio's project to occupy the city of Fiume went against the main pillars of Fascism and proved his "indifference, if not hostility, to what he considered the vulgar regime which has so often been seen as a consequence of his actions" (*Gabriele D'Annunzio* 345). He highlights that D'Annunzio did not think very highly of Mussolini as a political leader and, in fact, he had a much bigger cultural and political influence in Italy than Mussolini, hence the latter one chose to keep him under close supervision and offered him financial support to keep him away from politics (365-6).

Giordano Bruno Guerri, the President of the Fondazione Il Vittoriale degli Italiani is yet another important voice arguing for D'Annunzio's libertarianism, transgression, non-conformism and anti-authoritarianism. D'Annunzio's social and sexual non-conformism is one of the themes of Guerri's book *La mia vita carnale: Amori e passioni di Gabriele D'Annunzio* (My Carnal Life: Loves and Passions of Gabriele D'Annunzio, 2013). This book hints at the homosocial aspects of D'Annunzio's life, his sexual appeal to men and his sympathy for Oscar Wilde. In 2019, Guerri published *Disobbedisco: Cinquecento giorni di rivoluzione, Fiume 1919-1920* (I Disobey: Fifty-five Days of Revolution, Fiume 1919-1920). The book demonstrates that D'Annunzio's spectacular political performance to occupy Fiume in 1919 in fact went against most of the main pillars and values of not only Fascism but those of the entire era. Guerri's book proves that D'Annunzio was never a fascist, and Guerri finds evidence for this in D'Annunzio's villa: "among the more than twenty thousand objects in his house there is not a single bundle [fascio] or any element that recalls the regime, only those gifts that he placed in the attic"[34] (513). Furthermore, D'Annunzio never used the term "Black Shirts," he referred to them as "sordid shirts" (513). He never celebrated the regime's sacred dates and expressed his hatred for party officers (513). Guerri's study also underlines that those letters of D'Annunzio written to Mussolini which are usually discussed in terms of D'Annunzio's friendship and admiration for him are in

[34] "fra gli oltre ventimila oggetti della sua casa non si trova un solo fascio o elemento che richiami il regime, se non relegato fra i doni che riponeva nel solaio."

fact “a game of flatteries and threats which the reader often does not get”[35] (Giampiera Arrigoni qtd. in Guerri 514).

At first glance, Edward S. Brinkley’s article “Homosexuality as (Anti)Illness: Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Gabriele D’Annunzio’s *Il Piacere*” seems to offer a promising comparative analysis of the representations of *homoeros* and the dandy in Wilde’s novel and D’Annunzio’s *The Child of Pleasure* (1898), demonstrating how the former influenced homoerotic representations in the latter one. Even though the article does indeed provide an insightful comparative analysis of the two texts, instead of shedding a new light on the representations of queerness in D’Annunzio, it chooses to highlight the conservative representations of these themes in the two novels—homosexual panic, homosexuality as illness and its relation to elitism and narcissism which need to be punished. What is more, the article seems to portray D’Annunzio as an artist whose work was influenced by Oscar Wilde’s vicissitudes only in its portrayal of disgust for homosexuality and the figure of the dandy. The article thus illustrates how, in fact, decadence led to the birth of literary Fascism. Binkley’s observations are appropriate in that non-normative characters appear as subcultural homosexual males in these texts and they are surrounded by reactions of disgust and exclusion. However, Brinkley’s article seems to read these as D’Annunzio’s own opinion about homosexuality, rather than the dramatisation of the tension between stigmatised subjectivities and the oppressive discourse that labels them.

Brinkley observes that the threat of the contagion of homosexuality that characterises Wilde’s text is turned into figures of disgust in D’Annunzio’s novel, including his fetishised women but mostly Lord Heathfield who attempts in vain to seduce Andrea (78). Brinkley is right that both the protagonist Andrea and the narrator express disgust for *homoeros* represented by Heathfield. Yet I believe it is a far-fetched suggestion that the disgust that Andrea and the narrator show towards alterity, women and the character of Lord Heathfield reflect D’Annunzio’s opinions. Brinkley’s

[35] “un gioco di lusinghe e di minacce che spesso l’interlocutore non afferra.”

analysis seems to imply that D'Annunzio was an example of literary fascism, who took pleasure in representing cultural superiority in heterosexual male characters and the destruction of women and homosexual subjects (80). It is true that D'Annunzio's queer character Lord Heathfield represents the Other, stigma and abnormality which the normative discourse needs in order to be able to call itself normal compared to something. It is notable, however, that in the novel the character of Heathfield raises more sympathy in the reader than the main protagonist. In fact, reactions to Heathfield in this novel echoes the pattern that comes back in D'Annunzio's plays too: the clash between the queer and the normative. I believe it would be more accurate to say, especially in light of Elisa Bizzotto's analysis of Wilde and D'Annunzio, that this representation of Heathfield mirrors and even judges contemporary responses to Wilde across Europe by presenting the absurdity of this homosexual panic.

Katia Trifirò has approached the queerness of D'Annunzio's theatre through his theatrical experimentation, his defiance of traditional Italian theatrical norms and his fascination with eccentricity and excess. Trifirò explains that D'Annunzio began to move towards a poetic, symbolist theatre which was loathed by bourgeois audiences. D'Annunzio nonetheless dared to create a new kind of theatre and transformed the realist and naturalist dramaturgical codes of the nineteenth and early twentieth century (82). Trifirò builds on Paolo Puppa's work on D'Annunzio's and Pirandello's theatre. In addition, she compares the innovative nature of D'Annunzio's drama to that of Pier Paolo Pasolini for its similar lyrical and visionary tensions incompatible with conventional dialogical norms and for its inspiration from Greek tragedy (82). She claims that D'Annunzio's vocation for the theatre was inspired by his visit to Greece in 1895, which increased his admiration for Hellenism, Sophocles, the centrality of ritual, the sacred ceremonies and the active presence of the spectators in the theatre (83). Trifirò's reference to D'Annunzio's fascination with Hellenistic art is an important detail given his recurring representations of the beauty of adolescent male bodies like that of Saint Sebastian. Trifirò underscores D'Annunzio's wish to converge all the arts in a complex dramaturgical apparatus, which was the antithesis

of cheap bourgeois drama that preferred high-flown, ornate dialogues, domestic interiors, and unheroic bourgeois quotidian atmospheres (86). I also believe that this bourgeois theatrical tradition was not only unheroic but antierotic too, as it never represented *eros* in any explicit form, while D'Annunzio made desire and sexuality central to his drama.

Finally, even though Jason James Hartford's book *Sexuality, Iconography, and Fiction in French: Queering the Martyr* (2018) is not primarily about D'Annunzio's theatre, it is the only book that has called D'Annunzio's drama queer thus far. Hartford's monograph is a useful point of reference in my dramaturgical analysis of D'Annunzio's *Le Martyre* which applies the framework of the Bible and the martyr motif in an inverted way to express homoerotic content. Hartford has equally underlined that D'Annunzio created the first queer Sebastian on the stage and in literature (45).

Through my focus on non-normative sexualities and queer moments in the cultural networks and scripts of Yeats and D'Annunzio, this study thus intends to provide an original contribution to comparative, transnational and queer approaches to modern Irish and Italian drama as well as to queer modernist studies. To contextualise this queer research, I explore the queerness of Irish and Italian cultural and historical contexts as well as Yeats's and D'Annunzio's networks in my following chapter.

CHAPTER 1

QUEER COUNTRIES

"There is a great difficulty in writing of the women of the first ten years of the twentieth century. This is to be the Woman's Century. In it she is to awake from her long sleep and come into her kingdom; but when I look about me I find myself surrounded by the most terribly contradictory facts. We know there is to be a revaluation of all values—we know that old rubbish is to be burnt up, that the social world is to be melted down and remolded 'nearer to the heart's desire'"[36] (Florence Farr, *Modern Woman: Her Intentions*, Preface).

"I do not care if they lied, betrayed or sinned—if they were born perverse—because I feel that they have cried—they have suffered either for having lied, or for having betrayed or for having loved … I identify with them and search for them, I search for them not because I love suffering, but because women's grief is the biggest and most nuanced, it is sweeter and more complex than the grief attributed to men"[37] (Eleonora Duse's letter to Francesco D'Arcais qtd. in Lucia Re, "D'Annunzio, Duse, Wilde, Bernhardt" 132).

Introduction

I begin this chapter with the words of two New Woman actors, Florence Farr and Eleonora Duse, who created significant queer/feminist subcultures in their countries and whose theatrical collaboration with Yeats and D'Annunzio was an ethical action aimed to help women's emancipation. Farr and Duse were leading feminist voices and queer icons of their time

[36] I have used the online version of this book which does not include page numbers: *Modern Woman: Her Intentions*. Hermetic Academy Library, 1910, https://www.hermetics.net/media-library/mysticism/florence-farr-modern-woman-her-intentions.

[37] "Io non guardo se hanno mentito, se hanno tradito, se hanno peccato-se nacquero perverse—purché io senta che esse hanno pianto—hanno sofferto o per mentire o per tradire o per amare ... io mi metto con loro e per loro e le frugo, frugo non per mania di sofferenza, ma perché il compianto femminile e il più grande e dettagliato, è più dolce e più completo che non il compianto che accordano gli uomini."

due to the androgyny and sexual ambiguity they conveyed on the stage. They were both actors and activists, whose ideas went against the mainstream political discourses of the time: they criticised the institution of marriage, demanded that stigma should be removed from single men and women, encouraged divorce and the acceptance of all forms of love.[38] Farr had a life-long influence on Yeats just like Duse on D'Annunzio, and through their acting, they wished to raise awareness of women's oppressed status in society.

Even though my approach in this thesis is predominantly dramaturgical in order to demonstrate how the scripts can offer spaces for queer readings, the contexts in which the texts were written equally inform and enrich my analysis. D'Annunzio and Yeats had diverse queer and feminist networks and backgrounds to their plays and production histories, which made their works more sympathetic towards queer structures of feeling and feminist ideas. The role of this chapter is to provide a summary of these contexts and networks. Moreover, this chapter outlines the main commonalities between the Irish and the Italian political, cultural and literary contexts in terms of their attitude to gender, sexuality and the family. The cultural and historical backgrounds help highlight the subversive, anti-normative potential of the scripts and the way these works reflected their time's often contradictory gender and sexual politics. However, this is not a thesis on fascism or fascist sexual politics. Instead, I focus on the period between 1880s and 1930s to identify a growing presence of repressive sexual and gender politics in Ireland and Italy against which D'Annunzio's and Yeats's scripts revolted. Occasionally, I refer to the significant queer aspects of the pre-nineteenth century era to point out the deeply-rooted queerness of Irish and Italian culture, society and literature.

[38] To demonstrate these points, in the following chapters I provide examples from Farr's *Modern Woman* (1910) and Michele De Benedetti's 1913 interview with Duse entitled "La Duse parla del femminismo" (Duse speaks about feminism) which I quote and translate from Anna Laura Mariani's article "Sibilla Aleramo. Significato di tre incontri col teatro: il presonaggio di Nora, Giacinta Pezzana, Eleonora Duse." *Teatro e Storia: orientamenti per una rifondazione degli studi teatrali,* vol. 2, no. 1, 1987, pp. 67-133. http://www.teatroestoria.it/indici.php?id_volume=57

Irish and Italian theatre and literature were equally infused with homoeroticism even if mostly in coded, ambiguous ways, therefore I dedicate sections to the queerness of the two countries' literary and theatre history. Besides, I discuss the first prominent representatives of the fight for sexual liberation and women's emancipation including Eleonora Duse, Ida Rubinstein, Sibilla Aleramo, Lina Poletti and Irma and Emma Gramatica who were part of D'Annunzio's network. In the case of Ireland, I focus on Florence Farr and Eva Gore-Booth in particular, who had a lasting impact on Yeats's imagination in terms of sexuality and performance. Furthermore, I explore Southern Italy's queer tourism and Oscar Wilde's relationship with Italy and D'Annunzio. Since the legacy of Wilde in Ireland and in Yeats's works is incorporated in my chapter on Yeats's drama, I do not discuss this topic here.

A short section within the chapter looks at D'Annunzio's Fiume project of 1919, which was an attempt to create a libertarian city-state with a highly progressive, feminist constitution denouncing any sort of discrimination. If it had been realised, it would have been the first constitution to allow women to participate in political elections. Later, I explore the connection between the colonial imagery, sexuality and gender, stressing the contradictory relationship between the national and the sexual in both countries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Irish and Italian nationalisms put pressure on both women and men, enforcing an obsession with family and reproduction. Yet such excessive focus on sexuality inevitably led to contradictions, including homoeroticism and homosociality, which might have informed the scripts. This chapter thus draws on Sedgwick's idea that the homosocial cannot be strictly separated from the homosexual and the homoerotic. The homosocial belongs to the orbit of desire too, since desire is not simply an emotion but an "affective or social force, the glue" (*Between Men* 2) which, paradoxically often helped maintain patriarchal power and nationalist organisations (25).

Finally, I briefly discuss Yeats's and D'Annunzio's move towards anti-mimetic, physical theatre which prioritised the body and desire, thus it defied the moral prudery of the time. In D'Annunzio's case, it was mainly

Duse's, Isadora Duncan's and Rubinstein's stage presence and fluid movements that raised his interest in physical theatre, while Yeats was influenced by Eastern performance techniques and modern solo dancers, most directly by Michio Itō.

Through a focus on historical, biographical and cultural materials, this chapter provides the backgrounds against which the plays' protagonists are revolting. The contexts help reveal that Yeats's and D'Annunzio's plays indeed violated their time's ideas about sexuality, reproduction, patriarchy and the family, challenged authoritarian normativity and raised awareness of the mistreatment of sexual minorities and women. This chapter thus underscores that Yeats's and D'Annunzio's drama is part of a long history of queer literature which has been reflecting the tension between anti-normative forces and the scientific/political discourse that labels difference as abnormal.

1. Queer Italia: History, Art, Literature

Italy has a peculiarly rich queer literary and cultural tradition which is rarely acknowledged, as the queerness of the texts is often coded. Cestaro explains in his introduction to *Queer Italia* that Italian literature through the centuries has reflected "the difficult positioning of Italian culture and literature between the classical and the Catholic, between ancient organisations of human sexual activity that left some space for same-sex desire and Christian efforts to redefine and delimit it" ("Introduction: Queer Italia" 1). Yet Italian and American criticism have tended to overlook the queerness of Italian texts at the center of the canon (2). The aim of Cestaro's edited volume with various Italian literary texts is the same as my purpose with D'Annunzio's scripts: to uncover the complex workings of desire in the texts which speak both to their past and our present.

The queerness of Italy's Roman past is widely acknowledged, as great emperors (Caesar and Hadrian) were involved in same-sex activities, male homosexuality was common practice in baths, and Roman poets from Catullus to Juvenal and Virgil all sang the noble love between men. Cestaro stresses that this queer past became one of the main contradictions of Italian fascism which was famously obsessed with the idea of *Romanitá*, even

though "[h]omosexual love [was] there in every foundation of the empire" (3).

Homosexual activity was common in late medieval monastic communities as well, where the practice of adolescent boy love in pedagogical contexts flourished (4). In medieval Italy, there was an "aggressive ecclesiastical denial of same-sex desire" (4), especially in the sermons of Giordano of Pisa, who, however, initiated a vernacular discourse on same-sex love. Cestaro highlights the male same-sex activity of Renaissance Florence too, despite draconian attempts to legislate against it. In fact, the entire court of Pope Leo X and Giovanni de' Medici had queer erotics (6). This same-sex activity was accompanied by a queer literary production: while Dante and his Tuscan cohort contributed to "the heterosexual business of *dolce stil nuovo*" (5), a smaller group of men expressed their desire for other men in love lyrics, such as Cecco Nuccoli and Mario Ceccoli (5). Benvenuto Cellini was the most famous gay artist of Renaissance Italy and the first man convicted of sodomy. Cellini's case was the first in which the national and the sexual clashed as a public scandal: "Cellini went on to proclaim his love of men in defiance of the Florentine court's attempt to humiliate him and has become a sort of early gay hero" (6).

Lesbianism has been marginalised in the Italian literary canon, yet Lodovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1727)—a major influence on Italian modernists—portrayed hints of lesbianism. What connects Ariosto's treatment of same-sex desire to D'Annunzio's plays is that despite the lesbian undertones, the outcome is still heterosexualised. Moreover, Ariosto's protagonist Fiordispina resembles D'Annunzio's heroines as "an early gender warrior who subverts binary heteronormativity" (Cestaro 6). However, the first clearly lesbian representation was offered by Italian theatre and the *commedia dell'arte* in 1617 in Flamino Scala's play *The Fake Husband, A Comedy,* which was the play version of an earlier *commedia dell'arte* sketch *Il marito* (The Husband) featuring a lesbian marriage.[39] Cestaro emphasises the queerness of *commedia dell'arte* which

[39] *Commedia dell'arte* was an early form of professional theatre which emerged in Italy in the 1540s and occupied a central place in early modern Italian culture (Kerr 105). The name

is “a genre that exerted constant, subversive pressure on social norms of class, gender, and sexuality” (7) in an age when female and male sodomy was deeply condemned due to Franciscan friar Lodovico Maria Sinistrani’s *Peccatum mutum* which called for torture and death by fire for people engaging in same-sex relations (7).

Romantic and Risorgimento writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries likewise conveyed queer sensibility. The most notable examples include Vittorio Alfieri’s autobiography which tells frankly about his desire for adolescent novices; Giacomo Leopardi’s passionate love letters to his live-in companion Antonio Ranieri; and Luigi Settembrini’s *I neoplatonici* which is an erotically explicit tale of Greek love between young boys even though the state banned its publication until 1977 (Cestaro 7).

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Italian literature saw an increase in representations of lesbian relationships. Charlotte Ross has argued that there was a widely accepted and fairly visible lesbian subculture in nineteenth-century Italy, and female same-sex inversion was not a taboo topic at all in post-unification Italy (“Italian Medical and Literary Discourses” 228). The upsurge in homoerotic literary content was due to the fact that “sexual science and recognizably modern notions of sexual identity had begun to take hold” (Cestaro 8). From the 1890s, Italian sexologists created a variety of discourses about lesbian desire, which was further circulated in scientific and literary texts, even though these discourses were either outright condemnations of female homoerotic desire or voyeuristic depictions of sexual intimacy between women (Ross, “Italian Medical and Literary Discourses” 228). Only in literary texts did lesbian desire appear in positive contexts.[40]

---

of the genre “referred to both the professional status and the improvised performance style of the first commercial theatre companies that appeared in all the major centers in the north of Italy in the mid-sixteenth century” (Kerr 105). The major innovation of this genre was that it “institutionalized the presence of the actress on the Western stage” (Kerr 105), and more importantly, introduced the first female transvestite roles to Western theatre (Kerr 105).

[40] See also Chiara Beccalossi’s monograph *Female Sexual Inversion: Same-Sex Desires in Italian and British Sexology, c. 1870-1920*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

From the turn of the century to the 1920s, a more intense scientific discourse emerged on lesbianism in Italy by sexologists, which had an influence on literary representations. Medical discourses circulated in Italy already in the 1880s, as Arrigo Tamassia wrote an influential article "On Sexual Inversion" in 1878 and Guglielmo Cantanaro discussed sexual inversion specifically in women in 1883. Even though these works elevated homosexuality in the mainstream discourse, they pathologised it and compared inversions to anomaly and insanity (Danna 118). The following excerpt from Cantanaro's article could be a description of a Dannunzian character or the unconventional women he worked with:

> She shows no sign of attachment to her daughter, no interest in domestic life, no joy in wearing women's clothes or performing the tasks of her sex, no desire to be admired or pursued by young men, much less know the torturous delights of marriage, no sign of the reserve and modesty that becomes a young woman. Instead, she prefers a disordered life, virile labors, repugnance towards men and feelings for her own sex. (qtd. in Danna 119)

Cantanaro also condemned men who differed from the norm: "The man who never feels drawn to the enchanting beauty of women is not a man; the woman who feels no desire to be wrapped in two strong, manly arms in not a woman" (qtd. in Danna 119). It was Cesare Lombroso who, in the 1880s, criminalised homosexual activity, defined lesbianism as a degeneration and condemned all types of excessive sexual behaviour, the so-called excess libido (Danna 119).

This repressive context, however, did not prevent artists from writing novels about lesbian relationships. Interestingly, the first ones were written by male artists under the influence of Decadence[41]—which will be the case with

[41] According to the definition provided by the website of Tate Britain, "Decadence generally refers to an extreme manifestation of symbolism which appeared towards the end of the nineteenth century and emphasised the spiritual, the morbid and the erotic" ("Decadence"). Moreover, "[d]ecadents were inspired partly by a disgust at the corruption and rampant materialism of the modern world and partly by a related desire to escape into realms of the aesthetic, fantastic, erotic or religious" ("Decadence").

Irish representations of lesbianism too. In 1889, Alfredo Oriani wrote his novel *Beyond* followed by Enrico Butti's 1892 *The Robot*. Like D'Annunzio's plays, these novels criticise traditional family, patriarchy and marriage for condemning passion to life in prison, and they mingle heterosexual romance with lesbianism, exalting female sensuality (Danna 120). The year 1908 saw the publication of the first lesbian pornography novel *Sappho's Legacy* by a woman who published books under the pseudonym Fede (Danna 123). Following Fede's novel, in 1919 the bisexual Sibilla Aleramo—D'Annunzio's admirer, lover and friend who was often referred to as "D'Annunzio in drag" (Bassanese 149)—published *Il passaggio* (The Passage), the first lesbian novel by a queer woman. The novel was inspired by her relationship with the first lesbian and cross-dressing Italian playwright Lina Poletti. As Danna explains, "Aleramo had become the very emblem of Italian feminism after having left behind a son and a husband she did not love" (124) and whom she was forced to marry even after he had raped her (124). Aleramo also published *Una donna* (A Woman, 1906), an influential novel which denounces the condition of women in early twentieth-century Italy and which launched Italian feminism. Moreover, 1919 saw the publication of Mura's (Maria Volpi Nannipieri's) novel *Perfide* which portrays the love between two women. Mura enjoyed popularity among women after WWI (Danna 125), thus homosexuality became a very popular and accepted theme in artistic and literary subcultures in Italy and had the potential to reach other women.

Later in the 1920s, the ideas of the first homosexual rights movement in Germany found their way to Italy. In 1921, Aldo Mieli founded the first periodical, *Review of Sexual Studies*, *Demography and Eugenics*, which refused to see homosexuality as pathological. Yet due to the cultural politics of the fascist regime, they had to change their name to *Genesis* in 1931 and modify the contents significantly according to fascist sexual politics (Danna 126). Another lesbian novel by a male writer Guido Stacchini was, however, published during the heyday of fascism with the title *Lesbiche* which expressed an explicit adoration for lesbians (Danna 127). Guido da Verona further provoked the patience of his time's normative, fascist gatekeepers

with his parody of Alessandro Manzoni's 1828 *I promessi sposi* (The Betrothed), stressing the homoerotic relationship between the nun character (Monaca di Monza) and Lucia the protagonist, who often intimately touch and caress each other. As a result, de Verona's books were burned by irate Manzonians, gatekeepers of what could be said about Manzoni (Danna 127).

In 1930, another provocation for the fascist regime was the publication of the Italian translation of Marguerite Radclyffe Hall's lesbian novel *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) which D'Annunzio admired and whose author became his close friend in the 1930s.[42] The fascist regime countered this publication with E. F. W. Eberhard's *Feminism and Decadence: Sexual Aspects of the Fight for Female Emancipation* which was "a veritable anthology of misogynist commonplaces" (Danna 128) considering the presence of masculine women in society as a sure sign of decadence (129). What is more, the book's anonymous Italian editor followed the fascist policy of silence and denial around homosexuality, claiming that such "dangers simply [did] not exist in Italy, or at least they [were] not as serious a problem as they seem[ed] to be in other countries" (qtd. in Danna 129). Danna stresses that "despite all the 'scientific' attempts to pathologise love between women and brand them 'beasts,' more often (and with much greater verve) the literature of the period offers exalted portraits of passionate women. Certainly more beauty than beast" (129). The literature of the period, therefore, reflected this tension between decadent, dissident forces and the scientific, political discourse that condemned all sorts of deviations from the norm.

Charlotte Ross's research explores the queer subcultures in Fascist Italy. Her article focuses on the censorship of a less known Italian novel *Il suicidio di un esteta* (The Suicide of an Aesthete) written by Pier Leone Ticchioni d'Amelio in 1930. Ross highlights that representations of failure, breakdown of social relations, emotional yearning for same-sex characters, immoral heterosexual liaisons, effeminacy, too strong female desire for men

[42] I provide more details on the friendship between D'Annunzio and Radclyffe Hall in the introduction to my chapter on D'Annunzio.

and any kind of non-reproductive or amoral desires were deemed as obscenity by fascist censors, as these offended the national sentiment according to Article 339 of the 1889 Zanardelli Code and Article 112 of the 1926 laws of Public Security ("La carezza incompiuta" 404-7). Other writers such as Aldo Palazzeschi and Giovanni Comisso represented homoerotic desire in code by seemingly condemning it or by projecting it on female characters (404).

Ross further explains that "the boundaries between acceptable representation of sexuality and 'obscenity' were porous and shifting in this period" (405). Some homoerotic content could still circulate in Italy even after it was censored, such as Marguerite Radclyffe Hall's novel *The Well of Loneliness* which was banned in 1935, yet copies continued to circulate secretly (406). This was especially true for theatre: during fascism, "the dramas were seen as an innocent form of entertainment" (Bizzotto 136). For instance, Wilde's plays were perceived by fascist critics as less dangerous than his prose writings, and even some of his prose works were included in the fascist literary canon, mostly his children stories (Bizzotto 136).

Even though theatre was seen as a more innocent form of entertainment due to its elusiveness, it nonetheless offered queer spaces in Italy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries through melodrama and opera. These genres were highly popular among people, and they reinforced and even celebrated the stereotype of the Italian male as effusive and volatile, excessively theatrical (histrionic), melodramatic, indolent or effeminate, and ready to express emotions openly (Champagne, *Italian Masculinity* 2). John Champagne's work draws attention to a trend in Italian culture and literature to portray Italian men as sexually ambiguous and polyphonic (5), which he explains not only with Italy's queer cultural past but with the contradictory historical circumstances of the time.

Champagne stresses in *Italian Masculinity as Queer Melodrama* that even today, non-Italian newspapers reiterate the link between Italian men and melodrama through the figure of Silvio Berlusconi (3). Even though Italian literature itself often reiterated this connection, Italian male scholars tend to

criticise this stereotype which they link to "a feminized and feminizing sentimentality, to a rhetorical quality of Italians that severs their relationship to the world and catapults them into the melodramatic world of music and opera" (Stuart-Steinberg qtd. in Champagne, *Italian Masculinity* 3). Effeminacy became such a widespread trope that Giosué Carducci called Italians people of *cicisbei,* as *cicisbeo* stands for effeminate, indolent nobleman. Fascism tried to defy this stereotype, but eventually they ended up confirming it: "While Italian fascism's antibourgeois tendencies privileged embodiments of masculinity that challenged the cliché of the *cicisbeo*, the excessiveness of these embodiments, such as the famous nude statues surrounding the Foro Mussolini, always threatened to reconfirm what they set out to deny" (Champagne, *Italian Masculinity* 4). Inevitably, one of the many contradictions of Western masculinity is its excessive virility which always entails effeminacy and homoeroticism: "As the product of a complex series of contradictory historical circumstances, representations of the Italian male deconstruct binaries of masculine and feminine, active and passive, and, most recently, homosexual and heterosexual" (Champagne, *Italian Masculinity* 4).

Opera is still seen as Italy's most significant contribution to melodrama. Champagne focuses on Giacomo Puccini's *Tosca* and *La Rondine* whose characters are emotional and melancholic. These two operas articulate criticism of normative masculinities and sympathise with women who suffer the abuses of patriarchal society. As a result, Puccini's works were accused of being unpatriotic and feminine: "Puccini's work is feminine and suited to feminine (and feminized) audiences—which is to say decadent, childish, impotent and all the rest" (Earle qtd. in Champagne, *Italian Masculinity* 92). Like D'Annunzio's, Puccini's female characters could be interpreted in two different ways, but this ambiguity heightened their subversive potential: "in Puccini, this representation of the sexually tarnished woman is always in tension with an acknowledgement that forces beyond her control—forces directly linked to male power and prestige—are equally if not more responsible for her unhappy fate" (*Italian Masculinity* 88). Moreover, Puccini's complex female character Tosca was played by Europe's most

(in)famous New Woman Sarah Bernhardt, who featured in D'Annunzio's *The Dead City* as well. Even though Puccini's works were condemned as unpatriotic and feminine, his texts resonate with fascist ideas too (*Italian Masculinity* 93), thus reflecting the forces that were clashing in his time's socio-political arenas.

Even though Italy is still one of the most conservative countries in terms of its attitude to homosexuality, it has come a long way despite the influence of the Catholic Church. In the 1960s and 1970s, Italy saw the rise of ardent political feminist and gay rights movements, Mario Mieli published *Elementi di critica omosessuale* (Elements of a Homosexual Critique) in 1977 and criticism of patriarchy and patriarchal capitalism began to be seen as the path towards sexual liberation (Cestaro 9). In July 2000, Rome organised World Pride which became a historical turning point in the Italian gay rights movement (Cestaro 1) and gay authors and characters have become much more visible in contemporary Italy (10). Cestaro rightly stresses that there are so many Italian texts out there still waiting to be explored through a queer lens, and I contend that D'Annunzio's scripts belong to them. Queering his drama is important in order to "challenge the heteronormative bias of so much Italian criticism to date and to affirm the longevity and prominence of queer desire in Italian culture" (10).

2. Eleonora Duse and Italy's New Women

Eleonora Duse, Sibilla Aleramo, Lina Poletti and Irma and Emma Gramatica were the five women who most visibly represented Italy's queer literary subculture and they were all closely associated with D'Annunzio's networks. Lucia Re's research focuses on some of these independent New Women and Sarah Bernhardt who was worshipped in Italy, becoming D'Annunzio's close friend.[43] Re's article underscores the social and political importance of New Woman actors, as the end of the nineteen century brought a radical change in European theatre whereby the "actress"

[43] Bernhardt was an influential figure for generations of women including Duse, as she dared to contradict existing commonplaces about women as passive and weak (Re, "D'Annunzio, Duse, Wilde, Bernhardt" 121) and she could casually move between female and male roles (126). See also Pamela Corbin's article "She's old enough to be a beautiful young boy: Sarah Bernhardt, breeches roles and the poetics of aging." *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2012, pp. 47-66.

became much more important than the "actor" and it was the great actress that could attract masses to the theatre ("D'Annunzio, Duse, Wilde, Bernhardt" 115). Re connects this phenomenon with the women's emancipation movement in other parts of Europe:

> The years of the triumph of these so-called "prime donne" are the same years when in France, Italy and England the suffragist movement and organised feminism were born, and their role in society and in the relationship between the sexes was debated in literature as well.[44] (115)

Re continues that in this debate New Women had a seminal role, as they embodied the potential of women to be independent (115), suggesting that women can have multiple roles besides and beyond the domestic one (116). Re's discussion implies that working with these women, who were the only women referred to as geniuses at the time, was a very important political and social statement in an age that only accepted male geniuses. New Women actors could influence masses of people and thanks to their almost sacred position, they could portray sexually ambiguous, transgressive and anti-authoritarian characters without major consequences. They were also referred to as phallic women and were compared to Oscar Wilde, which made them more disturbing for normative society:

> The phallic woman, armed and cruel (or disguised) is in a certain sense *not* a woman; yet it is not possible to say for sure, if not with a paradox worthy of Wilde, that she is therefore a man. Rather, she exhibits a sexual ambiguity, a "dangerous" oscillation which Wilde could identify with.[45] (Re 129)

[44] "Gli anni del trionfo delle cosiddette prime donne sono gli stessi anni in cui in Francia, in Italia e in Inghilterra nascono il suffragismo e il femminismo organizzato, e anche nella letteratura si dibattono accesamente il ruolo della donna nella società e il rapporto tra i sessi."

[45] "La donna fallica, armata e crudele (o travestita) *non* è in un certo senso una donna; né si può dire certo, se non con un paradosso degno di Wilde, che perciò essa sia un uom essa esibisce piuttosto un'ambiguità sessuale, un'oscillazione 'pericolosa' in cui Wilde non poteva non riconoscersi."

D'Annunzio's decision to write for the stage was informed by his collaboration with Duse from the 1890s, when he wrote his first plays, namely *The Dead City* (1896), *Francesca da Rimini* (1901) and *The Daughter of Iorio* (1903), which were all performed in the 1920s as well in front of fascist audiences. Re is the first scholar to acknowledge that Duse was not merely a passive inspirational muse figure for D'Annunzio, but an active force and equal partner in his work (118). Re explains that Duse's gestures raised D'Annunzio's interest in a new type of tragedy which was classical in a Greek way but also modern in terms of psychology and politics (119). Duse thus made the appearance of the playwright D'Annunzio possible (119).

Duse was a prominent feminist voice in Italy, who had sympathy for the most vulnerable. She felt an immense sympathy for the hurts and stories of the characters she embodied on the stage, as they were theatrical representations of historically marginalised subjectivities, as the quotation from Duse's 1884 letter at the beginning of this chapter illustrates. This empathic acting style of Duse influenced other modernists too, including Federico Garcia Lorca, George Bernard Shaw, James Joyce, D'Annunzio, Rainer Maria Rilke and Pirandello among others (Re 134).

Figure 1: *Eleonora Duse* (1890) by Lee Strasberg. Source: theactorswork.com. Web. 29 Jan. 2021.

In her article, "Eleonora Duse and Women," Re focuses on other thus far neglected aspects of Duse's contribution to the fight for sexual liberation in Italy. There was a significant feminist and queer subculture that existed in Italy from the end of the nineteenth century and whose members included some of Eleonora Duse's closest friends such as Ofelia Mazzini, Lina Poletti, Enif Robert, Matilde Serao and Sibilla Aleramo, who were partly involved in theatre life. Re has emphasised the importance of disclosing various kinds of "discourses,

relations and exchanges between and among women, casting women in alternative positions of cultural empowerment that do not fit traditional patriarchal scenarios and have in fact, up to now, been hardly visible" (363).

Duse's art influenced a generation of both Italian and international male writers, including Irish writers such as Joyce and Shaw, for whom she became "a source of creative inspiration" (347). Duse often dismissed authorial intentions and reshaped characters, acting as an independent actress-author-director: she "was a uniquely powerful, original, and defiant interpreter of texts" (348). Duse influenced women intellectuals as well: Matilde Serao, Sibilla Aleramo, Grazia Deledda and the cross-dressing lesbian playwright and critic Cordula/Lina Poletti (349). Duse thus became a feminist icon in Italy before World War One, mostly due to her roles in Henrik Ibsen's plays as Nora, Hedda and Ellida with which she toured Europe at the turn of the century (349). Her role as a feminist icon was due "to her new, both empathic and critical approach to the predicaments of women and femininity under patriarchy" (349). Re further explains that Duse "highlighted and heightened the capacity of the theatre to represent identity and gender as inherently performative and constructed, thus dismantling the myth of an essential femininity or masculinity, or even of an essential, unified, individual self" (349).

Moreover, her stage presence was queer, as her acting style was a spectacle of strangeness, disruption and reminded audiences of the neurosis afflicting the modern woman, yet for women in the audience she represented the possibility of freedom from patriarchy (349). She raised desire in both men and women:

> The strength and charisma that emanated from her persona, and some of her powerful roles and performances made her appear subtly virile — at once masculine and feminine. Duse's eroticism on the stage, like her acting in general, was always very subtle, made of small, intimate, and often surprising gestures that "seduced" both men and women. (350)

Re criticises existing scholarship which still insists on looking at Duse within a heterosexual and patriarchal framework, reducing her role in D'Annunzio's life to that of a passive, subordinated muse figure and to a mere object of heterosexual desire (350).

Duse raised her voice against patriarchy in Michele De Benedetti's 1913 interview with her entitled "La Duse parla del femminismo" (Duse speaks about feminism).[46] Duse called for a new type of education for all women to help their emancipation (Mariani 133).[47] She criticised Italian society for seeing women suitable only for love, motherhood, marriage, housework and reproduction, while in other areas woman is kept in moral, sexual and intellectual subjection (Mariani 131). She speaks up for women whom society stigmatises because they do not want to or could not marry:

> it [society] then considers the woman who does not have family as a fallen woman, a woman whom even if due to simple vicissitude of fate, no one wanted. Because men … cannot admit that a woman can freely and happily live without a man, that she can refuse to choose a husband, and that between the prospect of an unhappy, dubious marriage and that of remaining a "spinster," she has preferred the second one.[48] (qtd. in Mariani 132)

Duse contends that women's anger is entirely justified, as "[t]he laws do not make her equal to man"[49] (qtd. in Mariani 131), even when women exceed men in all fields of life. Duse laments that women are diminished in men's eyes, deemed and treated as inferior even when in terms of productivity,

[46] The interview was reproduced by Anna Laura Mariani in her article "Sibilla Aleramo. Significato di tre incontri col teatro: il presonaggio di Nora, Giacinta Pezzana, Eleonora Duse." *Teatro e Storia: orientamenti per una rifondazione degli studi teatrali*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1987, pp. 67-133.

[47] As we shall see later, these thoughts echo the ideas of Eva Gore-Booth's feminist journal *Urania* founded in 1916.

[48] "e considera poi la donna che non ha famiglia, come una donna *ratée*, una donna che sia anche per semplice vicissitudine di fortuna, *nessuno ha voluto*. Perché gli uomini [...] non ammettono nemmeno che una donna possa liberamente, serenamente vivere senza l'uomo, che abbia essa rifiutato di prender marito, che fra la prospettiva di un matrimonio infelice e dubbio e quella di rimanere «zitella» abbia preferito questo secondo stato."

[49] "Le leggi non la fanno eguale all'uomo."

energy, intelligence and will-power they prove to be equal or superior to them (Mariani 131).

Duse thus engaged critically with her time's sexual and gender politics, which was inseparable from her acting. One of her last roles on the stage was that of Ellida in Ibsen's *The Lady from the Sea* staged in May 1921, and whose character represented for Duse a woman's needs and desires in a male-centred world, as she revealed in her personal notes included in the scripts (see Re, "Eleonora Duse and Women" 352). As Re has explained, after Mussolini's seizure of power in 1922, Duse gave up her hope to renew Italian theatre. Even though Mussolini and Silvio D'Amico wanted to include her in their project to create a state-supported theatre under Fascism, Duse declined the offer and refused Mussolini's proposal for a pension (Re, "Eleonora Duse and Women" 352-3). Instead of collaborating with fascists, she went abroad and toured Ibsen's plays with her own theatre company between 1921 and 1924 (Re, "Eleonora Duse and Women" 353).

Duse also had intimate bonds with much younger women who admired her confidence and authority, and who acquired a stronger sense of self through their bonds with her. For instance, in the biography of Duse written by her friend Ofelia Mazzoni in 1927 entitled *Con la Duse: ricordi e aneddoti* (With Duse: Memories and Anecdotes) there is a play of reciprocal mirroring. Mazzoni admires Duse's erotic maleness and virile forehead: "What attracted her to Duse was this very 'virility', and the fact that Duse was able nevertheless to triumph as a woman on the stage" (Re 357). Duse also admired Mazzoni and offered her professional and emotional support, especially when Mazzoni could not succeed as a stage actress (357). Re argues that

> Duse, through her work with the interpretations of women's stories on the stage and through her complex web of — often very intimate — friendships with other, and especially younger women, enabled the emergence and recognition of a female symbolic that contributed to foster a new sense of

> legitimacy for women's thought, women's writing, women's experiences, women's desires, women's gendered subjectivity. (353)

Lina Poletti and Sibilla Aleramo were both influenced by Duse and became two of Italy's first feminist and queer voices. Aleramo had an affair with D'Annunzio, but scholars often reduce her merely to such heterosexual affairs. Guerri, for instance, presents her as a woman devouring sex and longing for D'Annunzio's phallus (*La mia vita carnale* 114), while Aleramo's relationship with women was characterised by immense tenderness and sensuality. Guerri acknowledges, however, that her transgressive approach to sexuality disturbed the moralists of her time: "A liberty that the moralists of the era do not forgive her: an otherwise intelligent man, Giuseppe Prezzolini, describes her as a 'sexual washhouse of Italian culture'"[50] (113).

Poletti and Aleramo became involved with each other at the National Congress of Italian Women in Rome in April 1908, when Poletti was still a student, while Aleramo was already a prominent figure of Italian literature. The result of their two-year relationship and extensive correspondence was Aleramo's influential lesbian novel *The Passage* (1919). Ellen Zitani has explored the intimacy and sensuality of their relationship through their correspondence: "To Sibilla, loving Lina was a sensual experience. Through sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch Sibilla lives her love for Lina" (1). Connecting the experience of same-sex desire to an intense sensual experience appears in D'Annunzio's plays too, who knew these women very well and whose plays feature female bonds that focus on sight, smell, taste and touch. Moreover, Aleramo's and Poletti's correspondence refers to their relationship as an incestuous mother-daughter bond which not only resonates with D'Annunzio's themes but it also reflects that "the mother-daughter type of lesbian relationship was common in the late 19th century" (Zitani 8). In another article, Zitani adds that "[c]ertainly Aleramo and Poletti must have faced some criticism towards their relationship, but the

[50] "Una libertà che i moralisti dell'epoca non le perdonano: un uomo di solito intelligente, Giuseppe Prezzolini, la definisce il «lavatoio sessuale della cultura italiana»."

writing that Aleramo *did* produce during her time with Poletti exists as one of the most extensive collections of lesbian love letters from this time period" ("Sibilla Aleramo, Lina Poletti, Giovanni Cena" 119). After her relationship with Aleramo, Poletti became involved with Duse in 1910 and just like D'Annunzio, she began writing for the theatre thanks to Duse's influence, dedicating two of her plays *Arianna* and *Incesto* (Incest) to Duse.[51]


in una straordinaria galleria

ai regnanti d'Europa della fine dell'Ottocento (con i rari ritratti dello zar Nicola II e famiglia, 2.400 euro), alla guerra di Libia, al Giappone degli anni Trenta, alla Grande Depressione americana del 1929.

La scena è la sezione più ampia, con Sarah Bernhardt (protagonista di un intero album di 104 foto, 8.000 euro), con Frédérick Lemaître e con le celebri cortigiane immortalate da Èdes; foto di scena di Nadar; gli attori della Comédie-française; molti autori e impresari teatrali (foto con dedica di Dumas padre). La lirica dell'Ottocento, con tutti i personaggi di spicco della scena mondiale (Lina Cavalieri, Enrico Caruso). Il teatro italiano dell'Ottocento e del primo Novecento (Salvini, Rosoli, Duse, Gramatica, e una serie di foto di scena dalla prima della Figlia di Iorio di D'Annunzio, con costumi di Michetti). Buffalo Bill ritratto al Caffè Greco di Roma (3.000 euro). Il varietà (Mistinguett, Josephine Baker) e il cinema (Garbo, Valentino, Hepburn, Grant, Monroe, Bergman, Totò, Magnani, Fellini, Antonioni). Spicca il ritratto di Ava Gardner fotografata da Man Ray (18.500 euro).

L'artista. Ritratti di scrittori e artisti fotografati da Nadar, Carjat, Adam-Salomon, Disderi, Petit (Hugo, Baudelaire, Dumas, Flaubert, Zola, Gautier); un intero album su Tolstoj (4.500 euro). Molti gli scrittori e i musicisti italiani (Manzoni, Aleardi, Praga, Fogazzaro, Rossini, Verdi); Puccini con dedica (1.400 euro). Stupenda è la foto di grande formato con dedica di Amalia Guglielminetti (2.200 euro); Sbarbaro e Montale con dedica (950 e 700 euro); ritratto di Frida Kahlo (3.500 euro). Infine una raccolta di ritratti di pittori del Novecento tra cui Chagall, Picasso (1.000 euro), Fontana, Manzoni.

Il catalogo Volti e figure. Il ritratto nella storia della fotografia, a cura di Linda Fagnotta, con un'introduzione di Marco Fagioli, è pubblicato dalla Apax libri - Aión di Firenze (pp. 464, €80). Si può richiedere direttamente alla libreria antiquaria Apax di Firenze, al numero 055 289412 o per e-mail (apaxlibri@tiscali.it), oppure ad Aión edizioni (aion@aionedizioni.it).

Figure 2: Emma Gramatica (left) *en travesti* (1911). Originally published in Marco Fagioli's *Volti e figure: Il ritratto nella storia della fotografia*, Aion, 2009.

Besides Poletti and Aleramo, Duse's feminist influence shaped the work of Irma and Emma Gramatica as well, who featured in D'Annunzio's plays and were among the most unconventional voices of Italian theatre. Initially, they followed Duse on her tours both in Italy and abroad, and later they created their own productions. They featured in Irish plays on the Italian stage: most notably, Emma Gramatica played Christy Mahon in the 1919 production of Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* (*Il furfantello dell'Ovest*) in Carlo Linati's translation, who acquainted Italian artists with Irish drama through his translations from the 1910s onwards.[52] Just like

[51] Alessandra Cenni has written extensively on these lesbian-feminist bonds of early twentieth-century Italy in her book *Gli occhi eroici: Sibilla Aleramo, Eleonora Duse, Cordula Poletti: una storia d'amore nell'Italia della Belle Époque*. Mursia, 2011 and in her chapter "Ritratto di un'Amazzone italiana: Cordula Poletti." In *Fuori della norma, Storie lesbiche nell'Italia della prima metá del Novecento*, edited by Nerina Milletti and Luisa Passerini. Rosenberg & Sellier, 2007.

[52] For more information see Antonio Bibbò's article "'Ma quanti sono questi irlandesi?': La letteratura irlandese in Italia a inizio Novecento e i suoi mediatori." *Tradurre: pratiche teorie strumenti*, no. 14, 2018. Bibbò also noted in a conference paper delivered at NUI Galway that Irish plays were almost entirely produced by fascist companies in the 1940s, but the ambiguity of Irish plays also enabled their rebranding as anti-fascist ("'How many of these Irish writers are there?'").

Synge's play caused riots in Dublin in 1907 because of its explicit portrayal of sexuality, failed men and assertive women, the Gramatica productions generated outrage in Fascist Italy[53] (see Bonsaver 61). Theatre critic Silvio D'Amico's reaction to Emma-as-Christy in 1920 reflects the subversive potential of such productions: "Emma Gramatica … appeared as a boy of uncertain sex, horrible, clumsy and stupid, and her appearance made it impossible to get the starting point and the plot of the play; and the fresh and colourful words of the love scenes were not admissible on her lips"[54] (qtd. in Sarà, "Emma Gramatica"). Ettore Romagnoli and Marco Praga shared D'Amico's opinion:

> No, that boy doesn't have to be portrayed like this. Humble and fearful when he introduces himself, cowardly when fears the policemen. … Our Emma only made him whine, on one single note for three hours: and he appeared to us not as a daredevil capable of beating his father, but as a poor and insignificant idiot incapable of tearing off the wing of a fly.[55] (qtd. in Sarà, "Emma Gramatica")

Despite the hostile reactions, Emma Gramatica played Christy Mahon again in 1923 (see Sarà, "Emma Gramatica"). She featured in D'Annunzio's plays as well on several occasions. In 1914, she embodied an iconic Dannunzian dissident woman, Fedra, who is revengeful towards the normative forces that condemn her and her incestuous desire, while in 1924, she played Francesca da Rimini. In 1928, she was cast as Bianca Maria in

[53] When Emma Gramatica was about to stage a play by the anti-fascist playwright Roberto Bracco in the 1920s, fascist militants prepared to organise riots, hence Emma Gramatica wrote directly to Mussolini to ask him to stop the violence, which he surprisingly did, ordering militants and the press to refrain from any criticism (Bonsaver 61 and 286). However, despite the ban, some fascist militants still protested during the performance (286).

[54] "Emma Gramatica … apparve un ragazzettaccio di sesso incerto, orribile, goffo e cretino, il cui aspetto non rendeva possibile né il punto di partenza dell'opera né tutto il suo svolgersi; e sulla sua bocca non erano ammissibili le fresche e colorite parole delle scene d'amore."

[55] "No, quel ragazzo non dev'essere reso così. Umile e pauroso quando si presenta, vigliacco quando teme i gendarmi ... La nostra grande Emma non ha fatto che piagnucolare, su una nota sola, tenuta, per tre ore: e ci è apparsa non uno scavezzacollo capace di bastonare suo padre, ma un povero pusillo idiota, incapace di strappare un'ala a una mosca."

D'Annunzio's *The Dead City* and played Shaw's Saint Joan several times. Her sister Irma Gramatica embodied the outcast yet strong and independent Mila di Codra in D'Annunzio's *The Daughter of Iorio* in 1904 (Sarà, "Irma Gramatica") in which her role was to make the melancholy male protagonist Aligi realise that he could not find his place in the traditional family. Even though critics did not like Irma Gramatica's rendition of Mila, D'Annunzio gave her the role in 1915 as well. As Laura Mariani has explained in a podcast about the Gramatica sisters, Irma was much more masculine-looking than Emma, but Emma played male characters too. Both of them were eager to work with D'Annunzio as well as with non-canonical writers, and they remained in the theatre despite the constant criticism and failures (see Mariani, "Emma Gramatica" 00:00:00-00:29:20).

3. Echoes of Wilde: Queer Tourism in Southern Italy

European and mostly British gay men created their own queer subculture in Southern Italy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, building on an already deeply rooted homosexual activity in the local, especially Neapolitan community. British diplomat Norman Douglas remarked with astonishment that homosexual practice was treated by the local community as "the most natural thing in the world" (qtd. in Beccalossi, "The Italian 'Vice'" 199). The stereotype of Italian men as morally and sexually lax and the trope of Italy as a place of erotic libertinism was widespread in Europe at the turn of the century (Beccalossi 190). Yet after unification in 1861, and especially later during fascism, the political elite wanted to erase this stereotype and replace it with the virile Italian man, as they thought the trope of Italian man as effeminate and indolent[56] contributed to Italy's subaltern position within Europe (Beccalossi 191). This was also the reason why the South became internally colonised in Italy by the North which associated the South with crime and sexual immorality.[57] This phenomenon, however, created discourses on (homo)sexuality in Italy in the late nineteenth century to an unprecedented degree (Beccalossi 192), and it was

[56] Irish nationalists also wanted to eliminate the stereotype of Irish men as effeminate to counter British colonial discourse on Ireland.

[57] For more information on Italy's internal colonialism, see Gaia Giuliani's monograph *Race, Nation and Gender in Modern Italy*: *Intersectional Representations in Visual Culture*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

only later in the 1920s that fascism denied the existence of sexual deviancy on the peninsula.

Paradoxically, Italy was seen by British homosexuals as "an Arcadia untainted by the restrictive sexual mores of their own countries" (Beccalossi 186). Queer men who felt like social outcasts in their home country, most notably Oscar Wilde, chose to visit Southern Italy quite often, as the ruins of ancient Greece and Rome were widely understood as a code same-sex love and in the South, male same-sex acts were not legally punished in post-Unification Italy (Beccalossi 186). The new Italian Kingdom in 1861 adopted the law of the Kingdom of Sardinia where male same-sex acts could be punished with ten-year prison sentence, but the South was an exception, because legislators realised that punishing homosexuality in the South would entail a complete transformation of the indigenous population (Beccalossi 193). In Naples, Sicily and on the island of Capri, male prostitution was common practice: "In Naples and the surrounding areas, there existed men, generally young and from the lower classes, who wore women's cloths, reproduced female social roles so as to serve males in the neighborhood, and were well integrated into the local community" (Beccalossi 192).

These boys were called *femminiello*s who usually offered their bodies to European and British tourists including Wilde, Hans Christian Andersen, Lord Alfred Douglas, William Somerset Maugham and Norman Douglas. Wilde's friend Wilhelm von Gloeden photographed these nude Sicilian boys, which were widely circulated among European homosexuals[58] (Beccalossi 197). Moreover, these images along with British tourists' admiration for Italy, turned the negative stereotype into a positive one which celebrated such effeminacy and sensuality as a strength rather than diminishment. Strikingly, D'Annunzio experimented with something similar through his own body. Maria Giulia Dondero has argued that D'Annunzio's effeminate self-fashioning in photographs was an intentional theatricalisation of the male body: the body was a site of risk, perversion,

[58] For more information see Renato Miracco's book *Oscar Wilde: Il sogno italiano (1875-1900)*. Colonnese, 2020.

vitality and experimentation for D'Annunzio (162), and in such photographs he put on stage the ideal male body receptive of and open to pleasure (167).

Wilde fled to Naples in 1897, where he could experience sexual freedom: "It is not for pleasure that I come here, though pleasure, I am glad to say, walks all around" (Wilde qtd. in Beccalossi 195). In a letter to Robert Ross, Wilde describes how he met a boy called Giuseppe in a church in Sicily: "I also gave him many *lire*, and prophesied for him a Cardinal's hat, if he remained very good, and never forgot me. He said he never would: and indeed I don't think he will, for every day I kissed him behind the high altar" (qtd. in Beccalossi 199).

As to the legacy of Wilde in Italy, aestheticism and "Oscarwaldismo" were looked at with suspicion. The term "Oscarwaldismo" was coined by Paolo Valera in 1909, who thought aestheticism should be a vice just like homosexuality: "Oscarwildeism is the religion of inverts. It is not the illness of certain men or certain degenerates, like many people assume. It is the aestheticism of certain classes" (qtd. in Ross, "La carezza incompiuta" 393). Valera wrote a book entitled *I gentiluomini invertiti* (The inverted gentlemen) (1909) to condemn Wilde as the divulger of evil (Bizzotto 133). Leo Longanesi, whose satirical magazine *L'Italiano* took homophobic attacks on Wilde and his effeminacy, claimed that Wilde's self-fashioning proclaimed that "homosexuality [was] an aesthetics" (qtd. in Ross, "La carezza incompiuta" 394). These theories were also reinforced by Cesare Lombroso who "linked sexual 'deviance' to criminality, effeminacy, illness, and degeneration" (Ross 397). Paradoxically, Lombroso's works were later censored, as he was Jewish and he propagated homosexuality by writing about it. Ross explains that Italian scientists, sociologists and critics of the time "often used the term 'aestheticism' as a euphemism for the 'unspeakable' vice of homosexuality" (393). It is thus striking that D'Annunzio, the most prominent aesthete and dandy of the time, evaded fascist censorship and clashes with authorities, even though his work was

influenced by Wilde and he worked with a lesbian dancer Ida Rubinstein who dedicated her life to Wilde's *Salomé*.[59]

D'Annunzio nurtured a strong sympathy and intellectual kinship for Oscar Wilde despite all the insults Wilde received in Italy and Europe. D'Annunzio's translator André Doderet in his memoirs about D'Annunzio relates D'Annunzio's account of an accidental meeting with Wilde in Rome after Wilde had been released from Reading Gaol. This passage is also an account of male bonding and hints at the homoerotic nature of the encounter:

> D'Annunzio enters a Neapolitan restaurant in Rome … and, as a timid young man, advances towards [Wilde] and greets him saying,
>
> – Sir, would you allow me to shake your hand?
>
> Without answering, Wilde put his hand in the hand that was offered to him and D'Annunzio went to his usual table to have lunch.
>
> When Wilde had finished his meal, before leaving, he stopped in front of the unknown young man.
>
> – Excuse me, there's no doubt that you are a man of letters, sir.
>
> –Yes, I am, sir.
>
> –What's your name?
>
> –Gabriele D'Annunzio.
>
> –Goodbye, sir.
>
> –Goodbye, sir.
>
> …
>
> I asked D'Annunzio: have you seen Oscar Wilde again?
>
> He answered: "Never." (Doderet qtd. in Bizzotto 124, her translation)

[59] For more information about Rubinstein's obsession with Wilde's *Salomé* see Vicki Woolf's monograph *Dancing in the Vortex: The Story of Ida Rubinstein*. New York: Routledge, 2000, pp. 15-20 and Silvana Sinisi's book *L'interprete totale. Ida Rubinštejn tra teatro e danza*. UTET Università, 2011, pp. 12-31.

Interestingly, this motif of two men reaching for one another's hand comes back in D'Annunzio's novel *The Child of Pleasure* (1889) when the protagonist Andrea displays homosexual panic thinking of the gay character Lord Heathfield's hands. Andrea is both enchanted and disgusted by those hands: "so white, so significant, so expressive, so impossible to forget" (Brinkley 78). Even though this scene echoes Doderet's account of the meeting between Wilde and D'Annunzio in Rome, it is important to stress that the homosexual panic that is clearly represented here is that of the protagonist and not D'Annunzio's. Andrea is in many ways an antagonist with whom the reader cannot identify. What he represents is rather the disgusted reaction of the normative discourse to people who display any sign of difference.

References to Wilde in Italian literature by progressive artists always appeared in code, using euphemism or periphrasis (Bizzotto 132). Bizzotto claims that in the progressive and anglophile journal *Il Marzocco*, "Wilde's influence is unmistakable though it remained undeclared, possibly as a result of the trials" (126). D'Annunzio's statement in the Preface of *Il Marzocco* makes it clear that the aim of the journals' contributors was to avoid judging, censoring or stigmatising artists, and looked at the work of art itself: "We believe that every single manifestation of individual genius has in itself, an only by virtue of its being an artwork, a precise sociological and moral value"[60] (qtd. in Bizzotto 126, her translation). Bizzotto further explains that even though Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* did not enjoy much success in D'Annunzio's circles, D'Annunzio owned and annotated the first French edition, and its influence is visible in D'Annunzio's preface to his 1894 novel *Il Trionfo della Morte* (The Triumph of Death) (129). D'Annunzio also owned copies of *De Profundis* in French, English and German, and he copiously annotated them (129).

Furthermore, D'Annunzio resembled Wilde in many ways: he had a dandy self-fashioning and he imitated the style of Duse and Bernhardt. Re explains

[60] "Noi pensiamo che ogni alta manifestazione dell'ingegno ha di per sé stessa, per il solo fatto di essere un'opera d'arte, un valore sociologico e morale ben definito."

that he "literally abused the system of the diva"[61] ("D'Annunzio, Duse, Wilde, Bernhardt" 125) in his attempts to create a myth of himself and his work for the audience, and in this regard, D'Annunzio was very much like Oscar Wilde (125). Like D'Annunzio, Wilde realised himself aesthetically through the figure of Sarah Bernhardt (128). More pressingly, caricatures portrayed D'Annunzio as an effeminate "uomo-donna" (female man), and audiences associated D'Annunzio "divo" with Wilde and the great actresses of the time (125). This highlights the gender non-conformist aspects of D'Annunzio's public persona which, regrettably, has largely remained ignored in criticism.

4. D'Annunzio's Fiume Project: Equality and Sexual Freedom

Guerri's book *Disobbedisco* (I Disobey) uncovers the subversive and sexually radical aspects of D'Annunzio's occupation of the city of Fiume (Rijeka). This initiative was a carefully calibrated artistic performance which created safe queer spaces for its members and offered them sexual freedom. On 12 September 1919, D'Annunzio leading two thousand rebel soldiers conquered the city of Fiume. He managed to keep the city for sixteen months opposing both conservative and liberal political powers (see also Woodhouse, *Gabriele D'Annunzio* 315-352). As Guerri explains, D'Annunzio's aim was not simply to give back Fiume its Italianness, but to initiate a revolution against the established order and norms: "His Undertaking was—also, of course—an episode of more conventional nationalism, and yet it was primarily a generational revolt against every rule established by liberalism, socialism, traditional diplomacy and conventions"[62] (4). Its proposed constitution the *Carta del Carnaro* also theorised a government that defied conventional liberal, socialist and fascist ideas (4). Moreover, D'Annunzio's legionaries included not only soldiers, but writers, aristocrats, industrial workers, and feminists—one of the most prominent supporters of the Fiume project was, for instance, Sarah Bernhardt. Guerri observes that "[f]or some women, going to Fiume

[61] "letteralmente sfruttò il Sistema della diva"

[62] "La sua Impresa fu – anche, certo – un episodio del nazionalismo più consueto, eppure rappresentò soprattutto una rivolta generazionale contro ogni regola costituita dal liberalismo, dal socialismo, dalla diplomazia tradizionale e dalle convenzioni."

constituted as an act of feminism"[63] (177). It should also be noted, however, that the libertarian, anti-fascist and even feminist aspects of the Fiume project do not exclude or excuse its authoritarian and fascist elements. D'Annunzio's Fiume included just as many contradictions as D'Annunzio's life, his scripts and the sexual and gender politics of Italian Fascism in the 1920s. In fact, it was a highly authoritarian act that D'Annunzio invaded a city whose inhabitants might not have wanted foreign intervention after the chaos caused by WWI. In addition, when D'Annunzio was forced out of Fiume by the Italian Government, there were violent clashes between his legionaries and the Italian army, resulting in casualties in the civilian population as well at the end of December 1920 (Bloody Christmas).

The fascist mythology arising in the 1920s forced D'Annunzio to retire from public activity. Mussolini betrayed D'Annunzio in Fiume, making him believe he supported him, yet in the meantime plotted with the then prime minister Giovanni Giolitti against D'Annunzio, as a result of which D'Annunzio had to give up Fiume (353-360). In 1921, Mussolini expressed his annoyance with the constitution proposed for Fiume and claimed that there was no way in which fascism could find any ideas included in it useful or applicable in politics (329). Despite Mussolini's disapproval of the Fiume project and his fear of D'Annunzio's influence, he later wanted people to think of Fiume as the precursor of his regime, which, as Guerri demonstrates, was anything but (329). However, as noted above, it might be more accurate to say that Fiume was not simply anti-fascist, but went against all conventions set up by socialism, liberalism and fascism to stage a social experiment which defied the corrupt imperialist status quo and aimed to help oppressed groups and nations.

The constitution proposed by D'Annunzio for Fiume, the *Carta del Carnaro*, is an astonishingly progressive document, even though D'Annunzio could never actually realise his plans. His aim was to create a State of Italian language and culture which was independent, and where various ethnic groups and nationalities could peacefully coexist. The name of the new state became the Italian Regency of Carnaro, and D'Annunzio's

[63] "Andare a Fiume per alcune donne era un atto di femminismo."

address to his people was all about freedom and emotions: "we are about to create a voice and a form of freedom: a voice of beauty and a form of beauty above the oblivious world of eternal things, above the decrepit world destined to collapse and to be discarded inexorably"[64] (qtd. in Guerri 312). Barbara Spackman contends that D'Annunzio's Fiuman speeches dismantled conventional categories of gender:

> virility in the Fiuman speeches is not only, nor even above all, the province of males, just as in his earlier novels femininity is not only the province of women. The "feminine" was not a term for invective for D'Annunzio, and disclaimers marked the inclusion of women's suffrage in the *Carta del Carnaro*. (17)

D'Annunzio did not wish to present Italians as superior in this city-state as opposed to Italian nationalists who stressed racial superiority. He aimed to create a multi-ethnic city-state and listened to the opinion of Hungarian, Croatian and German citizens of Fiume: "instead of inciting hatred among the races, we are looking for fraternity"[65] (D'Annunzio qtd. in Guerri 313). The Republic of Weimar and Switzerland were among his ideal models, as he wished to create a space which guaranteed people social and political rights, public solidarity and the protection of the most vulnerable (315-6). D'Annunzio wanted the constitution to be a real work of art not simply a political document: he lifted the spirits of his people through his highly performative balcony speeches and the constitution itself was first presented in Fiume's Teatro Fenice, whereby De Ambris read out all forty-three articles, altogether 113 pages (Guerri 315-317).

The constitution's main principle was equality. It promised to recognise everyone regardless of sex, lineage, language, class or religion. It also guaranteed the freedom of thought, the freedom of press, cult, reunion and association (318). But its most progressive aspect concerned women, as it would have granted women the right to vote and the right to be elected

[64] "noi siamo per creare una voce di libertà e siamo per creare una forma di libertà: una voce di bellezza e una forma di bellezza sopra il mondo immemore delle cose alte e delle cose eterne, sopra il decrepito mondo destinato a crollare e disfarsi inesorabilmente".
[65] "invece di eccitare l'odio fra le razze ne cerca la fratellanza"

(318). Regrettably, women only received the right to vote in Italy in 1946, as D'Annunzio could never put his plan into practice. According to the constitution, the state would have guaranteed primary education, physical education, remunerated work, minimum salary, *habeas corpus* and the population would have been able to propose laws and request referendum to modify the constitution. Moreover, this constitution would have taken political power away from the Church: education would have been secular, and religion would have been treated as a private question which should never influence public life. D'Annunzio's city-state would have prioritised the arts, culture, creativity and artistic production by making them part of students' education (327): "Beauty is law, music is religion"[66] (327). Woodhouse has also underscored the anti-fascist nature of the Carnaro Charter: "Its statements are the exact antithesis of anything that was to be promulgated by Mussolini's government in the coming decades" (*Gabriele D'Annunzio* 345).

But Italy and the world had to survive the terrors of totalitarianism and WWII to realise the rights and opportunities proposed by D'Annunzio in 1919. Paradoxically, however, it was D'Annunzio's defiant attitude that Mussolini could later abuse even though D'Annunzio never gave him his support: "D'Annunzio lent no direct support to the fascist cause, but it was his attitude, inculcated by example into the youth of Italy at a crucial time, which provided all that Mussolini later needed" (Woodhouse, *Gabriele D'Annunzio* 350).

Besides D'Annunzio's progressive constitution, life in Fiume offered freedom for the people living there and for the community of D'Annunzio's legionaries. Homosexual activity was widespread among his soldiers and they practiced all types of sexual activity freely, especially D'Annunzio's close friend, the homosexual Guido Keller who was also a heroic war pilot and stood by D'Annunzio in Fiume (Guerri, *La mia vita carnale* 79). The Fiuman world was populated by women and men who were omnivorous of sex (83), which means that Fiume created a space for sixteen months during which all forms of *eros* were accepted and practiced freely.

[66] "La bellezza è legge, la musica è religione."

Since D'Annunzio's Fiume project aimed to undermine the British Empire by creating unrest in the Balkans, it had links with the Irish nationalist cause. Mark Phelan has discussed D'Annunzio's short-lived plans with Ireland, but his article presents D'Annunzio as "the high-priest of Italian ultra-nationalism" ("An Irishman's Diary on Gabriele D'Annunzio"), while disregarding the details that Guerri's book has provided about D'Annunzio's unconventional nationalism. It is an interesting aspect of the story, however, that Irish ultra-nationalists (Sinn Fein) refused the idea of collaborating with D'Annunzio:

> While Irish republicans appreciated D'Annunzio's Anglophobia, they rejected his other interests, which included philandering (he boasted of 1,000 'conquests'), anti-clericalism, and a hatred of American prowess and culture. As such, the Vatican and Washington, both of which were crucial to the wider Irish diplomatic strategy, regarded D'Annunzio with contempt. ("An Irishman's Diary on Gabriele D'Annunzio")

Thus one of the main reasons why D'Annunzio was refused by Irish nationalists was his sexually exorbitant lifestyle which later caused unease for Mussolini too. Early in the 1920s, there was already a "[f]ascist nervousness of D'Annunzio" ("An Irishman's Diary on Gabriele D'Annunzio") and Mussolini tried to make Ireland a promising destination for D'Annunzio to get rid of him ("An Irishman's Diary on Gabriele D'Annunzio").

Interestingly, when the Blueshirts appeared in Ireland, Yeats stressed the importance of D'Annunzio's poetic, Shelleyan performance which he combined with military skills. Yeats suggested that his readers

> might, after considering the demand of the black, brown, green and blue shirts, "Power to the most disciplined", ask

> themselves whether D'Annunzio and his terrible drill at Fiume may not prove as symbolic as Shelley, whose art and life became so completely identified with romantic contemplation that young men … identified him with poetry itself. (qtd. in Cullingford 146)

It is notable that Yeats associates D'Annunzio's performance in Fiume with Shelley's art. William Ulmer highlights that in Shelley's poetry "[t]he body represents a repository of revolutionary potential, and sensuality a political weapon" (qtd. in Harris 23), which is similar to D'Annunzio's view of the body's role. As Harris has explained, the Shelleyan radical *eros* is the origin of a desire-driven socialism and works to challenge the disgust for sexuality (*Irish Drama* 23). More importantly, Shelley "saw that only a new type of human being combining the male and the female, could ultimately save the world—a being having a feminine insight and imagination to perceive the evil and the manly strength and courage to oppose and finally annihilate it" (Carpenter qtd. in Harris 25).

5. Quare[67] Ireland: Irish Theatre, the Revival and Modernism

Similar to Champagne's description of Italy as "a particularly queer state" (*Italian Masculinity* 7), Patrick R. Mullen and Seamus Deane have both underscored that Ireland is also, in many ways, a "queer country" (Mullen 16; Deane, *Strange Country* 197). The queerness of Irish literature and culture can be traced back to the sixteenth- and seventeenth centuries when bardic poets produced intensely homosocial and homoerotic poems in service of their chiefs with whom they had a marriage-like relationship (McKibben 172; Kiberd, "Literature" 236). Sarah McKibben has emphasised that same-sex desire was mentioned in early medieval Irish law tracts "when a husband's preference for sleeping with horse-boys constitut[ed] grounds for divorce" (182). Moreover, when the Tudor state

[67] Irish scholarship often replaces "queer" with "quare." For instance, Joseph Valente chose this Irish version for the title of his edited volume *Quare Joyce*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998 and Charlotte McIvor used "quare" instead of "queer" in her article "'Albert Nobbs', *Ladies and Gentlemen*, and Quare Irish Female Erotohistories." *Irish University Review*, vol. 43, no. 1, 2013, pp. 86-101.

wanted to destroy Irish culture and lordship, bardic poets' response was an anti-colonial rhetoric infused with homoerotic content (176). Valente and Lapointe have equally highlighted that there was a considerable degree of sexual equality and lack of sexual orthodoxy in early Irish law, custom and society before Anglo-Norman contact (Valente 195; Lapointe 59). Valente mentions the Gaelic myth of sovereignty as an example whereby a candidate for kingship acceded to power through a mating ritual with a Poor Old Woman who became a young woman afterwards ("The Myth of Sovereignty" 195). According to Valente, the myth suggests a phallo*de*centric patriarchal rule "that is, without an originary division into positive and negative or dominant and recessive gender polarities" (195). However, this equality ended when the Irish Brehon law was replaced with British common law which entailed gender oppression (196).

It is therefore not a coincidence that Irish theatre (and literature in general) abounds in moments when the regular rules of society are suspended. Harris has demonstrated that Irish theatre had a remarkable gay subculture and queer aesthetic already at the end of the nineteenth century thanks to the influence of London's queer socialism, the fight for sexual liberation in the 1890s and Oscar Wilde's legacy (*Irish Drama* 1-15).[68] But the queerness of Irish theatre goes back to 28 April 1741 when Fanny Furnival became the first woman to play Hamlet in Dublin's Smock Alley Theatre, fifty years before London would do it. As Tony Howard explains in *Women as Hamlet*, Furnival moved to Dublin in 1739, where she played "a wide spectrum of *travesti* roles" (39).

Later in the 1800s, melodrama and gothic fiction continued to create queer spaces on the Irish stage and page, making Irish Revivalist literature and theatre inevitably homoerotic. In *Ireland's Others*, Cullingford identifies a theatrical Irish homoeroticism in Dion Boucicault's melodramas in which the homoerotic bond often evolves between Irish and English characters: the

[68] For a detailed discussion of Irish dramatists' turn to London see Nicholas Grene's study "London Irish: Wilde, Shaw and Yeats." In *Irish Literature in Transition, 1880-1940*, edited by Marjorie Howes. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2020, pp. 246-262.

Englishman in such melodramas "is usually a decent chap, and often he becomes the object of Irish desire" (7). In addition, Lapointe regards Boucicault's melodramas as proof of an early development of a history of *homoeros* in Irish theatre (*Between Irishmen* 48). Lapointe explains that even though Shaw accused Boucicault of reinforcing the English stereotype of the Irish as drunk, childish and irresponsible, he in fact also defied it by representing the Irish as clever and courageous (48). As Cullingford observes, Boucicault reverses the Celtic stereotype of feminine sentimentality, assigning it to the Saxon characters instead (*Ireland's Others* 36). Melodrama as a culturally accepted genre which intermingles sentimental, romantic, and didactic elements helped defy the tradition of laughing over Ireland and created sympathy for the country, endorsing the emergent cause of Irish nationalism (Lapointe, *Between Irishmen* 49).

The homoeroticism of the Irish Revival and the Irish Literary Theatre has received more critical attention, focusing mostly on Yeats, Martyn and Moore. Yet women revivalists also made an important contribution to the creation of socially and sexually unorthodox contexts. For instance, Teresa Deevy's plays conveyed anti-normative and feminist messages highly critical of patriarchal society, Catholic censorship, and the repressive institution of marriage just like Florence Farr's and Eva Gore-Booth's works and activism, as I shall discuss later.[69] Adrian Frazier has remarked that "cultural nationalism was an offshoot of London 'Decadence' as much as of the Dublin 'Irish Party'; begotten by an inflow of Wilde upon an upwelling of John O'Leary" (9). Valente adds that Irish hypermasculinity in fact bears "androgyny as its complementary other, functions as a mode of gender dissent, a self-queering position" (*Myth of Manliness* 177). Harris has emphasised the influence of London's queer socialism on Irish revivalist playwrights, re-examining the Irish dramatic Revival in light of the socialist movement that appeared in the 1880s and "a campaign for gender and sexual liberation whose harbingers were the New Woman and the queer

[69] See Úna Kealy's article "Resisting Power and Direction: *The King of Spain's Daughter* by Teresa Deevy as a Feminist Call to Action." *Estudios irlandeses*, Iss. 15, March 2020, pp. 178-192.

man, and whose emergence was closely linked to the late nineteenth-century European 'free theatre' movement and the twentieth-century avant-garde drama that arose from it" (1). Since London audiences did not welcome Yeats's and Todhunter's plays about transgressive women-loving women, Yeats returned to Dublin and was determined to create a similarly transgressive theatre for Irish audiences as part of the Revival, hoping for a more hospitable environment (Harris, *Irish Drama* 54). Even the Abbey Theatre founded in 1904 was not as conventionally nationalist as it is often assumed.[70] Lionel Pilkington has pointed out that even though some nationalist intellectuals such as Thomas Kettle and Arthur Griffith thought that a national theatre should reflect the views of the majority, Yeats and Lady Gregory did not share this opinion: "For them, a national theatre was not a forum for the expression of majority orthodoxies, but rather a means to critique dominant, widely held opinions from a critically sceptical perspective" (Pilkington, *Theatre* 3).

Besides Boucicault's sentimental melodramas, the Anglo-Irish horror-mystery genre of the earlier Romantic Gothic tradition equally informed the homoeroticism of the Irish Revival and Irish nationalism, as Lapointe has pointed out (*Between Irishmen* 51). The paranoid Gothic was a literary genre which portrayed the dialectic between male homosexuality, homophobia or homosexual panic (51). In Gothic fiction, homosocial desire often registers in the male hero's intimate yet fatal relationship with his double: it "not only frequently codes these 'doubles' as monsters such as the vampire, but also exploits a culture's worst fears by the common themes of incest and sexual deviancy" (52). For instance, the Irish Gothic writer Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's 1872 novella "Carmilla" introduced hints of lesbianism into Irish writing, as it tells the story of two teenagers Laura and Carmilla who bond with one another, holding hands, caressing and kissing (52). In such Gothic stories, the narrator experiences both attraction and repulsion towards the beautiful stranger—strikingly, this attraction-

[70] Christopher McCormack's PhD dissertation *Flashes of Modernity: stage design at the Abbey Theatre, 1902-1966*. 2018. National University of Ireland Galway, explores the ways in which the Abbey Theatre's counter-culture designs revealed frustration with the status quo and underlined new ways of envisioning Irish life (33).

repulsion dichotomy marks Yeats's characters' approach to strangers and strangeness, be it a fairy child, the invisible women of the Sidhe or a severed head. Le Fanu's fiction influenced Bram Stoker's imagination, as female vampires, sexual transgression and paranoid homophobia all appear in *Dracula*. But as Howes notes, *Dracula* also inexorably "feminizes … irrepressible and subversive desires and represents the fear of succumbing to the seduction of a vampire as the fear of being emasculated" ("The Mediation of the Feminine" 107).

The stereotype of Irish men as effeminate was widespread in British colonial discourses to justify Ireland's inferiority, hence Irish nationalists and Revivalist writers created hypermasculine heroes to defy the colonial imagery. Even the Irish political commentator D. P. Moran confirmed this stereotype:

> On all sides one sees only too much evidence that the people are secretly content to be a conquered race, though they have not the honesty to admit it…There is nothing masculine in the character; and when the men do fall into line with green banners and shout themselves hoarse, is it not rather a feminine screech, a delirious burst of defiance on a background of sluggishness and despair? (qtd. in Lapointe, *Between Irishmen* 60)

As a result, Standish O'Grady's 1878 *History of Ireland: Heroic Period* became an almost sacred text for young Irish nationalists, as it idealised Cuchulain as a manly, courageous and genuinely noble hero (58). Yet Cuchulain's masculinity included a lot of passion, ungovernable will and homosociality due to his bond with other warriors and chieftains, which, paradoxically, were anathema to middle-class respectability, even though they were acceptable in tales of heroism and tragedy (58).

Another Revivalist Edward Martyn's plays equally include homoerotic features, and can be read as "involuntary coming-out stories" (Lapointe,

"Edward Martyn" 74). Similar to Yeats's plays, Martyn's drama contains coded subtexts, private conversations underneath the dialogue between men, the supernatural as framework to express homoerotic desires, remote overpowering landscapes, ghosts, obsessions, sexually ambiguous diction, melancholy masculinities, men revealing their vulnerability, and inverted love triangles (80-81). Frazier has observed the homosocial bonds between Yeats, Martyn and Moore, who all read a lot of Walter Pater, fashioned themselves on the figure of Wilde and they lived very close to Havelock Ellis when he was working on *Sexual Inversion*. Frazier therefore asserts that "those males most identified with the deliberate creation of an 'Irish Renaissance' were well schooled in the creation of alternative male identities" (9). More importantly, their works conveyed ambiguity, as their representations of male sexual identity could be put into a nationalist master-narrative, yet they also challenged those narratives (10). Because of this ambiguity, they were soon accused of effeminacy by the veterans of the Irish movement: "in the current code of deprecation, these poets 'crooned' or 'lisped'; real men, the implication was, shouted and argufied" (9).

Frank McGuinness is usually seen as the first Irish playwright who changed the status of the homosexual from object to subject in Irish theatre, yet modern Irish drama and literature was equally critical of the repressive biopolitics that shamed everyone who violated the cult of respectability and moral prudery.[71] The queerness of Irish modernism has started to receive more critical attention over the last few years.[72] Mullen's latest book *The Poor Bugger's Tool* looks at Wilde, Synge, Casement and Joyce to demonstrate the queerness of Irish modernism. Mullen contends that both the vicissitudes of Wilde's life and the British government's cruelty towards Roger Casement began to echo through mainstream Irish literature. Mullen contends that male Irish modernists (Wilde, Synge, Joyce) "deployed queer

[71] On the queerness of modern Irish drama see also José Lanters' article "Queer Creatures, Queer Place: Otherness and Normativity in Irish Drama from Synge to Friel." In *The Irish Theatre in Transition: From the Late Nineteenth to the Early Twenty-First Century*, edited by Donald Morse, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, pp. 54-67.

[72] For a rich variety of articles on representations of marginalised subjectivities in Irish literature see Patrick McDonagh, editor. *Minorities in/and Ireland*, special issue of *Studi irlandesi. A Journal of Irish Studies*, vol. 10, no. 10, Firenze: Firenze UP, 2020.

aesthetic sensibilities to organise anticolonial discourses that read against the grain of British imperial hegemony" (4). Yet the primacy of this masculinist nationalism led to the repression of various counterdiscourses in early twentieth-century Ireland, such as feminism, lesbianism, radical socialism and the homoerotic (4). But Irish modernist writers, including Yeats, "embraced the inclusive potentials of queer aesthetics in order to articulate open and fluid models of Irish national belonging" (4). This explains the

> androgyny that runs as a theme from the bardic poets through Wilde and Shaw down to Yeats and Joyce: the constant attraction in texts between manly women and womanly men. It also accounts for a linked phenomenon: if the self can multiply, becoming the opposite of what it seemed by nature and gender, then it may also become multicultural as well. (Kiberd qtd. in Mullen 6)

For instance, Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* led to riots because it associated Irishness with a more open and fluid model of sexuality regarding both men and women. The play's erotic energy offended those "who did not like what was being implied about Irish character in its representations of Irishness" (Cregan, "Introduction" 1). Nicholas Grene has observed that

> [a]s the repressed physicality of the sexual was allowed to appear from under the normal decencies of its covering, so sex was proximate to violence and both made manifest in the actuality of a specific location. … Such contamination of confused categories was a deeply disturbing affront to the middle-class nationalist community whose self-image depended on just such moral classification. (86)

According to Lapointe, what also upset the audiences was Christy's "unmanly" behaviour in several instances of the play: his cross-dressing in Sara's petticoat to hide from the villagers and his admiration of the softness of his skin in the mirror (*Between Irishmen* 68).

Mullen builds on the work of Daniel Corkery whose interpretation of Synge's works reflects nationalist anxieties with Synge's flamboyant, queer aesthetics. Synge began writing on the West of Ireland following the advice he had received from Yeats in Paris. In fact, the influence of Parisian decadent literature and music played a seminal role in introducing queer sensibilities in Synge's works about the peasantry of western Ireland, which served to reveal that despite their poor material conditions, people of the West were also active participants in modernity (Mullen 19). Even though Synge was not a homosexual, Corkery found that "his *sensibilities* [were] too 'flamboyant' for the true Irish nature as defined by Catholicism, the land, and sexual chastity" (qtd. in Mullen 19).

James Joyce's *Ulysses* caused similar unease due to its sexually unorthodox content. Mullen argues that the figure of Roger Casement and the resulting homoerotic affective values are key to understanding the perversity of Bloom and Joyce's attack on the repressive sexual and national politics of the Citizen (20). The figure of Casement in Joyce "operates as a figure of progressive 'vulgarity'—not simply in terms of a (homo)sexual explicitness, but more broadly in terms of a popular or collective language of desire that stands in opposition to the 'property' and propriety of chase and radically exclusive visions of Irishness promoted by the Citizen" (20). Similar to Yeats, what Joyce articulated by inscribing Casement in his work was "a queer sensibility in the critique of claustrophobic articulations of purified nationalism" (20). Lapointe has also queered Joyce's *Ulysses*, exploring Leopold Bloom's gender ambiguity and his interest in transvestism, sadomasochism and sodomy[73] (*Between Irishmen* 181-2). What is more, Joyce himself performed in drag in 1891 at Clongowes Woods College when he assumed the role of Widow Twankey in the pantomime *Aladdin* (180). In addition, Cheryl Herr has chronicled the frequent drag performances of Joyce's time and observed that "within such arenas as the music hall and the pantomime, sexual impersonation was not only tolerated, it was enjoyed; what is more, it was expected" (137). When Ulysses was censored and people discarded it as a disgraceful and obscene book, Yeats

[73] See also Valente's edited volume *Quare Joyce* (1998) which covers a wide range of sexual unorthodoxies in Joyce's life and works.

defended Joyce's work which he "admire[d] immensely" (CL *InteLex* 4152). In a letter to George Yeats in 1922, he explains that when he heard someone discard Joyce's works as disgraceful and obscene, he tried to defend it but eventually left the room: "I did not like to over hear any more & went down stairs" (CL *InteLex* 4228).

The foundation of the Gate Theatre in 1928 by a gay couple Micheal MacLiammoir and Hilton Edwards offered space for queer identities[74] in Irish theatre with their programme of experimental, poetic and continental dramas, providing a more cosmopolitan alternative to the state-subsidised Abbey Theatre (Walshe, "Queering Oscar" 8). The Gate Theatre also offered opportunities, positions of power and responsibility for women artists, such as Ria Mooney, Daisy Bannard Cogley (Madam Toto), Mary Manning, Mairin Hayes and the queer, feminist Prussian author Christa Winsloe whose homoerotic play *Children in Uniform* was produced by the Gate in 1934, offering several good roles for women (Trotter 25-26). Surprisingly, "[i]n a state where homosexual acts were criminalised until 1993, and the homoerotic was censored and expunged from all official literary and cultural discourse, MacLiammoir and Edwards survived, and even flourished, as Ireland's only visible gay couple" (Walshe, "Queering Oscar" 9). What is more, when MacLiammoir died in 1978, the President of Ireland, the Taoiseach and several government ministers attended his funeral and expressed sympathy

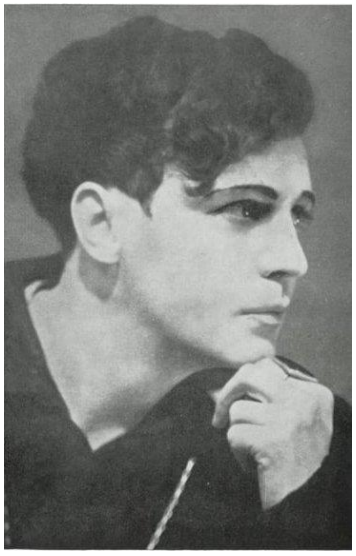


Figure 3: Michael MacLiammoir. Source: "'The limits of the imagination': The Gate Theatre then and now" by Ruud van den Beuken. *The Irish Times*, 12 Jan. 2021.

[74] The essays published in *Cultural Convergence. The Dublin Gate Theatre, 1928-1960*, edited by Ondřej Pilný, Ruud van den Beuken and Ian R. Walsh. Palgrave MacMillan, 2021 reveal not only the intercultural and transnational aspects of the Gate Theatre but also the fact that it was an inclusive and progressive initiative which created space for queer forms of expression and women's voices. Another book *A Stage of Emancipation: Change and Progress at the Dublin Gate Theatre*, edited by Marguérite Corporaal and Ruud van den Beuken. Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2021 also underscores how the Gate contested traditions, offered visibility for queer identities and power positions for women artists.

with Edwards as the chief mourner (9).

In addition, MacLiammoir often performed in drag in Dublin's clubs and on television from 1950, while Hilton Edwards cross-dressed in cabaret performances, including Donald Frankau's *Cabaret Kittens* with which he toured in Ireland, England, Scotland and South Africa (Walsh, "Commedia dell'arte and the Gate Theatre 11-2). Cabaret is yet another specifically queer genre[75] that existed in Dublin's Harcourt Street thanks to Madam Toto who was founding member of the Gate Theatre. Madam Toto became a cabaret impresario and ran "a cabaret-cum-nightclub-cum-shebeen called The Studio Art Club, at 41 Harcourt Street. She was a key figure in a truly Bohemian circle in Dublin" (Patricia Boylan qtd. in Dean 293). Cogley soon became a prominent figure in Irish artistic circles and later the director of the Gate Theatre. Conor Carville explains that among others Samuel Beckett became a regular customer at Madame Cogley's cabaret nights, which was "a demi-monde of experimental theatre, performance and cabaret that was oppositional in both its aesthetics and its politics" (69). Establishing such a vibrant cabaret life in Dublin was crucial for queer subcultures, as it created a safe space for people who felt judged because of their difference elsewhere: "Cogley's cabaret was a key node in a network connecting political activists, the avant-garde and a youthful Bohemia" (Carville 70). For instance, in the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s, cabaret became a safe space for black people where they could laugh, sing and dance (Vogel 74), and cabaret can serve to "critique the imperatives of racial and sexual normativity" (76).

Besides cabaret shows, Edwards and MacLiammoir were influenced by *commedia dell'arte*—another politically subversive genre which, according to Cestaro, imposed constant pressure on gender and sexual norms (7). Rosalind Kerr has also underscored that "[s]ince the official *commedia erudita* maintained the convention of using boys to represent women, the *commedia dell'arte* could play back and forth across these generic/gendered

[75] T. L. Cowan has demonstrated that the queerness of cabaret shows lies in their "appreciation of variety, risk, difference, provocation, and surprise accompanied by a concurrent sympathy with, or high tolerance for, the rough-around-the-edges aesthetic that characterizes many cabaret performances" (50-1).

restrictions" (109). Thanks to its founders' interest in *commedia,* the Gate Theatre was dedicated to the figure of Harlequin, and the logo designed by MacLiammoir depicts a Harlequin opening up the gates of Comedy and Tragedy, indicating the Gate's intention "to both conserve and break with theatrical conventions and to place the commedia dell'arte front and centre as the means to that end" (Walsh, "Commedia dell'arte and the Gate Theatre" 8). Their international repertory included *commedia*-inspired revue productions in the 1930s and 19040s, a performance of Carlo Goldoni's *The Servant of Two Masters* in 1973, a *commedia*-style *Merchant of Venice* in 1946 and MacLiammoir's play *Prelude in Kazbek Street* (1973). The latter one was directly inspired by Vaslav Nijinsky's homoerotic performance in the 1910 ballet *Carnaval* which was a touchstone for both Edwards' and MacLiammoir's idea of *commedia dell'arte* (Walsh, "Commedia dell'arte and the Gate Theatre" 15). Moreover, Edwards wrote a book entitled *The Mantle of Harlequin*, which was essentially a tribute to *commedia dell'arte* (Murray 175) in which Edwards borrows the voice of Harlequin to teach about stagecraft.[76] As Ian Walsh explains, what drew Edwards and MacLiammoir to the *commedia dell'arte* included mostly its internationalism, theatricality and queerness: Edwards and MacLiammoir "used the masks of the commedia as a means to imagine and embody publicly a queer identity in a time of extreme homophobia" ("Commedia dell'arte and the Gate Theatre" 10). In order to "reveal and shape their queer identities" (11) in a Catholic and conservative country, they often assumed the masks of Pierrot and Harlequin in their writings and on the stage (11). For the English Alfred Willmore, his self-invention as the Irishman Michael MacLiammoir fulfilled the same purpose: it functioned like a Yeatsian mask "enabling him to dissent and separate himself from a British masculinist heterosexuality" (15).

[76] Besides MacLiammoir, Edwards and Madam Toto, Jimmy O'Dea also contributed to the queerness of Irish theatre through his creation of the first Dublin Dame figure Biddy Mulligan. As Ian R. Walsh has pointed out, the character was informed by the tradition of female street dealers in Dublin ("The Dublin Dame" 66) and it first appeared in 1930 in a show entitled "Alive, Alive, o!" (66). Walsh explains that Biddy Mulligan portrayed a grotesque, anarchic mother figure on the stage informed by women who were strong and active participants in the public sphere. This offered a safe transgression for audiences, allowing them to mock the overidealised mother figure without feeling they were betraying this ideal (66-7).

Despite the prevalent homoeroticism of Irish theatre history, the first explicitly gay characters appeared on the Irish stage only in Thomas Kilroy's *The Death and Resurrection of Mr. Roche* (1968), in Brian Friel's *The Gentle Island* (1971) and in MacLiammoir's *Prelude in Kazbek Street* (1973). Until the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1993, Irish theatre audiences displayed a double thinking concerning homosexuality and theatre, as people saw and enjoyed Oscar Wilde's plays including characters with ambiguous sexuality and they respected MacLiammoir and Edwards, but they did not publicly accept homosexuality. The 1970s saw the rise of queer dramas in Ireland, and the Abbey Theatre expressed their support by accepting Kilroy's and Friel's plays. The first explicitly queer play was Frank McGuinness's *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme* (1985), which presented the first kiss between two men on the Irish stage.

As regards contemporary Irish theatre, on 1 February 2014, the Abbey Theatre provided the venue for drag queen Panti Bliss' famous speech which was part of a series of Noble Calls. This Noble Call was partly a reaction to the RTÉ scandal which became to be known as "Pantigate" (11 January 2014, *The Saturday Night Show*), although Panti had been invited to deliver her speech on the Abbey stage before the scandal broke. More importantly, her speech significantly contributed to the success of the Marriage Equality Referendum in 2015. The influence of Panti's speech was partly thanks to Patrick Mason's artistic directorship, who also staged plays about gay men in the Abbey such as Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* (1995) (Lonergan 163). As Lonergan has observed, Panti's speech in the Abbey "can be seen as the culmination of a long period within the Irish theatre of activism and engagement in relation to gay rights" (163). Contemporary Irish theatre portrays the vicissitudes of Irish queer subjectivities through the works of Frank McGuinness, Amy Conroy, Neil Watkins, Mark O'Holloran, Panti Bliss, Oisín McKenna, Shane Byrne and many others. After the first gay theatre company the Muted Cupid, THISISPOPBABY, TheatreofpluK, TheatreMachine and Petty Cash have

also represented queer lives through productions at the International Dublin Gay Theatre Festival, Queer Notions, OUTBURST and Dublin Fringe.

Similar to Italy, Ireland has come a long way within a very short period of time in terms of the country's attitude to gender and (homo)sexuality. After centuries of strict oppressive regulations due to the pervasive influence of the Catholic Church, homosexuality was decriminalised less than thirty years ago in 1993, same-sex marriage was made legal in 2015 and in May 2018 Ireland legalised abortion through a historic Referendum. The last few decades and years have equally witnessed an unprecedented increase in explicit literary and artistic representations of queer lives.[77]

6. Lesbian and Feminist Voices: Florence Farr and Eva Gore-Booth

The queerness of Irish theatre and literature has implied almost exclusively the representation of male homosexuality, as queer women have rarely been represented on the Irish stage or page, except for W. B. Yeats's and John Todhunter's early plays about the transgressive sexuality of women and the Gate Theatre's 1934 production of Christa Winsloe's *Children in Uniform* in Dublin. As Lonergan explains, experiences of gay women remained largely unexplored until Emma Donoghue's *I know my own heart* (1993) and Deirdre Kinahan's *Passage* (2001) (163). In contemporary Irish theatre, the plays of Donoghue, Kinahan, Amy Conroy, McGuinness, and Thomas Kilroy articulate the experiences of lesbian identities.[78] Similar to Italy, lesbian representations first appeared Irish literature in works written by men, including Yeats, George Moore and Todhunter. Such representations were considerably influenced by Florence Farr, who became Yeats's close friend through their mutual involvement in occult séances. Emma Donoghue points out that for those artists who looked to London as their barometer, "lesbianism had a certain cachet as a theme, if carefully handled" (161). Even though lesbianism has never been criminalised in Ireland unlike male

[77] See, for instance, *Queer Love: An Anthology of Irish Fiction*, edited by Paul McVeigh. Cork: Southword Editions, 2020.

[78] The essay collection *Lesbian and Gay Visions of Ireland: Towards the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Íde O'Carroll and Eoin Collins. London: Cassell, 1995 and Kieran Rose's *Diverse Communities: The Evolution of Lesbian and Gay Politics in Ireland*. Cork: Cork UP, 1993 offer details on Irish queer history along with studies by Tina O'Toole, Emma Donoghue, Katherine O'Donnell and Ailbhe Smyth.

homosexuality, there has been hostility towards lesbians in Irish society demonstrated by two unsuccessful attempts to criminalise lesbian activity in 1895 and 1922 (Walshe, "Shamrock" 164).

Besides male writers, Kate O'Brien and Elizabeth Bowen equally portrayed lesbian desires. O'Brien's novels and plays were informed by the lesbian artistic community she lived in in Bloomsbury: a group of independent women critical of the institution of marriage (Walshe, "Invisible Irelands" 42), who were also Catholic, as Catholicism offered spiritual support for them. Hence O'Brien "was able to write about believing Irish Catholics who managed to be both sexually dissident and spiritually independent" (44). As Donoghue reveals, in O'Brien's works the word "nun" was recurrently used as a code for lesbian ("Noises from Woodsheds" 163), and whose novel *Mary Lavelle* was thus banned by the Irish censorship board in 1936. Ireland also banned her 1941 novel *The Land of Spices* because of a single sentence describing an act of love between two men. This ban, however, led to "a public campaign against regressive censorship" (Walshe, "Invisible Irelands" 44), after which O'Brien became an emblem of liberal dissenters in Ireland and eventually the novel was unbanned in 1943.

Even though O'Brien lived in lesbian relationships and "her habitual dress was distinctly non-'feminine' and moved away from hetero-normative dress" (Walshe, "Invisible Irelands" 40), she never identified herself publicly as lesbian because of her Catholic education and conservative family whose support was important for her: "an Irish discretion around sexual matters facilitating such an arrangement" (44). In fact, none of Ireland's queer historical figures, not even MacLiammoir and Edwards, identified themselves openly as gay because "Irish cultural discourse simply didn't accommodate any public sexual identity outside the heterosexual consensus" (41). While in the nineteenth century, romantic friendship between women had been more or less accepted because of its chastity, the increasing interest in sexology and psychology turned society and the medical discourse suspicious of such relationships, which might also explain the hostile reaction of London audiences to Yeats's and Todhunter's

plays about transgressive women. The demonisation of lesbian relationships was further deepened by the 1926 publication of Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (41-2), which brought about similar concerns in fascist Italy. Walshe has pointed out that after the Second World War, O'Brien created a small queer social circle for herself in Roundstone thanks to her friends MacLiammoir and Edwards who introduced her to Dublin's queer subculture (44-45).

It was Elizabeth Bowen's *The Last September* (1929) that for the first time brought together Ireland and lesbianism[79] in an explicit way (Donoghue, "Noises from Woodsheds" 161). It portrays lesbian sensibilities and an intimate bond between a young girl, Lois, who has just begun to find her own voice and a mature, experienced Bohemian woman, Marda, who represents a future ideal self and freedom for Lois. Bowen's friend Molly Keane is also often referred to as an Irish lesbian writer mostly due to her 1934 novel *Devoted Ladies* in which a man tries to separate a lesbian couple (see Ian d'Alton, "'Devoted Ladies': the lives of Elizabeth Bowen and Molly Keane").

Eibhear Walshe has named Roger Casement, Eva Gore-Booth, Kate O'Brien, Michael MacLiammoir and Hilton Edwards as the five most visible Irish queer public figures ("Invisible Irelands" 39). However, I believe Farr should belong to this list too. She fulfilled the same role in Ireland as Eleonora Duse in Italy. Both women became very influential in theatre circles. They were obsessed with Ibsen's female characters, had an androgynous stage presence and shaped male playwrights' works and ideas about gender and sexuality, embodying sexual liberation and women's emancipation through their acting and activism. Cassandra Laity has discussed Farr's role as a feminist icon, stressing the formative impact of New Women and mostly Farr on Yeats's increasingly unorthodox portrayal of women and the shift from chaste maidens to strong heroines in his

[79] See also Eibhear Walshe's monograph *Elizabeth Bowen*. Irish Academic Press, 2009.

drama.[80] Yeats lamented the lack of assertive and passionate New Women in Ireland and blamed the Catholic Church's oppression of women for it (Laity 633). Laity recognises Farr as a New Woman, an Ibsenite and the model for "the unwomanly woman" (620). Like the D'Annunzio-Duse collaboration, the Yeats-Farr cooperation lasted from the end of the 1890s until 1904, had a lifelong influence on the authors' dramatic imagination and marked their apprenticeship in drama. As Laity explains, Farr's "boyish beauty, her emancipated view of women and sexuality, and even her strident manner brought into question Yeats's former ideal of beauty, the chaste sensuous maidens of his early poetry, and the romantic code of platonic love that reinforced his Victorian prudery" (620). What is more, when Yeats began a new phase of his theatrical activity in 1901, some artists devoted to Yeats's theories of musical speech and dramatic pose, founded a group called Masquers, involving feminists such as Farr, Pamela Colman Smith[81] (nicknamed 'Pixie'), and Edith Craig (who was also a lesbian), the queer artist Charles Ricketts as well as Thomas Sturge Moore and Laurence Binyon (Foster, *Arch-Poet* 257).

Farr was also a short story writer, essayist, playwright and scholar of occult studies writing books and articles about alchemists, Kabbalah, and Egyptian magic. Her 1894 novel *The Dancing Faun*, for instance, depicts the theatrical and the spiritual as inseparable, suggesting that "the public and the private are part of a single, trans-temporal, egalitarian system" (Denisoff, "The Feminist Occult in Florence Farr's *Dancing Faun*"). Her feminist essay *Modern Woman: Her Intentions* (1910) cited at the beginning of this chapter[82] celebrates free love, encourages women to flirt freely, criticises marriage, attempts to normalise the idea that a man and a woman can be in each other's company only to exchange ideas and demands to remove shame from people who do not wish to become parents: "We want married

[80] For more information on Irish New Women see Tina O'Toole's article "New Irish Women and New Women's Writing." In *Irish Literature in Transition, 1880-1940,* edited by Marjorie Howes. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2020, pp. 152-170.

[81] Pamela Colman Smith was also a suffragist, occultist and illustrator, who took on projects for Yeats and his brother Jack, including illustrations for *The Land of Heart's Desire*.

[82] As I have indicated earlier, I use an online version for Farr's *Modern Woman* which does not have pagination.

women to recognize the various proportions of sexuality in each sex, to make allowance for the passionate, and to admit that we are greatly indebted for our culture to individuals who do not desire to be parents" (*Modern Woman*). She explains the origins of women's oppression in society, and outlines the prospect of change which has to be initiated by women in order to achieve freedom. She demands equal wages and work opportunities for women, including wages for women who raise children. She writes honestly about how she is often criticised because of her profession which is associated with prostitution: "I think I had better own up at once that as an artist I am prejudiced against the exhibition of the necessities of nature" (*Modern Woman*). However, she owns her story and refuses to feel ashamed because of society's opinion, as the body and sexuality are a necessity of nature and there is nothing unrespectable or unnatural about it: "The old lies are in our blood—we still believe in Eve and her shame. White men have fought in the past, and it remains for white women to fight now, and at last rid their sex all over the world of the ignominy of this false doctrine" (*Modern Woman*).

Moreover, Farr speaks up for prostitutes as well and criticises all those women who uphold the patriarchal system which shames other women. Farr laments that since prostitutes are forced to be ashamed, in case of a contagious disease after intercourse, they do not receive immediate treatment:

> The pitiless contempt of married women for prostitution is bringing a terrible punishment, which is ruining the physique of nearly every civilized race. … The contempt that is shown towards prostitutes makes it impossible for them to insist upon proper sanitation in the quarters where they congregate. (*Modern Woman*)

Just like Duse, Farr suggests that society should not be surprised that such marginalised outcasts turn their rage against the society that abuses them: "Can we wonder that a woman who is treated as street walkers are treated

should feel this wild anti-social rage against the society that has first made use of her and then treated her as an outcast?" (*Modern Woman*).

Harris has emphasised Farr's political and social importance as a queer woman and as "an English feminist turned actress" (*Irish Drama* 16), whose contribution to avant-garde drama is much more significant than it has been accounted for. Farr had convinced the magnate and fellow occultist Annie Horniman to fund a season of avant-garde drama in the Avenue Theatre, which was the first occasion Yeats saw a play of his produced (16). Farr "was an outspoken feminist, an occult adept, a vocal critic of the institution of marriage, and a woman already identified – at least by Yeats, Todhunter and Shaw – as queer" (18-9). Harris asserts that Todhunter's play *A Sicilian Idyll* (1890) in which Farr appeared as a Hellenistic New Woman, strongly suggested "that Yeats, Todhunter and Shaw fell for Farr partly *because* they identified her as queer. They did not, of course, see her as exclusively lesbian – she had one failed marriage behind her, and for years she was romantically involved with Shaw – but *A Sicilian Idyll* suggests that Farr's bisexuality was, for them, one of her charms" (36). Farr played Amaryllis who is shown "as a man-hating virgin who is grieving the end of a passionate attachment to a younger woman who is just beginning to take an interest in men" (36), and this "is enough to establish her as Sapphic" (36). Moreover, Greece as setting functioned as "a *signifier* of same-sex love" (46).

Farr's queer stage presence often raised unease in audiences. For instance, her role as Lady Carmen in Todhunter's *A Comedy of Sighs* "provoked first-night audience to mutiny at a time when even the most hidebound London critics were resigning themselves to the New Woman as the new normal" (Harris, *Irish Drama* 45). This failure made Shaw realise that he might lose audiences by collaborating with Farr, which he explained in a letter to Elizabeth Robins: "Oh my Saint Elizabeth, holy and consoling, have you ever seen so horrible a portent on the stage as this transformation of an amiable, clever sort of woman into a nightmare, a Medusa, a cold, loathly, terrifying, grey, callous, sexless devil?" (qtd. in Harris 45). As Harris

discerns, the reason for this unrest was that "[l]ike [Yeats's] *Land of Heart's Desire*, *Comedy of Sighs* fuses two fundamental anxieties evoked by the New Woman: the fear that she would reject motherhood, and the fear that she would reject heterosexuality" (46).

Parallel to Farr's feminism, her occult practices and acting, the Irish suffrage activity dating back to 1876 also created safe spaces for feminist and queer women in Ireland following the example of the suffragette movement in Britain. In 1908, a militant suffrage association called the Irish Women's Franchise League was founded by Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington and Margaret Cousins (Tiernan 74). Yeats's friend, the lesbian poet and playwright Eva Gore-Booth belonged to this group of militant suffragists.[83]

Already in the 1890s, Gore-Booth and her sister Constance Markievicz initiated the foundation of Sligo's suffrage association of which she became secretary, while Markievicz its president (Tiernan 76). Therefore Ireland's militant suffrage activity began in Sligo where Yeats spent most of his time in the company of the Gore-Booth sisters. As Walshe has explained, Eva Gore-Booth was "a lone voice that found expression for a lesbian sensibility through the dominant tropes of the Celtic Revival" ("Oscar's Mirror" 150). Her group of radical suffragists founded their own periodical in 1916, *Urania*, which focused on gender equality and radical sexual theory. Tiernan laments that scholarship tends to overlook the extraordinary achievements of this periodical (75), which indeed became a crucial part of the Irish queer/feminist subculture. *Urania* was a privately printed journal which, however, reached hundreds of intellectuals with every issue and it was circulated until 1940 (Tiernan 80). The issues were always carefully edited and each of them opened with a psalm or poem and included a "Star Dust" section about women who achieved success in traditionally male areas: "they were chosen to highlight the fact that innate differences do not exist between the sexes" (81).

[83] Interestingly, Emma Donoghue's essay "How could I fear and hold thee by the hand" argues that Gore-Booth in fact "subverts and lesbianizes the poetry of her friend and admirer, Yeats, in poems such as her 1905 work, 'The Perilous Light'" (Walshe, "Oscar's Mirror" 150-1).

Moreover, the editors carefully selected stories about boys who changed into girls or women who cross-dressed but without the general sensationalism with which such stories were reported by other periodicals (81). As Tiernan further explains, "[t]he editors of *Urania* were fascinated by accounts of women who masqueraded as men and they reprinted newspaper reports of such cases" (82). On their own, such articles would have provided a mere sensational read or outrage. To avoid this, the editors provided their own commentary for these articles to educate and inform their readers instead of solely entertaining them. The commentary's purpose was threefold:

> Firstly, to show that women could achieve anything if they were not constrained by their socially expected gender behaviour and the legal restrictions of the era. Secondly, to highlight that gender was not innately linked to sexed bodies; it was simply a masquerade, a performance which either gender could overturn. Finally, cross-dressing highlighted the fact that people were not always content with their assigned gender and consequently chose to adopt the opposite role. (82)

In addition, the editors saw marriage as a system at the very heart of gender stereotyping which they wished to deconstruct (83). They encouraged women to choose career over marriage and to gain financial independence from men and not to be afraid of spinsterhood regardless of society's suspicion about spinsters: "These independent career women were commonly referred to as 'New Women' in the early twentieth-century. The rise in the number of spinsters caused societal concern, especially in regard to the birth rate, with women expected to replenish a decreasing population" (83). Due to this rise in the number of unmarried women, an anti-spinster sentiment appeared in contemporary newspapers and sexologists began pathologising women who chose not to marry (83). The editors' wish was to challenge the prevailing negative notion that women who did not marry were necessarily undesirable: "Among the women who have not married

will be found some of the most charming, the most attractive, and the best-looking of their sex" (qtd. in Tiernan 84). Ireland was therefore much ahead of other countries in terms of the dissemination of radical feminist thoughts and ideas of gender equality and queer sexualities. Even Virginia Woolf lamented the lack of articles on women in Britain in 1928 (Tiernan 85), when *Urania* had been circulating widely among Irish artists and intellectuals for more than a decade.

Roy Foster's book *Vivid Faces* offers a detailed overview of lesbian and male queer subcultures in late nineteen-century and early twentieth-century Ireland within radical nationalist and socialist circles. He mentions among others Maud Gonne's admirer Ella Young as well as Kathleen Lynn, a radical Protestant doctor and Madeleine ffrench-Mullen who "lived together all their lives in a relationship with all the marks of a marriage" (137-8). Such lesbian relationships were very common in Irish activist circles: "Besides Lynn and ffrench-Mullen, female couples were well known among socialist and radical circles, such as Louie Bennett and Helen Chenevix, and Elizabeth O'Farrell and Julia Grenan; to a certain extent, lesbians may have been drawn to such organizations in order to meet each other" (138).

7. Sexuality and Occult Societies in Dublin and Europe

Occult practices and Farr's influence played a crucial role in broadening Yeats's ideas about sexuality and performance, as the occult séances were always highly sexual and deconstructed fixed notions of gender, often involving sadomasochistic elements (Cullingford, *Gender* 51-2). Harris stresses that "[t]he most significant romantic relationships in Yeats's life were mediated by the occult, and he could never entirely separate magic from the erotic" (400). Foster adds that "[t]hroughout his life, episodes of sexual energy and confusion would be closely paralleled by periods of magical experimentation" (*Apprentice Mage* 101). In fact, Yeats attended various séances and rituals, because his search for his Daimon (Second-self) through ritual performance was a search for the feminine in himself (Haswell 291). Yet this obsession with the occult made Yeats an unorthodox figure in Ireland: "To most Irishmen at this time, the preoccupation with the

occult of Yeats and his wife must have seemed uncanny, obscure, cranky and heretical" (MacLiammoir 97).

Occult séances were also feminist and feminine spaces (Cullingford, *Gender* 25).[84] Bedford Park in London in the 1880s was the first occult atmosphere that influenced Yeats's ideas of performance and gender. On 5 May 1890, Florence Farr's androgynous role in Todhunter's *A Sicilian Idyll* in the local theatre constituted "a quintessential Bedford Park occasion" (Foster, *Apprentice Mage* 107). As Foster remarks, Bedford Park offered a milieu of bohemianism and popular aestheticism, where artists, playwrights, poets, academics could meet (60). It was characterised by an "eager fashion for agnosticism, socialism and occultism" (60) and an "indefinable pleasantness" (60). This experience was followed by the Dublin Hermetic Society founded in 1885, which nurtured the voices of Irish literary renaissance including Charles Johnston, Charles Weekes, George Russell and Yeats himself as its Chairman (Foster 46-7). In 1886, the society's name became Dublin Theosophical Society. Thanks to this change, the theosophist leader Madam Blavatsky sent her Indian envoy Mohini Chatterjee to Dublin, who made a lasting impact on Irish intellectuals. Madam Blavatsky and Chatterjee played an important role in creating homoerotic spaces in Dublin through esoteric science which conceives of the human as bisexual. Madam Blavatsky initiated a theosophical movement in Europe, and she sent Chatterjee as her representative to various European theosophical societies including the one in Dublin. The mission of Blavatsky's Theosophical Society was "to create a universal and enlightened brotherhood that could overcome religious and racial divisions" (Judge 264) and could bring about "a transgressive disembodied spirituality" (268).

In addition, the Theosophical Society and its members defied repressive colonial approaches to sexuality: "sexual desires and attachments exceeded colonial and theosophical demarcations, both of which sought to control and

[84] Margaret Mills Harper has discussed the transgressive aspects of Yeats's attachment to occult practices in *Wisdom of Two. The Spiritual and Literary Collaboration of George and W. B. Yeats*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006.

regulate sex to prevent interracial unions" (Judge 269). When Mohini Chatterjee[85] arrived in Dublin in 1886, he received a lot of attention from men including Yeats who was spellbound by him and who compared Chatterjee to Socrates (Judge 282). Judge explains that "[i]n this formulation, Chatterji, embodying the figure of Socrates as the 'subject who is supposed to know,' who is neither male nor female but an enigmatic desire, forced Wilde and Yeats to investigate the lack at the core of their subjectivity" (282). Both Yeats and Wilde found that the stability of their subjectivity was disturbed and transformed after meeting Chatterjee: "this encounter did not narcissistically annihilate difference by rendering Chatterji simply as a stable body; rather, their desires, perhaps homoerotic, provided an opportunity to acknowledge this enchanted Chatterji as something else that was not consistent with the colonial order" (Judge 282-3).

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was a similarly influential society in late nineteenth-century Dublin, which acted as a magnet "for the frustrated as well as the credulous" (Foster, *Apprentice Mage* 101). Like the Dublin Theosophical Society, it "attracted a high proportion of unconventional woman acolytes" (101-2) and "both were plunged by sexual scandals" (102). More importantly, there was a gender equality within the order.[86] Yeats joined this society after he met Maud Gonne in 1889, and it informed Yeats's earliest experiences with theatre, as most of the rituals "were closely connected with theatrical experiments" (Foster 105).

The Rhymers Club was yet another occult, literary homoerotic subculture in Dublin. Yeats was the club's original moving spirit (Foster 107), but it also included Todhunter, Lionel Johnson, Ernest Dowson and many others. Some of its members such as Dowson were bohemians, and it also functioned as "a strong homoerotic subculture" (108), as queer men such as Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon were unofficial patrons. The

[85] His name can be spelt both as Chatterjee and Chatterji.
[86] See Dennis Denisoff's short article "The Feminist Occult in Florence Farr's *Dancing Faun*." *Staging Decadence*, 14 November 2020.

homoerotic tone was sustained by Lionel Johnson's poems about supressed desire and the presence of John Gray "who lent his face and his name to the hero of Wilde's coded homosexual novel" (108). What is more, Wilde himself joined them occasionally, Arthur Symons became a Rhymer and Yeats's close friend, while Lionel Johnson acted as a powerful intellectual mentor for the still incomplete Yeats (108).

As regards Italy, Madam Blavatsky's influence reached Venice, Rome, Bologna, Naples and Bari too—she is even reported to have met the famous Italian patriots Giuseppe Garibaldi and Giuseppe Mazzini (Cranston and Williams 79). The first lodges in Italy where occult séances could be practiced were founded in the early twentieth century and Theosophy flourished until the advent of fascism. However, in 1930, the fascist government ordered the dissolution of the Theosophical Society. Some members continued to meet after the ban, which resulted in imprisonments, harassments and deportation to Germany on several occasions. The decree abolishing the Genoa centre of the Italian Theosophical Society makes it clear that the authorities observed their members with suspicion probably due to the fact that theosophical practices were pursued by bohemian, progressive-minded and sexually radical people in Italy just like in Ireland:

> According to the report of the local police headquarters of 30th November 1938-XVII it appears that the Italian Theosophical Society in the greatest part of its members is composed of persons who show little comprehension of the basic principles of Fascism and carry on an activity often in opposition to the politics of the National Government under the pretext of spiritual studies. Considering that many members of the Italian Theosophical Society far from pursuing any high ideal indulge, especially of recent times, in sectarian and demagogical manifestations. (qtd. in Girardi, "Theosophy in Italy")

Despite the prohibition, Blavatsky's movement made a lasting impact on Italian artists, including the esoteric aspects of the writings of Gabriele D'Annunzio. As Attilio Mazza explains in *D'Annunzio e l'occulto* (D'Annunzio and the Occult), in 1887 D'Annunzio wrote an article "Sancta Kabbala" for *La Tribuna* about his obsession with the spirit world: "I am an ardent novice of occult science. For some time I have been living in another world. I finally know how to … communicate with the spirits, to be a guest in a realm of fairy tales …."[87] (34). Similar to Yeats's experiences in Sligo's magical fairy lore, D'Annunzio's attachment to the occult was inspired by the superstitions of his home, the region of Abruzzo. Moreover, in 1901, D'Annunzio was introduced to masonry by Ettore Ferrari and later he was initiated into martinism. As Guerri points out in *Disobbedisco*, most of the volunteers of D'Annunzio's Fiume mission were occultists or freemasons, and the flag designed for the Regency of Carnaro featured masonic and gnostic symbols such as the Ouroboros (a serpent or dragon eating its own tail) and the seven stars (338-9). It is by no accident that Guerri wonders if D'Annunzio's conquest of Fiume was, in fact, his occult homage to masonry (338).

8. Gender, Sexuality and the Colonial Discourse in Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Italy and Ireland

Another area that connects Irish and Italian cultural politics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is the intersection between the national, the colonial and the sexual, which put significant pressure on both male and female bodies and their sexual behaviours. While Irish nationalists insisted on repressive notions of gender and sexuality to detach themselves from the British colonial imaginary which saw Irish people as childish and effeminate, Italian nationalists insisted on normative ideals and virility to establish their colonial power and secure colonial expansion. As Sandra Ponzanesi has pointed out, "Italy occupies a queer place in Europe because of the specific intersection between homosexuality and colonialism" (89). More pressingly, at the start of Italian colonial expansion, "the colonies

[87] "Io sono un ardentissimo novizio della scienza occulta. Da qualche tempo io vivo in un altro mondo. So finalmente come si fa … a ragionare con li spiriti, ad essere ospite di un reame di fiabe …".

appeared as a space of sexual liberation" (86), where adultery, prostitution and sometimes even homosexual practices were tolerated.

Even though post-unification Italy had a more progressive approach to homosexuality thanks to the 1889 Zanardelli Code, Liberal Italy's politics heavily built on ideals of virility, exclusion of sexual deviants and othering, which became crucial strategies to create a strong national identity. To achieve this strong national identity after 1861, "numerous legal and police measures were carried out to curb all phenomena regarded as socially deviant" (Giuliani 32), which included brigandage, homosexuality and prostitution—all associated at the time with the Italian South, hence the area became internally colonised by the North. In the name of national unity, internal domestication and colonisation began: "the state would bring 'rebels' under the rule of law and make 'deviants' conform to the norm and the image of the normative Italian citizen, either forcing them to accept their own inclusion in the Italian political arena or declaring them ontologically and hopelessly incompatible" (Giuliani 32). Thus the normative force of the state was controlling sexuality decades before Italian fascism, and expected people to set aside the needs of the body for the sake of national unity.

Sculpture, education and literature were all expected to convey strict ideas of gender and normativity well before fascism:

> Risorgimento heroes and heroines in opera shows, schools books, statues, and images of Italy as a motherly woman in public spaces and buildings were a constant visual reminder that Italians belonged to a nation and as such they served as ideals or models of normativity and normality, signaling who had 'the right to look' and identify as Italia. (Giuliani 34)

Even though the Zanardelli code decriminalised homosexuality on a national scale in 1889, prostitution and sexual inversion were both visually represented as mental or physical pathologies in criminal anthropology and sexology of the time. After Unification, homosexual acts were treated for some time as potential criminal acts and taxes against single men were introduced (Ponzanesi 85), which put pressure on men to marry and

reproduce. On Lombroso's influence, photographs and drawings were widely circulated to make a racialised distinction between the appearance of the natural born criminal associated with sexual perversion and the Italian South and the normative, white, heterosexual subject who had the right to sexuality (Giuliani 34).

During Italian fascism, sexual behaviour and normative gender roles became even more crucial for the maintenance of racial purity and strong national identity, but fascist sexual politics was full of contradictions. Ideal standards of masculinity and femininity were even more widely disseminated through propaganda in schools and sport associations (Giuliani 65). Interestingly, Ettore Scola's 1977 film *Una giornata particolare* (A Special Day) demonstrates that such notions of masculinity and femininity created an anxiety in Italian men and women. The film is set in 1930 on the day when Hitler visits Rome, and portrays two subjects marginalised by fascism: a housewife (Antonietta played by Sofia Loren) and a gay radio reporter (Gabriele played by Marcello Mastroianni). Through these two characters the film deconstructs both the stereotype of the Italian Latin lover and the dominant model of Italian femininity as both Gabriele and Antonietta experience unhappiness, anxiety and displacement: "by troubling Italian models of virility and ideals of masculinity, the film expressed both fascist anxieties vis-à-vis an unacknowledged homosexuality but also an Italian anxiety about its model of masculinity" (83). Even though Mastroianni was seen as the quintessential Italian man, he always played conflicted Italian male characters. This stressed the idea that normative notions of masculine behaviour put a lot of pressure on men who felt different from the norm: "underneath the façade of a presumed hypermasculinity is really the anti-hero, the Italian *inetto* (inept man), a man at odds with and out of place in a rapidly changing political, social, and sexual environment" (Jacqueline Reich qtd. in Ponzanesi 83). This kind of masculinity was similar to what Spackman has called the D'Annunzian model which countered fascist virility with a virility "molded through the feminine" (qtd. in Ponzanesi 84).

The normative family became one of the main pillars of the regime, as the family was equated with the nation and the regime itself: there was a "unifying notion of virile and patriarchal masculinity that combined obedience and loyalty to the nation and family with obedience and loyalty to the fascist regime" (Giuliani 65). Interestingly, initially fascists posed as anti-marriage and anti-tradition futurists and anarchists, which changed radically in the late 1920s when their politics began to be all about tradition, marriage and reproduction, as urbanisation and industrial progress were associated with homosexuality (Giuliani 67). Colonial images depicting the contrast between white fascist soldiers and black colonial subjects became familiar in Italian households "as if the imagined deeds of 'their' men and soldiers in Africa could reinforce patriarchal power in the domestic space" (Giuliani 71). Of course this obsession with the virile male body inevitably entailed homoeroticism (Ponzanesi 86), and Derek Duncan has remarked that "[t]he public celebration and display of the male body raises questions of how men looked at each other. Sexual potency was lauded, yet contact with women was shunned" (189). The best example of this contradiction is the sixty statues of male athletes of the Stadio dei Marmi commissioned by Mussolini—as Duncan points out, these statues are hardly fascist; instead they invoke "a lost bisexuality that characterized Mediterranean societies" (188).

There was an equally significant tension between the totalitarian model of femininity and imperial imaginary. While the regime promoted the sanctity of the family and condemned every action that violated it, the so-called madamism became a popular and accepted practice in the colonies: it meant "the right to have a local (temporary) 'wife' … to grant Italian soldiers and civilians the needed hearth and home, namely care and sexual satisfaction" (Giuliani 76). One of the main contradictions of fascist sexual politics was that "on the one hand, the display of exotic love affairs was encouraged as a sign of Italian virility, while on the other, inter-racial sexual relations were condemned by racial eugenics" (Ponzanesi 85).

Yet heterosexual Italian men were rarely identified as the causes of racial degeneration due to their adultery in the colonies: it was always women and

their behaviours that were shamed. Italian women were seen as "the guardian[s] of purity, morality, and racial regeneration" (Giuliani 77) but at the same time they were also always "the cause of impurity, immorality, and racial degeneration" (77). Fascism put an immense pressure on women: "the sexual behaviour of women was cast as a biophysical medium of the kind of diseases characteristic of inferior races but also as a means for ensuring psychological, physical, and genetic well-being of the Italian race" (77).

Women were expected to be uncomplicated, decent and simple: the image of the motherly woman, Christian, yet sexually active and devoted to the husband served to fully confirm male superiority in fascist Italy (Giuliani 79). Fascism discarded the provocative Risorgimento-era she-patriots and the complex women of the *fin de siècle* and proposed simple, one-dimensional she-patriots without pro-patria martyrdom and sacrifice (Giuliani 82), so women were denied entry to the sacrificial paradigm just like in Ireland.[88] Fascism countered the turn-of-the-century complex women with the nationalised model of the country farmer's wife who had to exemplify the rejection of defeminisation associated with emancipated women (82).

To control women's sexual behaviour, a series of laws were passed between 1925 and 1939 targeting sexuality, motherhood, female contraception and marriage: for instance the 1930 Rocco Code set out hard penalties for adultery (while Italian soldiers were allowed to commit adultery in the colonies), legitimised honour killings, and linked parental rights to paternal authority (Giuliani 80). Furthermore, in 1931, abortion was made illegal, divorce was prohibited. The cinematic production of the time (the so-called *telefoni bianchi*) was expected to contrast the ideal Italian woman with the degenerate one who poses a threat to men and the Italian nation (83). Mussolini thus controlled women's role in public life and explained to Emil Ludwig that he thought women would even laugh at him if he granted them the right to vote:

[88] For a more detailed analysis of the Irish sacrificial paradigm, see Harris's *Gender and Modern Irish Drama*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 2002.

> Woman must play a passive part. She is analytical, not synthetical. Ask her to build you a mere hut, not even a temple; she cannot do it. … My notion of woman's role in the State is utterly opposed to Feminism. Of course I do not want them to be slaves, but if here in Italy I proposed to give our women votes, they would laugh me to scorn. As far as political life is concerned, they do not count here. (qtd. in Ludwig 170)

The new fascist state also required the creation of the new fascist woman consisting of three different types: the strong defender, the beautiful warrior and the loving mother/wife.[89] But in reality, Fascism expected all women to belong to the last category, to be mothers and wives in the first place. This idealisation of maternity is called matriotism which "conceals gender inequity behind an idealisation of maternity, harnesses women's (reproductive) labor in the service of the State and suppresses women's sexuality in favour of their maternal role" (Carlston 7).

Even though fascism condemned homosexuality, the colonies created contradiction in this area as well. Since the main purpose of the regime was to maintain racial purity, "same-sex sexual relations had the advantage of not furthering 'miscegenation' as long as they remained conveniently invisible, covert, and unmarked, as the Catholic Church wanted them to be" (Ponzanesi 85). At the same time, homosexual practice was seen as the exact product of miscegenation, "the result of inadequately controlled sexuality that in turn weakened the race further" (85). As Duncan observes, "[t]heir crime was nonreproductive sex that contradicted the regime's express wish to increase Italy's population" (191). Italian race laws thus harboured ambivalence around homosexuality, instead of following Nazi Germany's strict discriminatory legislation. Rather than addressing homosexuality as deviancy in the national discourse, Italian fascists opted for a policy of silence (Ponzanesi 86). Even though reproductive fantasy was the regime's sustaining myth, the purity of the race was even more

[89] See Allison Scardino Belzer's chapter "Italian Fascism and the *Donna Fascista*." In *Women and the Great War*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010.

important, and fears of racial amalgamation "even led to the promotion of homosexuality in 'the imperial game'" (Duncan 192), which, in fact, was already a highly homoerotic practice. Besides homosexuals, men who lived as bachelors and did not reproduce were also targets of shaming, as Carlo Scorza's lines illustrate: "We must despise them. We must make the bachelors and those who desert the nuptial bed ashamed of their potential power to have children" (qtd. in Duncan 191).

Since fascists denied the existence of homosexuality in Italy, they could not publicly shame and persecute queer people, and could not begin a national discriminatory campaign against them: "homosexuality has a curious form of visibility in Italian culture since it is neither acknowledged openly, nor denied officially" (Ponzanesi 90). This, however, does not follow that anti-gay violence and homophobia was absent: in fact, as Ponzanesi concludes, social repression was so implicit and subterraneous during Italian fascism that legal eradication became completely superfluous: "Repression, in other words, remained amorphous and unarticulated, rather than explicit through the state and new legislation or administrative procedures" (89). As a result, homosexual desires in society and in literature were expressed through masking, coding and strategic silences. It was only in 1938 that the Race Laws labelled homosexuality as enemy of the race and it was recategorised as a political crime. As Duncan explains: "paradoxically it would first of all have had to make visible what had been hidden by political choice for centuries, and then repress it in order to hide it again" (190). Still, homosexuality in Italy remained the realm of the unsaid: "of whispers and euphemisms, of circumlocution and hidden faces: a world that is there but which doesn't exist because it isn't allowed to emerge into the light of day" (190).

In Ireland, romantic and revolutionary nationalisms became the foremost cultural and political frameworks, and, as Lapointe has remarked, three main strands shaped the country's attitude to gender and sexuality: conservative constitutional nationalism, militant revolutionary nationalism, and romantic cultural nationalism (*Between Irishmen* 2-3). Nationalism in Ireland had the power to define who was included in and who was excluded

from the definition of Irishness. Irish nationalism created internal borders between the Irish and the Other, excluding women, Travellers, Jews, the working class, abused children and gays and lesbians (Cullingford, *Ireland's Others* 7). Like in Italy, the aim was to secure an uncontaminated Irishness or Ulsterness as a means of liberation from colonial oppression. As a result, Irish nationalisms put an enormous pressure on Irish men but mostly on women and their sexual behaviors, since the male body stood for the nation while the female body embodied the symbol of the nation (Lapointe 21). Harris highlights that Irish nationalism aimed to suppress the needs of the body and deny its power, because they saw the body as a site of possible contamination[90]: the body is what "renders the 'Irish national character' vulnerable to imperial coercion, what makes imperial intervention inescapable and cultural pollution unavoidable" (*Gender* 39). Enforcing normative and oppressive constructions of Irish masculinity and femininity has therefore been central both "to the process of imposing and maintaining imperial rule in Ireland" (Harris, "Watch Yourself") and to the cause of Irish nationalism and anti-imperialism.

While in Italy the control of bodies and sexual behaviours served to ensure the country's colonial expansion, in Ireland it was part of the process of decolonisation from British rule.[91] Yet, as David Lloyd has emphasised, "it is a paradox of nationalism that though it may often summon into being a 'people' which is to form and subtend the nation-state, it is always confronted with that people as a potentially disruptive *excess* over the nation and its state" (*Ireland After History* 33). Lloyd outlines a promising proposal for future Irish scholarship which examines "the emergence of differently articulated male and female homosocial spheres in colonial and postcolonial Ireland, though these doubtless exist and have probably profoundly affected political and social life in Ireland" (*Ireland After*

[90] Harris has stressed that Irish nationalists were outraged at Yeats's *The Countless Cathleen* exactly because it suggested that the needs of the body were more important than the national cause (*Gender* 40).

[91] Geraldine Moane has done extensive research on the relationship between gender, sexuality and colonialism with regard to the Irish context. See, for instance, *Gender and Colonialism: A Psychological Analysis of Oppression and Liberation*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999.

History 88). Walshe has explained why postcolonial countries like Ireland have unease with the presence of the homoerotic:

> Colonialism itself generates a gendered power relationship and, inevitably, casts the colonising power as masculine and dominant and the colonised as feminine and passive. One of the consequences of this resistance to the imperial was an increased unease with the shifting and "unstable" nature of sexual difference, and so a narrowing of gender hierarchies ensues. In Irish cultural discourse, silencing sexual difference became imperative because of a supposed linked between homosexuality and enfeebled, "feminized" masculinity. (Walshe, "Introduction: Sex, Nation, and Dissent" 5)

A striking aspect of the queerness of Irish nationalism was the so-called Molly Maguires[92] secret society who were "Irish transvestite terrorists" (Lapointe, *Between Irishmen* 181). They "comprised secret societies of activist vigilantes who clashed with landlords over rent, evictions, and land reform. They primarily operated in rural Ireland at night, disguising themselves by cross-dressing as women, replete with bonnets, gowns, and petticoats" (181). Their name also evokes the English term "molly" which signified a male homosexual since the eighteenth century: "The queerly named Molly Maguires may be deciphered as the personification of Irish nationalisms' repressed homoerotic investment exhibited publicly, and stereotypically, on the surface of their garments" (182). Interestingly, Patrick Pearse and his brother William also engaged in transvestism in their late teens: they wandered the streets of Dublin dressed as poor women (99-100). Lapointe adds, however, that "Pearse's adoption of female dress and poetic personas in turn of the century Ireland, if widely known, would have raised concerns among his contemporaries" (100).

A crucial component of Ireland's history of sexuality was the practice of familism and thus marriage became the most significant institution. In

[92] Lapointe has explored the references to this organisation in Joyce's *Ulysses* when the intolerant nationalist citizen is hunted by transvestite compatriots (*Between Irishmen* 180-2).

Locked in the Family Cell, Kathryn Conrad has observed that "the centrality of the family cell to social, economic, and political organization defines and limits not only acceptable sexuality but also the contours of the private sphere, the public sphere, and the nation itself" (4). In *Writing Ireland*, David Cairns and Shaun Richards describe familism as a post-famine phenomenon which consolidated strict codes of behaviour between men and women, espoused celibacy outside matrimony, expanded matchmaking before marriage, and stressed strict chastity in the name of not risking the transmission of inheritance due to sexual desires (Lapointe 35; Cairns and Richards 42-3). Thus the needs of the body had to be fully repressed in the name of family interests. Cairns and Richards further explain that

> [f]or familism to operate it was essential that the codes of belief and behaviour upon which it depended, particularly the regulation of sexuality, and unquestioned patriarchal authority guaranteed by the Church's sanctions and underpinning stem inheritance, should be accepted by the family and the whole community. Only widespread acceptance could make it possible to perpetuate a system which demanded so much of individuals. (59-60)

Moreover, sexual needs and desires were not recognised, as "all *eros* was harnessed to serve economic imperatives" (Lapointe, *Between Irishmen* 36). All forms of sexuality were equated with sin, and bodily pleasure was marginalised and condemned in the name of gaining autonomy from colonial oppression: "The Irish in effect mortgaged bodily pleasure (the repression of which was one salient mark of Catholic difference), to retain cultural autonomy" (Margot Gayle Backus, "Sexual Figures" 114). Unregulated desire was a threat not only to the nation and the social order but to livelihoods in general, hence "the success of the Catholic Church's indoctrination of their flock with norms of extreme sexual restraint, intensified by the late nineteenth-century 'devotional revolution' in Ireland" (Cairns and Richards 62). Nonetheless, Irish people engaged in pre-marital

sex, adultery and prostitution, as Maria Luddy's and Mary O'Dowd's new book *Marriage in Ireland, 1660-1925* demonstrates:

> subversive behaviour and side-stepping the laws of Church and State in relation to personal and intimate relationships were common. The pursuit of love by Irish men and women, however that was understood in practical or romantic terms, their demand for personal attachment, their desire for sexual fulfillment and their assertion of economic agency challenged social norms throughout the period. (411)

Like in Italy, Germany and England, Irish society and nationalism were built on bourgeois respectability and the resulting moral prudery. Mosse argues in *Nationalism and Sexuality* that European nationalisms "absorbed and sanctioned middle-class manners and morals and played a crucial part in spreading respectability to all classes of the population" (9). This cult of respectability consigned women to the domestic sphere as passive, virtuous and motherly, while men were expected to be physical, rational, courageous and righteous (Lapointe, *Between Irishmen* 37). The homosexual man emerged as the antithesis to the masculine Christian gentleman, and the widely accepted symptomatic signs of the homosexual included fatigue, a nervous disposition, feminine appearance, sensuality, physical weakness and compulsive onanism (Mosse 28-31).

Besides Oscar Wilde's trials, the 1884 Dublin Castle homosexual scandal and 1889-1890 Cleveland Street Affair made Irish nationalisms more homophobic, yet, paradoxically, more homosocial as well. The former involved high-ranking officials who allegedly engaged in homosexual activities, but since they were privileged individuals, they evaded legal censure (Lapointe, *Between Irishmen* 39-40). The latter one involved an investigation into a male brothel where teenage boys employed as telegraph messengers served clergy and upper-class clientele, but yet again members of high society and nobility avoided penalty, which sparked controversy and was instigated by the newspapers (39). Even though in the mid-Victorian

period, homosexuality was not a public controversy, the Dublin Castle scandal made homophobia a major force in Irish nationalist politics:

> Strands of Irish nationalism took onboard discourses of respectability and normative gender roles and ideals as part of their definitions of *Irishness*, unwittingly, yet inevitably, producing homosocially-inflected nationalisms that drew upon normative models of masculinity and its various repudiations of the feminine. (42)

Before the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, sexuality in Ireland was governed by legislation from the Parliament of the United Kingdom, such as the 1885 Labouchere Amendment which made gross indecency a crime in the UK. This was the law under which Oscar Wilde was condemned to two years' hard labour and which sentenced Alan Turing to oestrogen injections as an alternative to prison. After independence, however, Ireland did not become a more progressive place for women and gay people despite the initial hopes about the new constitution. According to the 1916 Proclamation, Irishwomen would have been given equal citizenship, equal rights and opportunities. Even the 1922 constitution appeared promising for Irish women, as it guaranteed equal rights for all citizens regardless of gender (Beaumont 565). Esther Roper in a letter to Sheehy-Skeffington expressed her high hopes for the new state: "never had there been such a firm foundation of justice and freedom guaranteed by any country of its women citizens" (qtd. in Beaumont 565). Yet the Irish Free State and the Catholic Church soon smothered these bright prospects by introducing legislations that limited the citizenship rights of women in Ireland. Sheehy-Skeffington also lamented that the new constitution was built on "a Fascist Model, in which women would be relegated to permanent inferiority, their avocations and choice of callings limited because of an implied invalidism of the weaker sex" (qtd. in Beaumont 563).

The first signs of the strong influence of the Catholic Church on William Cosgrave's government included a full-time film censor in 1923 to protect citizens from the moral dangers of Hollywood. Thus censors were given the

power to ban or cut films deemed as blasphemous, obscene, indecent or subversive of public morals in any way (Beaumont 566). In 1925, Cosgrave banned divorce in Ireland, which Yeats as a senator of the Free State explicitly opposed: "Yeats denied that divorce increases immorality, and set the sacredness of individual love against the sanctity of the family. Characteristically, he invoked the liberty of minorities against the tyranny of the majority" (Cullingford, *Yeats, Ireland and Fascism* 183). In the same year, Catholic Girl Guides were introduced to encourage young Irish women to adhere to Catholic ideals of womanhood (Beaumont 566). In the eyes of the Church, women's primary role was that of mother and wife, but in reality, many Irish women in the 1920s did not find suitable partners. Single women were either compelled to emigrate, enter a convent or pursue a badly paid employment, even though these opportunities were very limited too (566). As early as 1922, an Irish Bishop clearly demarcated the dangers that threaten Irish women and the morality of the Irish race: "traps for the innocent are chiefly the dance hall, the bad book, the indecent paper, the motion picture, the immodest fashion in female dress – all of which tend to destroy the virtues characteristic of our race" (qtd. in Beaumont 566). Like in fascist Italy, the youth had to be protected from such influences through strictly supervised and controlled education and by Catholic teachers who had to teach young Irish women the main moral principles that had to guide their lives: obedience, modesty and chastity (567).

One of the major concerns of the Catholic Free State was the emergence of New Women in Ireland, thus the first issue of The Mary Immaculate College Annual established in 1927 was entitled "Wanted – A New Woman": "Recognising the important social status of teachers, students at the college agreed to play their part in discouraging 'mannish and immodest' dress" (Beaumont 567). Excessive, assertive behaviour and theatre were also condemned: "Young women were to refrain from smoking and from talking laughing loudly in public. Immodest dances, cinema shows and plays were to be avoided at all cost" (567). Yet women were not entirely brain-washed into submission, as many women asserted their citizenship rights through various women's societies in the 1920s, 1930s

and 1940s (564). In 1910, the Irish Countrywomen's association was founded, which was followed by the National Council of Women in 1924 and the Joint Committee of Women's Societies and Social Workers in 1935, which "were anxious to portray women as active, intelligent, and responsible citizens" (564).

What is more, the so-called Mother and Baby Homes were established from the 1920s onwards for women who became stigmatised by their family, society, the state and the Church because they fell pregnant unmarried. Several historians[93] have demonstrated that there was a moral panic in post-independence Ireland whose primary mission was to regulate sexual behaviours through the notions of respectability and decency to prove Ireland could function as an independent nation (Grimes 52). Ireland is still struggling to face this trauma of Irish history. An investigation in 2021 revealed that these homes—which were supposed to protect women and their babies—caused the death of nine thousand children just because they were born to unmarried women. Since these institutions existed until the late 1990s, survivors are still part of Irish society.[94] The Magdalene Laundries were similar repressive institutions run by the Catholic Church from the eighteenth until the late twentieth century, where women who transgressed or were simply unmarried were punished and confined (Moane, "Living Visions" 89). These laundries equally caused the death of hundreds of women who were labelled as "fallen women" by the state and the Catholic Church. The report on the Mother and Baby Homes published in 2021 makes it clear that throughout the twentieth century, Ireland was an immensely misogynistic country which rid unmarried women of their basic rights and pushed them in an absurd situation whereby young women were not allowed to know anything about sexuality, and contraception was prohibited as well as abortion. As the Executive Summary of the Final

[93] These historians include Jennifer Redmond, Maria Luddy, Diarmaid Ferriter, Sonja Tiernan, Lorraine Grimes and Mary McAuliffe among others.

[94] Lorraine Grimes has done extensive research on the trauma of women who entered these institutions. See for instance "'They go to England to preserve their Secret': The emigration and assistance of the Irish unmarried mother in Britain 1926-1952." *Retrospectives*, vol. 5, no. 5, 2016, pp. 51-65.

Report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes states:

> In the 1920s, the Irish Free State was a newly-independent nation which was determined to show the world that it was different; part of that difference related to the capacity to withstand the undesirable aspects of modernity, including sexual licence and alien cultures. There was a strong alignment of views between church and State, resulting in legislation against contraception, divorce, censorship of cinema and publications that was bolstered by church sermons denouncing sexual immorality and the evils of modern society. (Government of Ireland 14-15)

The report equally clarifies that women were not forced to enter these institutions, but they had no alternative, as the pressure of the family, society and its cult of respectability was enormous: "Women who feared the consequences of their pregnancy becoming known to their family and neighbours entered mother and baby homes to protect their privacy. Some travelled to Britain, for the same reason" (3).

Irish nationalism's repressive sexual and gender politics was a resistance to the British imperialist discourse which "labelled the Irish as feminine and therefore inferior, dependent and weak" (Howes, *Yeats's Nations* 16). Moane has also stressed that the narrow definitions of womanhood, the fear of women and sexuality, and the focus of maternity were all legacies of colonisation ("Living Visions" 89). As a result, both British imperialism and Irish nationalism "disavowed femininity and asserted a compensatory and exaggerated masculinity" (Howes, *Yeats's Nations* 16). For instance, Yeats seemed to applaud Mussolini and the fascists in his 1924 Tailteann speech for "calmly walk[ing] over the more or less decomposed body of the goddess of Freedom" (qtd. in Cullingford, *Yeats, Ireland and Fascism* 149), and he initially idealised a myth of manliness connected to Charles Stewart Parnell (Valente, *Myth of Manliness* 244), the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy and the aristocratic courtier culture of Renaissance Italy (Howes, *Yeats's*

Nations 28). Due to societal pressure to be manly, Yeats eventually distanced himself from Celticism because of its femininity with which he was increasingly associated (Howes, *Yeats's Nations* 17).

But Yeats's representations and ideas about gender and sexuality were highly fluid and unstable, which is manifested in the difference between the Cathleen of *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (co-written with Lady Gregory) and *The Countess Cathleen*. Harris notes that scholars have treated the former one "as an aberration, an isolated attempt to pander to a popular nationalism that Yeats abandoned when he saw the error of his ways" (*Gender* 28), but she suggests that scholarship should stop treating this play as an aberration. The nationalist press after the production of *The Countess Cathleen* displayed a growing obsession with integrity and purity expected in the domestic sphere and in women's behaviours, which became the center "for all forms of national security" (Harris, *Gender* 67). Harris also suggests that we should not dismiss Yeats's eugenist phase as a direct influence of his flirtation with the Blueshirts, but "as a symptomatic of his lifelong obsession with degeneration" (228) and "his disillusionment with the progress of Irish politics" (229). Irish nationalists concerned about the vulnerability of the Irish body found in fascism the answer to some of their prayers (229). But Yeats was clearly becoming more and more critical of repressive nationalist ideas and his plays do not present the vulnerability of the body as a weakness but as something that is continuously abused by political interests and patriarchy.

9. Towards a Physical Theatre

Thanks to Yeats's and D'Annunzio's enriching collaborations with artists who defied conventions of acting, dance, gender and sexuality, their theatre began to move towards an anti-mimetic, anti-realist theatre, focusing on the erotic and political power of the body. This also meant a move towards total theatre in which music, dance, singing, and gesture all contribute to the storytelling.[95] Creating a theatre which focuses on the body is crucial, as

[95] Even though the ritual, the body, sexuality, dance, total theatre techniques and taboo topics create a strong link between their theatre, D'Annunzio wrote much longer, less

both in Irish and Italian society and national imagination, the body has always been a site of conflict. As Claudia Kinahan has explained, dance and physical theatre can offer "theatre makers a universal language through which to reinterpret difficult stories about our past and the contested political status of our bodies" ("Irish Bodies: The Rise of Dance Theatre").

Besides, Yeats's and D'Annunzio's determination to create a ritualistic experience through performance equally informed this change.[96] Due to its liminality and ambiguity, ritual signals a transformation from one phase to another, when people can linger between more social categories and identities (Schechner 66). Ritualistic experience could help direct the attention towards the physicality of the body and raise more sympathy in audiences towards the protagonists, thus towards vulnerable social outcasts and their bodily experiences. Moreover, ritual offers the possibility to formulate social and political criticism more easily, as in ritual "[a]mbiguity reigns; people and public policies may be judged sceptically in relation to deep values; the vices, follies, stupidities, and abuses of contemporary holders of high political, economic, or religious status may be satirized, ridiculed" (Turner 102). For instance, Terence Brown has described Yeats's entire dramatic practice as a "ritualistic eschewal of the conventions of theatrical realism" (72), thus ritual helped him parody the realist theatrical tradition. However, in his later plays, ritual bears a dangerous, uncanny nature (84) and serves to highlight the violence imposed upon marginalised, oppressed individuals. Trifirò has stressed that through the influence of ancient Greek drama, ritual became central to D'Annunzio too and to his creation of a new kind of Italian theatre (83).

New Women actors also raised Yeats's and D'Annunzio's interest in focusing on the body in performance. Re highlights that just like the dandy,

---

codified plays without masks involved, while Yeats mostly wrote short one-act plays in which masks and stylised movements played a seminal role.

[96] For more information on the centrality of ritual, body and spiritualism to Yeats's and D'Annunzio's drama see Mary Fleischer's book *Embodied Texts: Symbolist Playwright-Dancer Collaborations*. Amsterdam-New York, NY: Rodopi, 2007 with special attention to the chapters "Gabriele D'Annunzio and Ida Rubinstein" (pp. 19-92), "W. B. Yeats and Michio Ito" (pp. 149-214) and "W. B. Yeats and Ninette de Valois" (pp. 215-252).

New Women actors used their body gestures, their movement, eyes and intonations to mesmerise the audience ("D'Annunzio, Duse, Wilde, Bernhardt" 120). The fluidity of gender identity expressed through the body and movement was yet another characteristic of New Women: the "fluidity of the actress's gender identity was the sign of a decadent and modernist vision of a *tout court* identity, like a perpetual slippage between various masks, transvestisms and positions"[97] (126).

D'Annunzio's interest in physical theatre was informed by Duse, Isadora Duncan, and Ida Rubinstein in particular. Duse's charismatic stage presence helped increase D'Annunzio's passion for the physicality of the body: "Through his collaborations with Duse, D'Annunzio realized the crucial role that the body could play in conveying emotion and thought; the presence and physicality of the body were expressive in a distinctly different way than were the mimetic and referential functions of spoken language" (Fleischer 21). As D'Annunzio describes her in his autobiographical novel *The Flame of Life*:

> Although she was motionless, although she was silent, her well-known accents and her memorable gestures seemed to live about her, vibrating indefinitely, like melodies round the chords that repeat them, like its rimes round the closed book where love and pain go in search of them, to find comfort and intoxication. The heroic fidelity of Antigone, the fury of Cassandra, the devouring fever of Phaedra… all were living in her, living in her body… and for no other reason than the motion of a muscle, a sign, a gesture, a line of feature, a tremor of the eyelids, a slight change of color, an almost imperceptible bend of brows, a changing play of light and shade, a lightning-like virtue of expression radiating from that thin, frail body, infinite worlds of undying beauty were continually generated… (qtd. in Fleischer 21)

[97] "La fluidità dell'identità di genere dell'attrice è segno di una visione decadente e modernista dell'identità *tout court*, come slittamento perpetuo fra varie maschere e vari travestimenti e posizioni."

Both Duse and D'Annunzio were disappointed with the commercial theatre of their time: they wished to rely on Greek tragedy as an ideal for the spiritual and cathartic theatre they envisioned and which included a kind of "Dionysian frenzy and liberation" embodied in dancers (Fleischer 23). Despite Duse's minimalistic acting style, her stage presence was very physical:

> all commentators agree in attributing to Duse the capacity of making visible through the unexpected movements of her body, her gestures, voice and mostly through the manipulation of pauses, immobility, silences and glances a sense of something authentic that came from inside, and which had the ability to fascinate and almost hypnotise spectators.[98] (Re, "D'Annunzio, Duse, Wilde, Bernhardt" 131)

The famous queer dancer Isadora Duncan further refined D'Annunzio's obsession with the dancing body—Duncan herself drew inspiration from Duse who later became her partner. Fleischer emphasises the influence of her highly perturbing and unorthodox dances on D'Annunzio's imagination, and she traces a Duncan-like figure in *The Flame of Life* in the character of "La Tanagra": "The silent dancer appeared within a parallelogram traced in the arch of the stage, as within the limits of a strophe; her body, redeemed for a while from the sad laws of gravity, imitating fire and water and the whirlpool and the evolution of stars" (D'Annunzio qtd. in Fleischer 23). Even though Duncan did not perform in Italy until 1912, she had a long friendship with both Duse and D'Annunzio—she also claimed that her art of dance was inspired by Duse's sense of stillness on the stage which,

[98] "Tutti i testimoni e commentatori sono d'accordo nell'attribuire alla Duse la capacità di far trasparire dai movimenti repentini del corpo, dai gesti, dalla voce, e soprattutto attraverso la manipolazione delle pause, dell'immobilità, dei silenzi, e dello sguardo, il senso di un qualcosa di autentico che veniva da dentro, e che aveva la capacità di affascinare e quasi ipnotizzare gli spettatori."

paradoxically, could generate a sense of movement for the audience (Fleischer 24).

Moreover, D'Annunzio envisioned his dream theatre in Paris in the 1910s for a Théâtre de Fête which would have been built in the Esplanade des Invalides with the help of Mariano Fortuny and Countess Béarn's private theatre (Fleischer 25). As part of this latter project, they experimented with moving lights and projected images: "D'Annunzio was particularly fascinated by Fortuny's 'magic machine' because it could create the illusion of an outdoor vista, leading his audience 'out of themselves' and towards the sky; lighting and special effects could help to emphasize the movement of the body and heighten the sensory experience of a performance" (25). This project would have included Duncan's dance company which was supposed to perform a piece before the premiere of *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien* (25).

Statue-like bodies constitute an equally important theme in D'Annunzio's theatre. Sculpture was crucial for Fascist body politics and served to promote muscular, athletic male bodies for worship and admiration, yet their whiteness implied that they were abstract ideals, as fascism condemned corporeality and materialism. For D'Annunzio, however, the body of the dancer was like an "animated sculpture" (Fleischer 28) which conveyed a sense of plasticity instead of stasis and rigidity: "Introducing statues or statuesque characters into a context where we expect life-like movement, albeit stylized, fascinates and can create a sense of mystery and unease through blurring divisions between divine and human, living and dead, art and life, body and soul" (25). Furthermore, statues could evoke the androgynous beauty of Hellenistic sculpture which was one of D'Annunzio's major inspirations for his drama. These statue-like figures in D'Annunzio's plays had to be dancers, creating fluid and mysterious movements on the stage, and this effect was realised most eminently by Ida Rubinstein.

Rubinstein ignored gender restrictions of any kind, became a feminist and lesbian icon of her time, and lived an adventurous life which was unheard of for women (Fleischer 38). When D'Annunzio first saw Rubinstein in *Cléopâtre* in 1909 in Paris, she was working with the *Ballets Russes* company which, unlike classical ballet companies, hired tall and boyish women such as Rubinstein and highly effeminate male dancers like Vaslav Nijinsky. Yet Rubinstein had many difficulties within the ballet circles because of her position as a foreigner (Russian), her religion (Jewish), her sexuality (openly lesbian), her stature (tall, angular, manly), and her lack of ballet education (she received private lessons from Mikhail Fokine, but critics thought she had no talent). As composer Ferruccio Busoni commented, "I shall see Mlle Rubinstein, of whom it is said by one that she cannot speak but can dance; by another that she has a beautiful body, but cannot dance; by a third, that her body is not womanly, therefore not beautiful. She is just like St. Sebastian, pierced with arrows by all" (qtd. in Fleischer 30).

Figure 4: Ida Rubinstein as Basiliola in the film version of D'Annunzio's *La nave* (The Ship), dir. Gabriellino D'Annunzio. Source: Laura Granatella. *Arrestate l'autore: D'Annunzio in scena,* 1112.

Nicole Haitzinger and Julia Ostwald have contextualised Rubinstein's performative queerness through the notion of eccentricity which, as a label, was first used deliberately by Bernhardt "to legitimise herself as an artistic female living outside the gendered social norms" ("Ida Rubinstein as Saint Sébastien"). Eccentricity means being outside the centre, but not entirely separated from it, thus it "points to a position that always maintains a flexible and critical relationship with the centre and its norms" ("Ida Rubinstein as Saint Sébastien"). It can thus be understood as a strategy that both reaffirms and subverts the norms, dissolving the order between the centre and the periphery ("Ida Rubinstein

as Saint Sébastien"). Rubinstein's unconventional movements, body and voice all contributed to creating such performative queerness on the stage. Paradoxically, she increased the physicality of the plays through an almost incorporeal presence. Emile Vuillermoz described her body as "désincarné" (qtd. in Cuttoli 19), and D'Annunzio wondered "Where could I have found an actor whose body is so incorporeal?" (qtd. in Cossart 42). Haitzinger and Ostwald explain that her otherness on the stage was enhanced by the discrepancy between the effect created by her voice and body: the latter was usually a source of amazement, while her voice (Russian accent and hoarse, boyish voice) disturbed them ("Ida Rubinstein as Saint Sébastien").

Rubinstein's wealth helped her establish herself as a power figure in Parisian ballet. She was privately tutored, erudite and multilingual, and in her childhood she was surrounded with the finest artworks and listened to the most eminent musicians (Fleischer 31). In St Petersburg, she saw Isadora Duncan dance and met Sergei Diaghilev who was amazed by the plasticity of her movements and hired her for the *Ballets Russes*. In *Wild Things*, Halberstam has examined the queer dances performed by Vaslav Nijinsky in Diaghilev's ballet company, especially in the 1913 production of *The Rite of Spring* (51-69). Rubinstein was strikingly similar to Nijinsky in that she also broke the traditional rules of ballet and startled audiences with her angular movements and illegible, often disorderly dance moves, which Halberstam has defined as elements of queer dance (59). Rubinstein could afford to ask Mikhail Fokine to give her private choreography lessons to be able to perform Wilde's *Salomé*. Fokine's role is important, as he defied the ballet tradition and encouraged "equality between the sexes in partnering and eliminating the artificial conventions and acrobatics of ballet at that time in favor of expressive movement" (Hanna 27). Even though Rubinstein was often mocked by critics because of the strangeness of her body, movements and voice, she was proud of her difference: "Frustration and disappointment at being misunderstood did nothing to stop the girl being fascinated by her own image and by the plasticity of her own body. If anything, it reinforced a narcissistic fixation that motivated her throughout her entire life" (de Cossart qtd. in Fleischer 31).

Rubinstein was equally talented in evading censorship and defying political and religious authorities to realise her unconventional performances. In 1907 in St. Petersburg, Rubinstein and Vera Komissarzhevskaya were planning a provocative production of Wilde's *Salomé*, but both were banned by the state censor, the Russian Orthodox Church, because of their blasphemous potential and spectacles of nudity. Yet, as Fleischer points out, "Bakst realized that the letter of the ban merely prohibited the actors from reciting Wilde's text onstage, and cleverly suggested that given Rubinstein's talents, that she mime the entire play" (35). D'Annunzio, Debussy and Rubinstein applied a similar trick in 1911 when the French Catholic Church banned *Le Martyre*, as I will illustrate in my later chapter on D'Annunzio.

Similar to D'Annunzio, the body became central to Yeats's drama as well thanks mostly to his unconventional erotic/mystical/theatrical experiences, the influence of Parisian decadence and Japanese Noh theatre (a medieval, aristocratic theatre for samurais in the 14th century). Fleischer explains, for instance, that Yeats was fascinated with how Sarah Bernhardt's body on the stage could express personality (157). Fleischer underscores that "Yeats realized that much of the theatre's power comes from its connection to human bodies and the audience's experience of body; dance only intensifies this dynamic" (157). After his first collaboration with a professional dancer Michio Itō in 1916, Yeats concluded that "expression is mainly in those moments that are of the entire body" (*Four Plays for Dancers* 87).

Deng Huei-Lee has discussed Yeats's inspiration from the greatest New Women dancers Loïe Fuller, Isadora Duncan, Ruth St Dennis, Anna Pavlova, Ninette de Valois and Maud Allan as well as his collaboration with the Japanese dancer Michio Itō. Interestingly, Itō learned from Vaslav Nijinsky, the most effeminate and queer dancer of the *Ballets Russes*. Most of these dancers were feminist: they "used space-assertion and other choreographic strategies literally and metaphorically to sever dependencies from men on stage" (Sally Banes qtd. in Lee 8). Lee also highlights the impact of Maud Allan's shape-changing dances on Yeats's representations

of shape-changing women in his plays, whose dances were compared by critics to the incarnation of the bestial as in Wilde or Beardsley (77-8). Lee claims that "[w]hether mythological, legendary, or human, Yeats' dancers represent an oppositional force to rigid notions of nationality, gender, and religion, just as early modern dancers combat against the physical constraints of classical ballet and Victorian conceptions of pure womanhood to liberate the female body" (76-7). Moreover, Lee discerns the transgressive potential of Yeats's representations of the Sidhe and their relationship to Yeats's collaboration with modern soloist dancers:

> In his middle career, these collective Sidhe transmute into the solitary figure of a bird-woman-witch dancer, who, resembling the soloists of early modern dance, occupies center stage without any support from men and (to some extent) contests patriarchal assumptions. The late Yeats satirizes the imposition of sexual, racial, and religious purity on postcolonial Irish identity by means of Salome-like dances in which "fair" dancers hold the severed heads of "foul" spectators. … Early to late, the evolution of Yeats's dancers reflects his gradual incorporation of more innovative female roles partly resembling those created by the pioneers of modern dance. (1)

Figure 5: The Three Musicians (Conor Gromley, Aimee Banks and Una Valaine) in DancePlayers' *The Dreaming of the Bones,* 2019, O'Donoghue Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance. Photo taken from a video recording of the show provided by the director Melinda Szűts.

The influence of these Parisian artists reached Yeats parallel to the influence of the all-male medieval Japanese Noh theatre in the 1910s through collaboration with Ezra Pound and the dancer Michio Itō. Fleischer has underlined that "Ito

captured for Yeats the image of an ideal symbolist dancer who embodies and expresses thoughts through the rhythmic and intimate presence of his body" (163). Itō's stage presence was also highly androgynous: even Itō described himself as "a dandy modern boy" (qtd. in Fleischer 165) thanks to the influence of his modern parents who merged traditional Japanese culture and Western ideas. Yeats equally mingled Eastern and Western theatrical conventions and aesthetics in his Noh-inspired dance plays, creating a physical theatre which queers both Western and Eastern traditions and replaces the conventional and often misogynistic content of Noh plays with subversive taboo topics. In this sense, what Yeats achieved in the early twentieth century was strikingly similar to the Butoh genre created by Kazuo Ohno and Tatsumi Hijikata in 1959, which featured body makeup, hyper-codified movements, grotesque bodies and challenged conventions of dance and formulated a critique of normativity. As a dancer from a contemporary Butoh company stated: "People who feel different feel at home in Butoh" (qtd. in George, "Queer Butoh"). As in Yeats's drama, in Butoh, "[t]he concepts of otherness and ambiguity, particularly with respect to gender identity and sexuality, permeate [the] narratives. Drag, androgyny and fluidity are staple elements" ("Queer Butoh"). In fact, DancePlayers Company's physical theatre production of Yeats's *The Dreaming of the Bones* in 2019 created a strikingly Butoh effect through the body-paint of the Three Musicians.

Due to their subversive themes, Yeats's Noh-inspired plays resemble Kabuki theatre more than the Noh, although Kabuki used facial make-up instead of masks. This was thanks to Itō's influence as well, as he had special training in Kabuki (Fleischer 165). While Noh plays could not formulate criticism of political and religious authorities, Kabuki parodied Buddhist priests and samurais through unusual dances performed by men dressed up as women (called *onnagata*). These dances, however, originated from the transvestic shirabyōshi dance performed by female entertainers dressed up as men in medieval Japan.[99] Kabuki is today regarded as a queer

[99] On the queerness of kabuki theatre see Maki Isaka's book *Onnagata: a labyrinth of gendering in kabuki theatre*. Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 2016.

theatre which was founded by a woman Izumo no Okuni in Kyoto in the 17th century with the aim of criticising political, military and religious authorities in total theatre performances.[100]

As to the queerness of Itō's solo dances, Carrie J. Preston's research highlights the transnationalism of Itō's art of dance, whose choreography was "a marriage of East and West" (Kisselgoff qtd. in Preston 8) and expressed anxiety about culture and nationalism (8). Yet his contribution to modern dance has been forgotten because of dance studies' politics of whiteness (16). Preston stresses that his solos should be looked at as cultural fusions and choreographies of transnationalism rather than Oriental or exotic dances (8). Transnationalism "examines how cultural forms cross borders to reveal affiliations transcending national identities" (8). In fact, Itō as a dancer in Yeats's *At the Hawk's Well* in the role of the Hawk-Woman could promote cultural diversity and difference, crossing traditional boundaries of not only gender but culture as well in a play which seemingly celebrated Irish nationalism's great virile hero Cuchulain.

Itō's solo dances were informed by Isadora Duncan upon his trip to Germany in 1912 to study opera (Preston 9). He was influenced by Delsartism through Duncan, which was an international movement related to performance theorist François Delsarte, promoting "statue-posing in postures imitating Greek art" (10). Solo dance was associated with the shaping of identities, the expression of one's own feelings through the movement of their bodies (11), hence its queer potential. It was Yeats's theatrical collaborator Edmund Dulac who designed the costumes for Itō's solo recitals in London in 1915. These recitals in Margaret Morris Theatre and in Kensington were attended by Yeats, Dulac, Ricketts and Ezra Pound. Itō's art included Noh-style chanting, modern dance, ethnic dances such as

[100] Japanese theatre is in many ways queer. Due to the political control of women's bodies, it became an all-male space in which male actors performed female roles (called *onnagata* in Kabuki theatre). All four main genres of Japanese theatre: Noh, Kyogen, Kabuki and Bunraku were all-male, inevitably introducing homosociality and homoeroticism in the performances. See Brian Powell's chapter "Cross-Dressing on the Japanese Stage." In *Changing Sex and Bending Gender*, edited by Alison Shaw and Shirley Ardener. Berghahn Books, 2005, pp. 138-49.

the tango, but also ballet, folk and African American dancing (14 and 21). What is more, Itō restaged Yeats's *At the Hawk's Well* in New York in 1918, in Los Angeles in 1929 and in Japan in 1939 (14), which testifies to the transnational potential of Yeats's drama.

10. Conclusion

This chapter has contextualised Yeats's and D'Annunzio's drama culturally, historically and biographically as a basis for the dramaturgical analyses. Irish and Italian nationalisms were obsessed with reproduction, family and normativity, suppressed desire and sexuality, and were suspicious towards single men and women. Yet D'Annunzio and Yeats filled their plays with characters who refuse reproduction, subvert normative gender roles, prioritise sexuality and corporeality and flee from the traditional family. The playwrights' collaboration with their time's iconic queer and feminist voices further increased the transgressive potential of their theatre. We have seen that homoerotic content in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries could almost exclusively appear in code, resulting in deliberately ambiguous interpretations.

D'Annunzio's case is the most remarkable in this regard, as he was allowed to stage his plays in fascist Italy featuring strong women embodied by Bernhardt, Duse, Rubinstein, Emma Gramatica and Irma Gramatica. D'Annunzio could evade censorship, as he was far too popular in Italy to be silenced directly. Hence fascists applied the same policy of denial towards his drama as towards homosexuality: instead of censoring his works, they asked Giovacchino Forzano to stage D'Annunzio's plays as part of a fascist project of promoting theatre. Even though D'Annunzio's theatre celebrates the power of women, fascists highlighted his plays' misogynistic elements, abusing the ambiguity which also rendered its most subversive potential. Notably, Mussolini applied the same technique to Luigi Pirandello, who publicly criticised fascism, yet Mussolini claimed that his plays were in fact fascist: "Pirandello writes Fascist plays without wanting to do so!" (qtd. in Ludwig 214).

This chapter has outlined the main commonalities between the queer cultural, literary and theatre history of Italy and Ireland in the context of the

two countries' repressive sexual politics which put an immense pressure on women in particular. I have also highlighted the similarity between the role of Eleonora Duse and Florence Farr as catalysts of sexual liberation and women's emancipation in their respective countries and in Yeats's and D'Annunzio's drama. Besides literature and the arts, occult societies operated in both countries gathering the most forward-thinking, radical and unconventional people. Thanks to these cultural influences and the contradictions of the historical contexts, Yeats's and D'Annunzio's drama abounds in voices critical of patriarchy, normativity, marriage and the family, while also reflecting the main contradictions and anxieties of their time's sexual and gender politics both in terms of content, form and techniques (anti-mimetic physical theatre). In what follows, my approach is predominantly dramaturgical, focusing on the queer moments in the scripts, but always referring back to these crucial cultural and historical contexts.

CHAPTER 2

QUEER FEELINGS IN YEATS'S DRAMA

"When I returned to London in my twenty-seventh year I think my love seemed almost hopeless, and I knew that my friends had all mistresses of one kind or another and that most, at need, went home with harlots. Henley [the poet William Ernest Henley], indeed, mocked at any other life. I had never since childhood kissed a woman's lips" (Yeats, *Memoirs* 71).

Introduction

The above passage demonstrates Yeats's anxiety with normative masculinity and sexuality which expected him to get over his feelings for Maud Gonne by engaging casually with other women. However, Yeats had difficulty meeting such social expectations, as his unrequited love for Gonne pushed him into celibacy at a young age while at the same time sexual desire was torturing him. Yeats indicates his difference from his friends, who in this passage represent the pressure of (hetero)normativity. Yeats's love for Gonne is often idealised and romanticised because of Yeats's relentless attempts to win her love. Nonetheless, this unfulfilled desire made Yeats experience feelings that are similar to what queer people have experienced in society over the centuries and what Love has called "queer historical structures of feeling" (*Feeling Backward* 24). These include failure to meet social expectations, wounds caused by insult and mockery, a constant desire to escape from normative social roles, the impossibility of certain desires, and a sense of displacement, all of which pervade Yeats's scripts as well. These experiences resonate with Ahmed's definition of queer feelings which "may embrace a sense of discomfort, a lack of ease with the available scripts for living and loving, along with an excitement in the face of the uncertainty of where the discomfort may take us" (*Cultural Politics* 155).

Cregan has identified Frank McGuinness as the first Irish playwright who

applied a distinctively queer dramaturgical epistemology ("Coming Out" 46). Yet Yeats's drama also created spaces for anti-normative, queer representations, and thus interrogated normative constructs of sexuality and gender. Due to Yeats's position as a white, male, middle-class Protestant citizen of the British Empire and his controversial responses to Irish nationalism and the rise of authoritarian politics, Yeats and his works could be seen as representatives of the dominant literary tradition and the normative patriarchal discourse (Cullingford, *Gender* 6). However, Yeats was one of those artists, who frequently "let something different from tradition get through" (Cixous qtd. in Cullingford, *Gender* 20). We have seen in Chapter 1 that Yeats sympathised with his time's queer men and women, and witnessed their vicissitudes and fight for recognition. Therefore, even though Yeats's drama is often seen as elitist, it fosters spaces of inclusion and visibility for people treated by the patriarchal state as invisible (no)bodies. Judith Butler calls such unrecognised subjectivities ungrievable lives which cannot be recognised as injured or lost by the mainstream political frameworks (*Frames of War* 1-3). Yeats's drama opens up the frameworks of recognition for such marginalised subjectivities by making visible the structures of insult and violence that aim to hurt them.

Yeats's turn to drama was initially a search for what he called "more of manful energy" (*VP* 849).[101] However, his experimentation with dramatic form, multiple identities and non-linear, anti-mimetic dramaturgical structures created spaces for alternative visions of gender and sexuality. As Cormac O'Brien explains, the fragmented dramaturgical strategies which characterise anti-realism "disavow realist narrative drama in favor of free-flowing theatrical form" (76). This kind of dramaturgy can challenge "the very concept of norms, and systems of theatrical and social normalizing" (81) and "the queerer the form, the queerer the possibilities for masculine identities" (83). Yeats gradually moved towards dance-based plays and physical theatre techniques, focusing on the power and the vulnerabilities of

[101] I use *VP* as an abbreviation for *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats*, edited by Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach. New York: Macmillan, 1957, while later I employ the abbreviation *VPl* to refer to *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W. B. Yeats*, edited by Russell K. Alspach and Catherine C. Alspach. London: Macmillan, 1966.

the body, strangers and strangeness, fluid boundaries between various layers of reality, and spectrality. Moreover, there is a lot of nonverbal discursive hiatus in the texts, especially in the dance scenes, which can disturb the patriarchal authority of language, and represent the threat of the feminine and the erotic for patriarchy which fears the power of *eros*.[102]

What is queer in Yeats is often not immediately visible: "The thing, the 'queer' is what emerges among, across, and between," (Croft 3) and "it is how the elements rub, collide, and comingle" (Croft 7). James Flannery stated that Yeats was in many ways a twenty-first century writer whose plays try to convey vital messages through text and dramaturgy, yet most of them remain hidden in the dramatic text and subtexts, which the audience cannot see and often cannot understand (Flannery 80). Yeats's plays include several moments when the audience can be queerly moved, as the spectacle, dance or image transgresses traditional borders of authority, language and representation, which feel like "a queerly transitory suspension of the regular rules of society" (Campbell and Farrier 3). His drama features the tension between authoritarian normativity and individuals whom it wants to contain and oppress due to their difference or excessive temperament. This facet of Yeats's drama demonstrates that theatre can help raise awareness to the manipulative strategies of power and normativity which want to contain bodies by forcing them into transparent roles such as wife and husband, mother and father, man and woman, normal and abnormal, able-bodied and disabled-bodied.

[102] Audre Lorde has explained that patriarchal societies fear the erotic and relegate it to the bedroom alone, as the erotic helps recognise the power of one's own body and a joy which is not achieved with marriage or belief in God ("The Power of the Erotic" 13).

Some productions have reflected the queerness of Yeats's drama, such as the Gate Theatre's 1953 production of *The Countess Cathleen* featuring MacLiammoir as the bard Aleel. Since MacLiammoir was wearing heavy white makeup, his Aleel evoked drag performances, the cross-dressing cabaret shows of early twentieth-century Dublin as well as the homoerotic tradition of bardic poetry.[103] It also resonated with Yeats's own choice for a *travesti* Aleel in 1899 when Farr played the bard, which, according to Katherine Worth, "cannot but have played down the virility of Aleel, the force of his sexual frustration" ("Meeting Places of Life, Poetry and Theatre"). Worth continues: "We can understand how the part of Aleel could be played by a woman; how Florence Farr's femininity could be a concealing mask for the more fierce and virile frustration the situation of Aleel seems to require" ("Meeting Places of Life, Poetry and Theatre").[104]

Figure 6: Michael MacLiammoir as Aleel in *The Countess Cathleen* in 1953. Source: Gate Theatre Digital Archive, NUI Galway.

Besides, Druid Theatre Company staged Sophocles' *Oedipus King* in Yeats's version directed by Frank Conway in 1987 whereby Marie Mullen played King Oedipus, and the white makeup created a similar drag effect thanks to Joe Vaňek's experimental, androgynous costume designs for the show. These choices resonated with Yeats's own interest in transvestism[105] and gender-bending manifested in his early play *The Island of Statues* (1885), *At the Hawk's Well* (1917) in which Michio Itō played the Hawk-Woman, and his later plays *The Resurrection* (1931) and even *The Words*

[103] On the homoeroticism of Irish bardic poetry, see Sarah McKibben's studies, including her article "Queering Early Modern Ireland." *Queering the Issue*, special issue of *Irish University Review*, vol. 43, no. 1, 2013, pp. 169-183.
[104] The open access version of this article does not include pagination.
[105] My chapter on Yeats and the art of *travesti* is forthcoming in *The Edinburgh Companion to W.B. Yeats and the Arts*, edited by Adrian Paterson, Charles I. Armstrong and Tom Walker.

upon the Window-Pane (1934) where Jonathan Swift speaks through the body of Mrs. Henderson. Opting for a *travesti* Oedipus also reflected Yeats's own views of the figure of Oedipus whom he saw as inherently ambiguous which inevitably implied gender and sexual ambiguity: "The ambiguity of Oedipus—both sinner and saint, swordsman and saint, hunter and hunted—make him the perfect exemplar of the Yeatsian antithesis of mask and anti-mask" (Macintosh 532). Yeats was also actively protesting against the British censorship of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* as part of a "public debate concerning consanguineous sexual relations, which culminated in the passing of The Punishment of Incest Act (1908)" (Macintosh 5 29). As Macintosh points out, the fact that Oedipus is blinded evokes the punishment of sexual crimes (532).

Figure 7: Marie Mullen as Oedipus King in 1987. Source: The Druid Archive, NUI Galway.

In what follows, I briefly refer to other productions as well by Raymond Yeates, James Flannery, Christian Lapointe and DancePlayers Company to support my dramaturgical readings. It is notable that drag is often a safe choice to confront audiences with difference: "Drag, another common strategy of representation of sexual dissonance in modern theatre, remains a safer choice for mass consumption since it allows the audience to maintain its imaginative distance from the performer and his/her gender while underscoring the historic link between effeminacy and *homoeros*" (Lapointe, *Between Irishmen* 73).

This chapter offers queer dramaturgical analyses of five plays ranging from Yeats's early period to his later drama in order to demonstrate how his plays reveal the violence of normalcy imposed on individuals who inhabit social and sexual norms differently. In chronological order, these include *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894), *Calvary* (1920), *The Cat and the Moon* (1926), *The King of the Great Clock Tower* (1935) and *A Full Moon in*

March (1935).[106] I shall briefly refer to other plays and productions as well where it supports my dramaturgical reading. Even though I have already outlined the main cultural, biographical and historical contexts to Yeats's theatre in Chapter 1, I occasionally refer back and add to these contexts at the beginning of each subchapter.

First, I explore Sara Ahmed's concept of the happy family, its unhappy subjects and the resulting will to escape in Yeats's *LHD* and Edward Martyn's *The Heather Field* (1899), with brief references to Yeats's *The Countess Cathleen* (1892). Both plays portray same-sex desires through the safe frameworks of familial bonds, the supernatural and friendship. I chose to include Martyn's play, as his alleged closeted homosexuality played an important role in making Yeats and his plays more alert to a wide range of sexual and gender possibilities. It also demonstrates that Yeats was not the only Irish playwright who, as part of the Irish Revival, experimented with a more transgressive type of theatre which flirted with audiences and readers in ambiguous ways.

In the second subchapter, I look at representations of homoerotic male bonds and alternative masculinities in *Calvary* in the context of Oscar Wilde's legacy with brief references to *The Resurrection* (1931) and "The Crucifixion of the Outcast" (1897). Through the figure of Christ, the play illustrates the pressure normative notions of masculinity put on men and the harm it causes. I explore how the Biblical framework and Greek mythology can help legitimise queer desires.

The third section discerns sadomasochistic dynamics in Yeats's late plays *CM, KGCT* and *FMM,* which dramatise the clash between the unruly forces of seduction/pleasure and the normative force of power. I decided to look at three texts in this final section, as the connection between these three plays in particular is remarkable, and reflects Yeats's growing interest in the connection between power and desire. I contend that through theatrical representations of sadomasochistic attachments based on reversible agency,

[106] Since I have to use these titles several times in the thesis, in what follows I shall employ abbreviations (*LHD*, *CM*, *KGCT*, *FMM*) except for *Calvary*. For Martyn's *Heather Field*, I use *HF* as an abbreviation.

Yeats's late drama reveals the systemic failures of normative distributions of power and gender roles, thus proposing alternatives.

In the conclusion, I briefly mention a production of Yeats's *The Dreaming of the Bones* by DancePlayers Company in 2019 to illustrate how Yeats's text can speak to contemporary audiences and the queer community. I follow the same pattern in my chapter on D'Annunzio, given that this is a text-focused research with limited space for detailed performance analyses.

In the subchapters, I build on works by Heather K. Love, Jack Halberstam, José Esteban Muñoz, Sara Ahmed, Leo Bersani, Elizabeth Freeman, Michel Foucault, Nicholas Mirzoeff and Didier Eribon whose ideas were very helpful in bringing to the surface the less obvious queer moments of Yeats's plays. Yeats's drama fulfills what Foucault described as the main role of literature in countering power, namely "to displace rules and codes, to compel the unmentionable to be told … to place itself outside the law, or at least to take on the burden of scandal, transgression, or revolt" ("Lives of Infamous Men" 174). His plays indeed say "what is most resistant to being said—the worst, the most secret, the most insufferable, the shameless" (174), such as the secret pleasure behind domination, the connection between the sexual and the national, bonds between women and intimacy between men, social outcasts claiming visibility for themselves, and the reversibility of fixed power relations. Or, as Foucault phrased it: "the action, in disorder, noise, and pain, of power on lives, and the discourse that comes of it" (174). The characters of Yeats's plays make great refusals and at the same time they are saddened by those things they escape from for the sake of other forms of loving and living, and all of them are marked "by loss of an indeterminate nature" (Love, *Feeling Backward* 63).

1. The Happy Family, Affect Aliens and the Will to Escape: Yeats's *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894) and Edward Martyn's *The Heather Field* (1899)[107]

"Queer failure [. . .] is more nearly about escape and a certain virtuosity" (Muñoz 173).

"Family love cannot absorb us [women] if we wish to survive. We are complicated, and our possibilities of social and political intercourse are a subject of endless interest and inquiry. Let us then start again on our voyages of discovery, this time with a little more purpose in our method and delight in our hearts" (Farr, *Modern Woman: Her Intentions*).

This subchapter explores the tension between the normative family and its non-normative subjects in Yeats's *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894) and Edward Martyn's *The Heather Field* (1899), which "introduce(d) ciphers of *homoeros* into the modern Irish theatre at its inception" (Lapointe, "Edward Martyn" 74). I decided to analyse the two texts together through a queer lens to demonstrate the broader homoerotic aesthetic of the Irish Literary Theatre founded after Yeats's and Todhunter's negative experiences with London audiences, who despised the Irish playwrights' transgressive female characters.[108] In this section, I look at Martyn through Yeats's perspective to demonstrate Yeats's attention to his friend's closeted desires. In the two plays, the framework of the supernatural is employed to sharpen the tension between characters who safeguard the traditional family and characters who wish to escape from that world as they find it oppressive. This tension helps create spaces for queer readings today, as it points out the insults (hetero)normativity imposes on people who inhabit norms differently (Ahmed, *Cultural Politics* 151-3). As Harris has explained, such Irish plays displayed contemporary cultural anxieties about the New Woman and the

[107] A version of this subchapter was published with the title "'What secret torture?'": Normativity, *Homoeros*, and the Will to Escape in W. B. Yeats's *The Land of Heart's Desire* and Edward Martyn's *The Heather Field*." *Minorities in / and Ireland*, special issue of *Studi irlandesi: A Journal of Irish Studies*, vol. 10, no. 10, Firenze UP, 2020, pp. 23-41.
[108] For more information on the fiasco of Yeats's *LHD* and Todhunter's *A Comedy of Sighs* in the Avenue Theatre in 1894, see Susan Harris's chapter "Desiring Women: Irish Playwrights, New Women and Queer Socialism, 1892-1894" (*Irish Drama* 16-56).

queer man: the threat that they will refuse their social roles and thus heterosexuality too (*Irish Drama* 46).

LHD and *HF* were written in the realist narrative tradition which is normally in conflict with feminist and queer readings due to its reliance on notions of fixed identity. These plays, however, demonstrate that realism is not always a prison for women and non-normative subjectivities. At least the realist drama written by Yeats and Martyn displays a resistance to the conventional tendencies of realism (Lapointe, "Edward Martyn" 81), similar to Henrik Ibsen's plays. As Gibson Cima has discerned, "[f]or late nineteenth-century audiences accustomed to the conventional codes of melodrama, realism made those codes seem strange, for in realism the female actor exceeded the womanly characters or styles of performance behaviour the audience had grown to expect. And in that excess, that visibility, lay power" (12-3).

1.1 "What secret torture?": Martyn, Yeats and Closeted Desires

Coding illicit desire through the supernatural was common in Irish plays written around the end of the nineteenth century by Yeats, Martyn, Todhunter and Farr. In the 1890s, Yeats's relationship with theatre was primarily informed by occult performance. In fact, theatre, the supernatural and sexuality were inseparable for Yeats and Farr. Hence, in his drama, characters belonging to the supernatural realm are not steadily gendered and allow gender bending. Yeats was drawn towards the art of *travesti* from the earliest days in Bedford Park observing Farr's virile roles and occult séances (see Foster, *Apprentice Mage* 107; Harris, *Irish Drama* 36). He was influenced by two *travesti* productions in particular: William Poel's production of *Everyman* in 1901 and Sarah Bernhardt's role as Pelléas in *Pelléas et Mélisande* in 1904 (Worth, *The Irish Drama of Europe* 39-40). Since Yeats's first experiences of theatrical transvestism coincided with his first intense occult séances, gender fluidity is usually associated with the supernatural in Yeats. Harris has observed that in Yeats's *LHD*, "the supernatural elements obscure the more troubling aspects of female desire" (*Irish Drama* 48), while Katherine Worth noted that "the supernatural involves an ambiguous sexuality and was thought of by Yeats as open to a performer of either sex" (*The Irish Drama of Europe* 41). Furthermore,

Valente has discerned the androgynous spirit of Yeats's famous hero Cuchulain and his relationship with the feminine occult (the women of the Sidhe), which could reflect Yeats's transition from Celticism that celebrated the feminine imagination to the use of more masculine elements in his work. At the same time it also mirrored "his critique of cramped sexual traditionalism of his nationalist compeers" (*Myth of Manliness* 175). In addition, Pawan Kumar has demonstrated in a conference paper that Yeats and his wife Georgie Hyde-Lees (also known as George Hyde-Lees) often practiced sexual magic through Tantra, and in Tantric philosophy every normal sexual image is bisexual ("Yeats, the Golden Dawn and Tantra Philosophy"). In the two plays discussed below, the supernatural functions as a symbolic space of possibilities and alternative happiness towards which the protagonists aspire to escape the oppressive atmosphere of the normative family. However, I discuss the supernatural only as a useful framework to articulate homoerotic desires, not as the focus of my analysis.

The protagonists of the plays, Mary Bruin and Carden Tyrrell, both experience discomfort with normative family roles—they choose to fail in their domestic roles and become failures for the family. As Ahmed explains, the "[q]ueer subject, when faced by the 'comforts' of heterosexuality may feel uncomfortable (the body does not 'sink into' a space that has already taken its shape). Discomfort is a feeling of disorientation: one's body feels out of place, awkward, unsettled" (*Cultural Politics* 148). Yeats's and Martyn's protagonists display an existential anguish which signals their unease with the normative family that wants to see them happy in their roles as wife and husband. In this respect, they could be described by what Ahmed has called "affect aliens" (30) in "Happy Objects": "the family sustains its place as a 'happy object' by identifying those who do not reproduce its line as the cause of unhappiness. I call such others 'affect aliens': feminist kill-joys, unhappy queers, and melancholic migrants" (30). Likewise, Fintan Walsh has pointed out that the phobias of dissolution or non-identity in normative society lead to the production of such affect aliens "whose daily lives are policed by hatred, fear, shame, rather than just legislation" ("Touching" 64).

The connection between failure and queer subjectivities has been explored in depth most notably by Halberstam and Love who explain how capitalism and normative society make everyone who differs from them believe they are failures. Love emphasises that "same- sex desire is marked by a long history of association with failure, impossibility and loss. … Homosexuality and homosexuals serve as scapegoats for the failures and impossibilities of desire itself" (*Feeling Backward* 21). Halberstam contends that in fact "all desire is impossible, impossible because unsustainable, then the queer body and queer social worlds become the evidence of that failure, while heterosexuality is rooted in a logic of achievement, fulfillment, and success(ion)" (*Queer Art* 94). Martyn's and Yeats's plays were ahead of their time and reflect key tenets of queer studies today: they dramatise the tension between the discourse that defines what counts as happiness and individuals whom it labels as embodiments of social failure and the cause of unhappiness for others. Yet, as Harris has discerned, "[i]t is in this realm of failed re/production that Irishness and queerness meet" (*Irish Drama* 7).

Yeats clearly understood that some people might not feel comfortable in certain social roles created by what we today call (hetero)normativity. For Yeats, the strange, the unconventional was always a source of attraction, interest and sympathy, and he could identify with people who differed from the norm. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Yeats also felt different due to the pressure of normative sexuality and his own unfulfilled desires. In his *Memoirs*, Yeats explains that he put his own unfulfilled desire in *LHD*, but he imagined that Gonne was taken from him by a girl, not a man, and possibly fantasising the seduction of Gonne as a woman, thus queering his desire for her:

> I began to write *The Land of Heart's Desire* to supply the niece of a new friend, Miss Florence Farr, with a part, and put in it my own despair. I could not tell why Maud Gonne had turned from me unless she had done so from some vague desire for some impossible life, for some unvarying excitement like that of the heroine of my play. (72-3)

Yeats employs the ambiguous phrase "vague desire for some impossible life" which can refer to a spiritual experience but also to a forbidden form of desire. The longing for this impossible life and unvarying excitement for the unknown once again recall Ahmed's and Halberstam's definitions of loss and failure associated with queer desire as well as Love's ideas of impossible love: the link between love's impossibilities and failures and at the same time the "wild hopes for its futures" (*Feeling Backward* 23). *LHD* also reflects Yeats's close friendship with Farr, who was very critical of marriage and the traditional family, which she detailed later in *Modern Woman: Her Intentions* (1910).[109]

More pressingly, Yeats perceived Martyn as a queer man and sympathised with the suffering he was going through to deny his true desires. Martyn was known as a celibate, who opposed physical comforts, criticised the institution of marriage, felt ill at ease in the company of women but who was also greatly influenced by androgynous Greek ideals of beauty thanks to his Oxford education. As F. S. L. Lyons explains, Martyn's mother urged him to find a wife, but his reaction was to choose an "impenetrable bachelorhood" (12) instead. His mother convinced him to buy a luxurious ancestral mansion in Tulira "to make it fit to receive the ideal wife" (12), yet Martyn used the house to receive his intimate male friends. His contemporaries, including Yeats and Moore in particular, noticed that "he was afflicted lifelong with some unexplained psychological anguish" (Lapointe, "Edward Martyn" 76). In his *Memoirs,* Yeats also claimed that he knew he must have much in common with Martyn (101). In "Dramatis Personae," Yeats suggests that what hurt Martyn was his repressed desire for his own sex, and wondered "[w]hat drove him to those long prayers, those long meditations, that stern Church music? What secret torture?" (*Memoirs* 253). Moreover, Yeats alludes to homosexuality when he talks about Martyn's close friendship with Count Stanislaus Eric Stenbock and Moore[110]:

[109] See Chapter 1.

[110] These bonds informed the ambiguous relationship between the old lecher and the saint in the subtext of Yeats's *The Cat and the Moon*. See Lapointe's article "Edward Martyn's Theatrical Hieratic Homoeroticism." In *Deviant Acts: Essays on Queer Performance*,

> I have observed in other abnormally virtuous men a tendency to choose friends for the sins they themselves had renounced. Martyn had a good intellect, moderate and sensible, but it seems to me that this intellect has been always thwarted by its lack of interest in life, religious caution having kept him always on the brink of the world in a half-unwilling virginity of the feeling imagining the virginity of his body. He had no interest in women, and Moore would accuse him of a frustrated passion for his own sex. 'I believe,' he said to him once, "you think sexual intercourse between men more natural than between women." I wonder if Moore invented the answer. "Well, at any rate it is not so disgusting." (*Memoirs* 118-9)

In fact, Yeats was in a similar half-unwilling virginity until the end of his 20s, as he admitted in his *Memoirs*, so he indeed had much in common with Martyn. Yeats, therefore, sensed in Martyn a constant desire to escape from his strict religious world and the social expectations that wanted to see him as a married man. Strikingly, Yeats made a similar observation about Wilde in *A Vision* "B," noting Wilde's "desire to escape" (112). Yeats continues that Martyn "once said the majority of souls are lost through sexuality, had his father's instincts through repression or through some accident of birth turned, as Moore thought, into an always resisted homo-sexuality" (*Memoirs* 119). Yeats also mentioned Martyn in the context of gender fluidity and hinted at Martyn's unease with his body: "in Martyn the sterility is complete, though unlike Moore he has self-possession [originally "charm"] and taste. He only fails in words. *It is as though he had been put into the wrong body*" (*Memoirs* 271, my emphasis). In another passage, Yeats mentions Martyn with regard to a tale about changes of gender, which

---

edited by David Cregan. Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2009, pp. 73-97 and Alexandra Poulain's article "Failed collaboration and queer love in Yeats's *The Cat and the Moon* and Beckett's *Rough for Theatre I*." *Artistic Collaborations*, special issue of *Ilha do Desterro*, edited by Alinne Fernades, Maria Rita Drummond Viana and Miriam Haughton, vol. 71, no. 2, 2018, pp. 233-244.

was recounted by William Sharp when he told Yeats and Martyn how he had discovered Fiona Macleod in himself. Yeats noted that this story raised much unease in Martyn:

> I found Martyn full of derision over some tale he had told after dinner the night before to Martin Morris, now Lord Killanin, an unsympathetic hearer, and himself. He had been somewhere abroad when he saw the sidereal body of Fiona enter the room as a beautiful young man, and became aware that he was a woman to the spiritual sight. She lay with him, he said, as a man with a woman, and for days afterwards his breast swelled so that he had almost the physical likeness of a woman. (*Memoirs* 129)

This reaction evokes Erving Goffman's ideas of identity ambivalence elaborated in his 1963 book *Stigma*: "The stigmatized individual may exhibit identity ambivalence when he obtains a close sight of his own kind behaving in a stereotyped way, flamboyantly or pitifully acting out the negative attributes imputed to them. … In brief, he can neither embrace his group nor let it go" (108). The story of William Sharp and Fiona Macleod raised a profound interest in Yeats, who was eager to know the meaning of the figure of Fiona in Sharp's life. Terry L. Meyers has underscored the sexual tension that stood behind Sharp's decision to create Fiona: "From his youngest years, Sharp appears to have struggled with Victorian constructs of gender and sexuality, chafing under their constraints, and undergoing in the 1890's a particularly acute crisis of sexual identity, a crisis eventuating in the creation of Fiona Macleod" (4). More interestingly, Vern L. Bullogh and Bonnie Bullogh have descried Sharp as "one of the more interesting cases of cross-dresser behaviour" (qtd. in Meyers 4) in the nineteenth century. Even though Yeats did not fully understand this at the time, he was close in suggesting that for Sharp this was a "secondary personality" (qtd. in Meyers 19).

Yeats was therefore surrounded with two close male friends (Sharp and Martyn) at the end of the nineteenth century, who both went through significant sexual tensions, and Yeats was alert to this process. When Yeats

watched Martyn's *HF*—which depicts the unease of the main protagonist because he had to marry a woman—Yeats said he thought of Martyn's personal life: "Mrs. Martyn's attempts to find a wife for her son came into my head" (*Memoirs* 253). Yet nationalist critics, such as this anonymous reviewer in *Sinn Féin*, were disgusted with Martyn's play: "We tire … of Mr. Martyn's weak men and strong women … Martyn can do large things in drama, and does not do them because he lets a little devil compounded of perversity and sentimentality run away with him" (qtd. in Lapointe, "Edward Martyn" 82). *HF* was performed alongside Yeats's *The Countess Cathleen* in May 1899 in the Ancient Concert Hall in Dublin, inaugurating the Irish Literary Theatre, and since Farr played the bard Aleel (Countess Cathleen's lover), two very homoerotic plays opened the new theatre.

Yeats uses the word "queer" in *LHD* to describe the fairy people outside the house—invisible to the audience—who try to lure the newly-wed Mary Bruin to their realm, and Martyn also applies "queer" to describe his protagonist Carden and his intimate male friends. In Yeats's time, the word "queer" was used both in the sense of "outside the norm" and sexual deviance. It was John Douglas the 9th Marquess of Queensberry, the father of Lord Alfred Douglas (Bosie, Wilde's lover), who first used it as a slur in 1894 in a threatening letter to Alfred Montgomery after his eldest son Francis had presumably committed suicide fearing the consequences of his relations with Lord Rosebery (Ellmann 402). As Butler has explained in "Critically Queer":

> "Queer" derives its force precisely through the repeated invocation by which it has become linked to accusation, pathologization, insult. This is an invocation by which a social bond among homophobic communities is formed through time. The interpellation echoes past interpellations, and binds the speakers, as if they spoke in unison across time. In this sense, it is always an imaginary chorus that taunts "queer". (169)

As we shall see, in Martyn's *HF*, this is exactly what happens: characters safeguarding the family will use "queer" to insult and pathologise those who

differ from them and to form a homophobic social bond against the "queer lot" (Ellmann 36), while in *LHD* only Mary applies this word to the fairy people whom she finds attractive, thus assigning a more positive connotation to queerness.

1.2 Failure, Unhappy Outcasts and Escape to the Supernatural

In this section, I focus on the main characters' unease with the traditional family and their will to escape to the supernatural and to affectionate relationships with members of the same-sex. Both plays feature characters who offer consolation and freedom for the ones who feel ill-at-ease with conventional ways of living, and they insinuate these closeted characters' difference, just like Yeats and Moore noticed Martyn's. As Sedgwick observes: "After all, the position of those who think they *know something about one that one may not know oneself* is an excited and empowered one" (*Epistemology* 80).

In *LHD*, the setting immediately indicates Mary's unease with the roles assigned to her by society and her family: she is standing by the door, reading a book, signalling her liminal position and her desire to escape. Mary's mother-in-law Bridget complains to Father Hart that Mary is not following the example she represents of womanhood and motherhood: "She would not mind the kettle, milk the cow, or even lay the knives and spread the cloth" (*VPl* 182) and "[s]he is not a fitting wife for any man" (*VPl* 191). These speech acts are performative and work to let Mary know that she is the cause of the unhappiness of the entire family due to her failure to reproduce its traditions. This resonates with Ahmed's discussion of the way the "happy" family marks the consciousness of those whom it identifies as the cause of its unhappiness[111] ("Happy Objects" 44-50). *LHD* thus suggests that the same formula cannot make everyone happy. She is labelled as a failure by her family, hence she is looking for ways to escape this oppressive environment, which resonates closely with the way Farr described her life:

[111] See also Ahmed's monograph *The Promise of Happiness*. Durham and London: Duke UP, 2010.

> I was brought up in a large family until I was twenty-three, and I lived the orthodox married life for four years, so that I have given home and the family as much trial as seemed necessary. … I have no regrets, because my failures have been some of my most valuable experiences, and my moments of bitterness have been the cause of my greatest contentment. … Those who are suffering from the home want to do away with it. With philosophic calm I can suggest improvements and ways of escape that would make it bearable, but would not destroy it. (*Modern Woman*)

Reading also raises suspicion in normative characters, as it indicates a lack of interest in domestic activities traditionally assigned to women: Bridget, Maurteen and Father Hart all highlight the book as a disturbing object. Father Hart warns Mary: "You should not fill your head with foolish dreams. What are you reading?" (*VPl* 184). Mary is reading about a woman who was lured into "the Land of Faery" (*VPl* 184): a kinder and more tolerant world "[w]here nobody gets old and godly and grave / Where nobody gets old and crafty and wise / Where nobody gets old and bitter of tongue" (*VPl* 184). This might refer to the authoritative, know-it-all, manipulative and insulting environment Mary has to endure within the family. Maurteen commands her to put down the book, as it seems to bring her to a different world where she feels better than in her own family. Through Mary's refusal of conventional notions of femininity and duties assigned to women, she becomes a stranger to her own family: "To become wilfully estranged from femininity is to become a stranger to the family," (*Willful Subjects* 90) as Ahmed phrased it. Mary thus denies the basic principles of the normative family according to which "[t]he child must not only become part of the family, a willing member, seated at the family table, but as part must become a point, willing to extend the family line, to assemble a new body" (*Willful Subjects* 113). This serves as a technique for straightening out the willfulness into willingness: willingness to reproduce the family (114).

Yet Mary wants to escape from this dull house and achieve the freedom she has been denied: “What do I care if I have given this house, / Where I must hear all day a bitter tongue, / Into the power of fairies?” (*VPl* 191). She begs: “Come, fairies, take me out of this dull house! / Let me have all the freedom I have lost; / Work when I will and idle when I will!” (*VPl* 192). Mary’s sudden protest against her family recalls Farr’s words: “Can we wonder that a woman who is treated as street walkers are treated should feel this wild anti-social rage against the society that has first made use of her and then treated her as an outcast?” (*Modern Woman*). The fairy child—who is in fact older than anyone else—promises Mary a kiss and through that kiss freedom and escape from what Mary calls her captivity: “You shall go with me, newly-married bride, / And gaze upon a merrier multitude. / … Where beauty has no ebb, decay no flood, / But joy is wisdom, time an endless song. I kiss you and the world begins to fade” (*VPl* 205). Ahmed mentions this desire “to leave a certain world behind” (“Happy Objects” 47) as one of the reasons why the “happy” family associates everyone who is different from them with a life doomed to be necessarily unhappy. For instance, when the Fairy child appears at the door, Maurteen and the others immediately assume that she is unhappy, as she seems to have no family, hence he lets her in. Maurteen stresses that he (the family) is happy, therefore everyone around him should also be happy. This implies an intolerance for unhappiness disguised as benevolence and care: “Being happy, I would have all others happy, / So I will bring her in out of the cold” (*VPl* 195). This is the same reason why Maurteen also commands Mary to

Figure 8: Feminist artist Pamela Colman Smith's illustration for *The Land of Heart's Desire*. Source: marykgreer.com. Web. 29 Jan. 2021.

put away her discontent, but without any interest in the causes of her melancholia.

There is an important connection between fairies and marginalised subjectivities within Irish culture and literature. Charlotte McIvor discusses this connection with regard to George Moore's novella "Albert Nobbs" in which Alec, the narrator's fictional interlocutor claims: "A woman that marries another woman, and lives happily with her isn't a natural woman; there must be something of the fairy in her" (qtd. in McIvor 98). Fairies carry an ambiguous double-meaning, which could help to obscure the homoerotic content of the play: "The 'fairy' … represents *both* an alibi that allows resumption of heteronormativity *and* the zone of an alternative queer reality" (McIvor 98). Moreover, by the 1920s, fairies had an established association with both Irish queerness and rural Irish heteronormativity (98). Angela Bourke has similarly stressed that fairies belong to the margins and "their constant eavesdropping explains the need sometimes to speak in riddles, or to avoid discussion of certain topics" (28). Thus fairies can serve as metaphors for marginalised individuals and the unspeakable in society and they are strongly associated with queer *eros*: "it is in this very realm of the fairy that queer Irish female histories reside" (McIvor 98).

Yeats's drama abounds in such metaphors of marginality, which seem impenetrable, obscure, ambiguous, visible and invisible at the same time, but always strongly associated with forms of desire that normativity labels as dangerous and deviant. Just like the fairy, other seemingly obscure symbols in Yeats's works could also be called "quare signifiers" (McIvor 99) and "metaphorical erotohistoriographical archives" (99). Íde O'Carroll and Eoin Collins have also explained the connection between the Fairies, the Irish Aisling/Vision tradition and lesbian and gay lives. According to this tradition, creatures representing Ireland appear to declare something about Ireland's future, and while these fairies are dancing merrily, people witnessing it are fearful as they do not know what they are exactly, which "mirrors the reaction of many individuals who witness lesbian and gay lives from afar, who dismiss it as high jinks, or flee with fear, refusing to engage with a different way of being" (1).

In *LHD*, Mary desires the unknown, invisible realm of the fairies, while she is getting weary of her husband's "drowsy love" (*VPl* 192). Yet Shawn seems to take her anxiety seriously unlike her father: "Do not blame me; I often lie awake / Thinking that all things trouble your bright head" (*VPl* 192). This is a beautiful moment of understanding between them, and Mary calls him the great door-post of the house and herself the branch of quicken wood. However, she tells him that she cannot hang upon the post this branch, meaning she cannot make him happy: "O, you are the great door-post of this house, / And I the branch of blessed quicken wood, / And if I could I'd hang upon the post / Till I had brought good luck into the house" (*VPl* 192-3). Strikingly, Mary does not explain why exactly she cannot make Shawn happy: her failure to conform to conventional social norms remains unexplained, it is marked by silence, which increases the sense of closetedness in the play.

Yet once Shawn mentions that no power can break their marriage, the fairy child interrupts him and sings about "[t]he lonely of heart" (*VPl* 195) and of a happier land, implying that there are other forms of happiness beyond marriage between a man and a woman. She identifies Mary as her kind whose place is elsewhere: "There is one here that must away, away" (*VPl* 196). Mary transfers some objects through the door to this supernatural realm, which, as Harris has observed, never return (*Irish Drama* 40). Similar to the world of queer people and other socially marginalised subcultures, it is a space that is real yet invisible, or as Bersani has put it, it is "[i]nvisibly visible, unlocatably everywhere" (32).

Father Hart gives a reductive explanation to Mary's melancholia, hoping that Mary will one day merge into the normative family and society, and will become like the rest: "My colleen, I have seen some other girls, / Restless and ill at ease, but years went by / And they grew like their neighbours and were glad / And gossiping of weddings and of wakes" (*VPl* 185). What equally vexes characters representing normativity is pensive and melancholy women and men, hence Bridget's remark that Mary is "old enough to know that it is wrong / To mope and idle" (*VPl* 185). Maurteen observes that Mary is repressing something: she is hiding among her dreams

like children from the dark under the bedclothes, hence he implores her to put away her "dreams of discontent" (*VPl* 189). In "Happy Objects," Ahmed mentions this kind of demand as characteristic of the normative family which defines what happiness should be: the demand that people should let go of certain histories which cause melancholia. In fact, melancholia can provide a powerful framework to examine the ungrievable losses and hurts associated with marginalised and stigmatised subjectivities.[112]

Even though queer critics often argue against treating the link between homosexuality and melancholia as an essential one, Eribon, Ahmed, Love, David Eng and Butler have all discussed the validity of this connection.[113] As Eribon has observed, "there exists a specifically homosexual 'melancholy'" (*Insult* 36) which is part of the process of ego-formation caused by the loss of heterosexual ways of life. Or, in Ahmed's words, "the unhappy queer is made unhappy by the world that reads queer as unhappy" ("Happy Objects" 43). Mary's melancholia can also be explained with her liminal position between her feelings of duty towards the family and her wish to find freedom somewhere else:

> This is a melancholy related to a "split habitus," to invoke Bourdieu's wonderful, powerful concept. Strangely enough, it is precisely at the moment in which you try to get past this diffuse and hidden kind of malaise, to get over it, or when you try at least to allay it a bit, that it pushes even more strongly to the fore, and the melancholy associated with it redoubles its force. (Eribon, *Returning to Reims* 12)

This melancholia characterised twentieth-century Irish drama by women too, including Lady Augusta Gregory, Teresa Deevy, Christina Reid and the

---

[112] Francis Lee's film *Ammonite* (2020) starring Kate Winslet, Saoirse Ronan and Fiona Shaw has associated the unexplained melancholia of Charlotte's character (played by Ronan) and the sadness of Mary's character (played by Winslet) with repressed desire for their own sex.

[113] For more information on melancholia and gender see Judith Butler's monograph *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997, whereas for racial melancholia see David L. Eng *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy*. Durham and London: Duke UP, 2010. Eribon's memoir *Returning to Reims*. Penguin Books, 2009 also explores the connection between melancholia, queerness and change of class.

works of Marina Carr, to respond to and defy discourses of exclusion, as Mikyung Park's PhD thesis has demonstrated.[114]

The family sees the Fairy child and her kind as the evil Other, yet Mary claims they are also children of God, introducing a voice of tolerance and equality into the narrative of hostility and othering. It is only Mary who describes the people outside the house as "queer": "A little queer old woman dressed in green" (188) and "[a] little queer old man" (*VPl* 191). Since Mary is the only character who is truly interested in this world, her use of "queer" gives the word a more positive connotation, seeing difference and strangeness as full of potential and possibility. Moreover, the Child displays an age unorthodoxy—like Woolf's Orlando, she lives without age: she can put on womanhood anytime as if putting on a dress, and Maurteen notes that it is strange that so young a girl loves old age and wisdom. She claims that she is "much older than the eagle-cock [which is] the oldest thing under the moon" (*VPl* 203). The strangeness of this figure and Mary's interest in her raise panic in the others, thus they hope the crucifix and the priest will protect them.

Since the Child is terrified of the crucifix, she gets Father Hart to put it away by gently "caressing him" (*VPl* 66), which borders around another sexual taboo regarding children and the clergy.[115] Once the crucifix is gone, Mary's seduction begins through dance. The fairy child asks everyone if they love her, and suddenly turns to Mary: "And do you love me too?" (*VPl* 202). She promises Mary to give her more than her husband can, implying that she can offer just as much or even more to a woman than a man. Everyone replies with yes to her question, as they see her as a child not a woman. Only Mary understands, as Harris has discerned, "how many different kinds of love might be implied in that question" (*Irish Drama* 42), hence she answers "I do not know" (*VPl* 202). It is crucial that Mary's reaction is neither fully dismissive nor affirmative, but hesitant. Unlike

[114] See Mikyung Park. *The politics of melancholia in twentieth-century Irish drama by women: Augusta Gregory, Teresa Deevy, Christina Reid and Marina Carr*. 2017. National University of Ireland Galway.

[115] See Joseph Valente and Margot Gayle Backus. *The Child Sex Scandal and Modern Irish Literature: Writing the Unspeakable*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2020. Full book available at https://publish.iupress.indiana.edu/projects/the-child-sex-scandal-and-modern-irish-literature

anyone else, Mary feels embarrassed by the fairy child's question not just because it is very straightforward, but because in their relationship, it might imply romantic love. Promotion photos for the performance published in *The Sketch* (see Harris, *Irish Drama* 43) also reveal more about the ambiguous relationship between the two women, as the fairy child's hands lay on Mary's body and she stares intensely in her eyes. Mary allows this, but her body and confused facial expression display that she is in a state of transition and hesitation. Yet, as Harris has revealed, "[t]he assumption of childhood innocence protected spectators from recognising the play's adult aspects" (44).

Mary is torn between the two worlds: Father Hart warns her to "think of this house and of [her] duties in it" (*VPl* 205), while the fairy begs her to come away otherwise she will never escape from domestic duties and will become like the rest. It is notable that the prospect of growing like the rest is used both by Father Hart and the fairy, but with a very different emotional content: for Father Hart, becoming like the rest is the ideal future for Mary, while the fairy child depicts this as the worst thing that can happen to Mary. The fairy begs her:

> Stay and come with me, newly-married bride,
> For if you hear him *you grow like the rest*;
> Bear children, cook, and bend above the churn,
> And wangle over butter, fowl, and eggs,
> Until at last, grown old and bitter of tongue,
> You're crouching there and shivering at the grave. (*VPl* 205-6, my emphasis)

She thus promises Mary that unlike her family, she will love her as she is: "I keep you in the name of your own heart" (*VPl* 206). This part of the play is a dramatic competition for Mary's love and attention between Shawn and Father Hart and the fairy child, in which Mary rejects marriage, motherhood and the Church too. Since Yeats himself admitted that he put his own

despair of desires in this play, Harris stresses that "the battle for Mary Bruin's soul is inevitably framed as an erotic competition" (*Irish Drama* 40-1). This fairy child is a queer presence in that she is "an anti-reproductive force" (42) which takes women away from their conventional duties as wives and mothers. Father Hart laments that people like the fairy child are dangerous as they divert people from the traditional path: "And day by day their power is more and more, / And men and women leave old paths for pride / Comes knocking with thin knuckles on the heart" (*VPl* 210). As Moane has underlined, in the eyes of the Irish society of the time, the right to choose not to marry was a lesbian issue along with divorce, poverty, prostitution and lone parenthood ("Living Visions" 91-2).

At the end of the play, the fairy child is standing by the door just like Mary at the beginning: Mary begs her to take her to the people of her kind "who ride the winds, run on the waves, / And dance upon the mountains" (*VPl* 208) and who are thus "more light / Than dewdrops on the banner of the dawn" (*VPl* 208). The child calls her "little bird" (*VPl* 208) and Mary addresses her as "Dear face! Dear voice!" (*VPl* 208). When the seduction is complete, Mary dies but it is implied that her soul was taken by the fairy child to a kinder world which does not label her as a failure. From Mary's point of view, the fairy child serves as a medium through which she can find her own voice and place in the world, which recalls feminist and queer bonds of entrustment between older and younger women.[116] This bond between older and younger characters appears in many of Yeats's works given his relationship with women who were half of his age, such as Iseult Gonne and his wife George Hyde-Lees. Just like Mary follows the fairy child in *LHD*, Irish studies also needs to follow the fairies in order to reveal the often hidden queer lives included in the texts: "following the fairies," as McIvor elaborates, "through oral, literary and other histories will yield an even more extensive archive that reveals not a lack of quare Irish female erotohistories, but a multitude of quare lives lived hiding in plain sight" (99).

[116] Lucia Re has written about such bonds of entrustment (*affidamento*) with regard to Duse's intimate relationship with younger women ("Eleonora Duse and Women" 354).

In Martyn's *HF*, four male characters express unease with traditional family roles, while they offer each other emotional support to counter the insults of normativity. As Harris explains, here "[e]ach character is given an androgynous sidekick who shares the protagonist's vision and professes unconditional love for his doomed companion" (*Gender* 42). The characters' difference is represented by the male protagonists' shared admiration for the heather field where they can listen to the waves and wind, thus the invisible land of acceptance is similar to the Sligo-setting of *LHD*. Moreover, the play is full of over-sentimentalised expressions of love between these men, which appear as romantic love scenes expressed through the safe frameworks of brotherhood and friendship, similar to the safe innocent childhood motif of Yeats's play. The young Miles tells his brother Carden: "There is no one in the whole world I love as well as you" (Martyn 26) and the child Kit exclaims to Carden: "I love you. Oh, you don't know how I love you, father" (53). Just like in Yeats's play, the younger characters of *HF* portray a profound admiration for old age and wisdom. In fact, strong bonds between men have been one of the main tropes of Irish drama. Lonergan has stressed the presence of "the Irish male double act" (137) in the Irish theatre tradition, as in Yeats's *On Baile's Strand* and *The Cat and the Moon*, or in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*.

By appearance, Carden seems to conform to conventional notions of masculinity, as he is a "powerfully built man" (21) and talks about practical business issues. Yet his gestures are marked by tenderness towards the other male characters. As soon as he enters, he smiles at his friend Barry Ussher and expresses his anxiety caused by the fear of losing him and his support: "No, you must believe in me, and inspire me with heart" (22). Harris notes that since "the play depends on the audience's sympathizing with Carden" (*Gender* 42), it is surprising that the play was received much more positively than, for instance, Yeats's *The Countess Cathleen*. Even though Carden's masculinity is unconventional in the play, the play's first performance was more or less successful because Martyn built Carden into the position of an idealist through his mystical connection to the land and through the opposition between him and his wife (*Gender* 44). Thus for

nationalists, it was acceptable that Carden chose the love of the land instead of a physical relationship with his wife, refusing the needs of the body for an ideal, which yet again illustrates how the mystical and the supernatural can work as a shield for queer desires.

The tender relationship between the play's male characters is constantly criticised and mocked by the five characters who represent normativity: Carden's wife Grace, two doctors, and Lady and Lord Shrule. Grace complains to Lady Shrule that Miles "is certainly amiable, but vexes me occasionally with his foolish admiration for my husband" (36). She observes about Carden's close relationship with his best friend Barry Ussher that "[w]hat you two have to say perpetually to each other puzzles me" (29). She expresses his concern to Lady Shrule too: "Yes, and to have that fellow Ussher, too, dropping in to complete the mutual admiration society! Oh, I always disliked him" (36). Grace is also afraid that these bonds will provide a bad example to the child Kit, hence she calls two doctors to try to heal and thus pathologise Carden.

Just like Father Hart trivialises Mary's anxiety, Grace reduces Carden's unease with normative life to imaginary sufferings:

> Really it becomes too provoking when you begin talking about those imaginary sufferings and aspirations of yours. What on earth have you to suffer? You are in good health are you not? Were you not more than fortunate to have married as you did? Have you not independent means? What can a man like you aspire more to? (31)

This resembles the way discourse uses insult to mark the consciousness of queer people, to inscribe shame in their minds and to let them know they are inferior to them (Eribon, *Insult* 16-7). Grace insinuates that Carden is mad simply because he is different, which, in fact, indeed makes Carden believe he is mad. This is how interpellation and insult work: making the insulted believe he insults the world and not vice versa. Carden points this out too: "Ha – ha – I suppose people of her type think everyone who differs from them, mad" (32).

Carden articulates how normativity controls and molests people who do not wish to obey: “It is really too bad that I should be molested thus perpetually with unsolicited advice. All my acquaintances seem to consider it incumbent upon them to interfere in and direct my affairs just like their own. One would think I had no right to do anything” (41). Carden thus wants to escape: “I will live my life as I want, and I will take dictation from nobody” (41). Grace complains to the doctors and the Shrule family that Carden “always seemed to me odd and ridiculous: for he never cared for society, never went to races, dances, or tennis parties, you know, like other people” (34). She continues calling Carden and his family queer people: “He is such a queer creature. You cannot imagine how strange his ideas are” (35). They also observe that Carden has no interest in women at all, even though Lady Shrule thinks “it is impossible that a man can exist without loving some woman” (35). This lack of interest in activities traditionally assigned to men and Carden’s indifference towards women signals that he is different from normative notions of masculinity.

However, friendship, brotherhood, reading and the heather field offer consolation for these insults. Carden tells Ussher and Miles that “two friends such as you ought to compensate for what I have to bear from others” (42). The heather field offers a similar escape from what Carden calls his life of pain and unrest as a husband: “Oh! There is magic in those mountain breezes! … I hear in its waves those voices floating back to me” (45). But when Carden explains this to the doctors too, they immediately diagnose him as mad, as he claims that for him his current life is only a dream, and his real life is there in the heather field: “I often think that my life of pain and unrest here is only a dream after all” (27).

His close friend Barry Ussher tries to save him from the medical discourse and calls him away: “Really, Carden, I don’t see what you gain by discussing your ideas with people who can neither understand nor sympathise with them. Come, come away” (46). It is also Ussher who reproaches Grace for her plan to pathologise Carden and the child Kit, and compares Carden to Joan of Arc and Socrates to stress that there is nothing abnormal about him: “Did not Joan of Arc declare she heard voices calling

on her to accomplish a work which proved to be one of the most wonderful and practical in history? Was not Socrates firmly convinced that he was in the habit of receiving admonitions from his daemon?" (48). Ussher unveils the cruelty of normativity which wants to contain the unconventional behaviour of people like Carden: "To take him away from all that he loves—his free life on the mountain, his intimate delight in nature, his interests and occupations without which life would become for him meaningless—can you understand the cruelty of this?" (50). At the same time, he warns Carden that it is dangerous to go to the heather field, which Carden sees as a betrayal of their bond: "What do you mean? Are you too going to join the enemy?" (55). In Act III, in which Carden is already domesticated and supervised by doctors and police officers, Miles and Ussher speak up for him: "Oh, I know you [Grace] have much to endure, but I cannot remain here and listen to such denunciation of what my brother holds nearest to his heart" (62).

Ussher appears as an older, more authoritative figure who has managed to escape and who can thus serve as a teacher for the younger Miles too. Ussher teaches him through his stories about Carden's difference, employing ambiguous diction—for instance, he reassures the anxious Miles: "I fear I also find difficulties cultivating the tastes that are congenital to me" (17). Ussher embodies freedom for Miles: "Well, in any case you seem able to live as you please. You have always means to travel, and never want for anything" (18). Yet Ussher suggests that he lost happiness when Carden married Grace and hints at the ambiguous relationship between him and Carden. The marriage appears as the greatest grievance/betrayal in their relationship, which Ussher calls a strange and unnatural choice and sees it as a betrayal of their intimacy: "Grace would probably have made an excellent wife for almost any other man, but for your brother—well, it might have been better if he had never thought of marriage at all" (18-9). Miles does not understand what he is referring to which increases the sense of closetedness in the play: "Well, you see, Carden and I had been intimate so long. We had been brought up together in fact, so that I fancy I understand him better than anyone" (19). This conversation basically paraphrases the homoerotic nature

of their relationship, but deliberately avoiding to name it, marking it with silence.

Carden's marriage appears as a shared trauma for him and Ussher. Carden blames Ussher's warnings about the marriage for his unhappiness, which leads to a heated quarrel between them. First, Ussher becomes angry and is ready to leave: "I was wrong ever to have interfered with my advice. Never will I do so again" (23). But the stage direction indicates that his tone suddenly becomes more tender: "I hope, Carden, at least I may never be to you the cause of ill luck" (23). Towards the end, when Carden displays signs of madness, he believes he is ten years ago when he was about to marry Grace despite Ussher's warning. He re-enacts the scene but decides to take Ussher's advice not to marry (64). This trauma pervades Martyn's play and marks the relationship between its sensitive male characters with an atmosphere of unrealised potentials, closetedness and failure. These moments in the play evoke Love's idea of broken intimacies and moments of failed or interrupted connections as characteristic of queer historiography (*Feeling Backward* 24).

Moreover, Ussher serves as a mentor for the child Kit who also falls in love with the heather field and keeps asking his father to come out with him to enjoy it. He is obsessed with flowers, described as pensive looking and he is wearing a sailor suit. The young Kit and the older Ussher have an interesting conversation about masculinity, as Kit understands that he will only have rights if he becomes a man. This passage plays with the ambiguous connection between becoming a man and becoming masculine, and it can be interpreted in both ways.

> Kit (*with impatience*): Oh, how I wish I were a man.
> Ussher: Alas, are you not much better as you are? Why do you want to be a man?
> Kit: Because then they could not prevent me from doing what I like. I should be a sailor and find out what is beyond

> the great sea father and I [*sic*] are always looking at from the heather field. (39)

When Carden asks him if he has brought flowers from the heather field, he answers ambiguously: "They have not yet come out" (63), implying also the repressed, unrealised aspects of Carden's life who cannot go to the heather field anymore. But the play ends with Carden and Kit holding hands watching a rainbow above the heather field talking about man's speechless desires: "Oh, mystic highway of man's speechless longings! My heart goes forth upon the rainbow to the horizon of joy!" (66). *HF* is therefore very much about accepting loss. Carden has lost the world from which he wanted to escape—the normative family and social roles with which he could never identify—but by the end of the play he also loses the heather field which offered consolation for his life of suffering as a husband. However, his bond with Ussher is not fully broken, although it has to remain unfulfilled and marked by a history of regrets and hurts which Carden tries to transform into an alternative form of happiness through bonds of friendship. In the words of Muñoz, "[t]o accept loss is to accept queerness" (73) and it does not mean hiding in the closet or disappear, but "to veer away from heterosexuality's path" (73). Even though Carden is forced to remain within the family, in his own way he manages to veer away from heterosexuality's path or at least the play offers strategies of resisting normativity and escaping from it.

Through their 'affect alien' protagonists, Yeats's *LHD* and Martyn's *HF* convey queer structures of feeling and demonstrate the importance of histories that hurt. Mary's and Carden's social marginality can indeed mirror the experience of queer historical subjects and is able to speak to contemporary queer subjectivities, who inhabit norms differently and who have to bear the pressure imposed on them by normativity.[117] These two

[117] In their attempt to leave the restricting family home behind and live an independent life with their chosen family, these two plays evoke Poulain's discussion of Michael's character in Tom Murphy's *Conversations on a Homecoming*: : "[I]n the course of the evening Michael has died a symbolic death, killing the 'romantic' in himself, and has been reborn a wiser man: 'I know what I came home for,' he concludes….At the end of the play, Michael

plays subvert conventional gender roles and portray complicated same-sex intimacies through the safe frameworks of the supernatural, brotherhood, familial bonds and childhood, all of which work to obscure the more complex desires closeted in the texts. The relationship between characters of the same-sex and the transformational energy that arises from these intimate relationships also speak to the importance of queer bonds of entrustment in coming-out narratives. Thus *LHD* and *HF* can be read as love letters to anyone who feels different from the norm, who has difficulty in living up to the social expectations that restrict their freedom, and who refuse to become like the rest despite the inevitable consequence of becoming failures in the eyes of normative society. Through Carden's and Mary's unease and unrest, the plays reveal how restrictive society's notions of success and happiness can be for some people. What counts as failure for the rest of the characters becomes an alternative success story for Carden and Mary: their victory lies exactly in becoming a failure for the family, in unbecoming[118] respectable wives and husbands. Both Carden and Mary put pleasure and their own interests in front of national and social considerations, and replacing production/reproduction with pleasure is a crucial non-normative queer strategy (Harris, *Irish Drama* 24). Due to these topical messages about difference and the pressure of normativity, it does not seem an exaggeration to call these plays queer dramas.

2. Melancholy Masculinities and Wildean Echoes in *Calvary* (1920)[119]

"Have you noticed that the Greek androginous [*sic*] statue is always the woman in man, never the man in woman? It was made for men who loved men first" (CL *InteLex* 6759).

---

decides to go back to America, although he hasn't got much of a life awaiting him there. Homecoming has enabled him to give up the myth of home, and start inventing his own roots" ("'My Heart Unravelled'" 189).

[118] I use this word here in the sense that Jack Halberstam applies it in *The Queer Art of Failure*: to intentionally refuse or fail to become something that is expected by society (2).

[119] A version of this subchapter was published with the title "Yeats's Queer Dramaturgies: Oscar Wilde, Narcissus, and Melancholy Masculinities in *Calvary*." *International Yeats Studies*, vol. 4, Iss. 1, Clemson UP, 2020, pp. 15-44.

This section explores the impact of normative masculinity on the intimate bond of three biblical men—Christ, Lazarus and Judas—in the context of Yeats's sympathy for the vicissitudes of Oscar Wilde. More specifically, I examine the unhappy Lazarus motif and the implicit references to the Greek myth of Narcissus in *Calvary* (1920) which work to provide a discourse of legitimation for love between men and alternative, melancholy masculinities. To support my reading of *Calvary*, I make brief references to *The Resurrection* (1931) and "The Crucifixion of the Outcast" (1897). The latter one appears as the early prose version of *Calvary* and a more explicit commentary on how normative society treats men who inhabit norms differently. As Eribon has observed, any representation of an effeminate or melancholy/contemplative man implies "male homosexuality—all of them—even when one knows this has no basis in reality" (*Insult* 71). In fact, as Cullingford has revealed, Yeats too "had considerable trouble becoming a man" (*Gender* 5) and his sexual identity was indefinite, and "[w]omen who loved women also loved Yeats" (*Gender* 269). Halberstam has equally stressed that signs of effeminacy—including contemplative/artistic nature, solitude or melancholia—have always been condemned by masculine societies as a threat to the politics of virility and as a betrayal of patriarchal fraternity (*Queer Art* 160). While male bonding and homosocial fraternity can be worked into patriarchal social structures, a more direct threat for patriarchy is the refusal of these bonds for the sake of solitude and the rejection of masculine mastery, settling for a "*non-suicidal disappearance of the subject*," (Bersani 99, his emphasis) which is exactly what the unhappy Lazarus is longing for in *Calvary*.

2.1 "Some Boy of Fine Temperament": Oscar Wilde, Narcissus and Christ

One of the means of defying the (hetero)normative discourse is the creation of counter-heroes through a performance of effeminacy as authority, which appears in *Calvary* and in Yeats's writings about Wilde as well. Thomas Carlyle's book *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* is relevant to this context,[120] as it asserted that authority was strictly masculine

[120] Carlyle, Thomas. *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*. London: Chapman and Hall, 1840.

and history was about great men, hence it became the major point of reference for Fascist and nationalist visualities (see Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look* 17). Carlyle was a major influence on Standish O'Grady and even on Wilde, but as Geraldine Higgins has pointed out, Yeats was never really interested in Carlyle "except to disparage his prose style" (12). Wilde built on Carlyle's ideas on the hero but only to challenge them by posing as an effeminate hero, which "created a clear sense of gender and sexual difference" (Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look* 151). As Mirzoeff observes, this was a countervisual claim to autonomy staged against Carlyle's reality: "If his being Irish could not be posed as Heroic aristocracy because of his perceived embodied difference, Wilde repositioned it as a form of Heroic resistance to tyranny that nonetheless endorsed the continuance of a decentralized British empire" (Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look* 152).

Yeats also made a countervisual claim for Wilde: when everyone saw Wilde as the exact opposite of a man of action, Yeats detailed Wilde's tenderness and kindness and claimed that he "considered him essentially a man of action, … and [Wilde] would have been more important as a soldier or politician; and [Yeats] was certain that, guilty or not guilty, he would prove himself a man" (*Memoirs* 285). Here Yeats deconstructs the normative and gendered views of manliness, heroism and authority as the opposite of tenderness, kindness and effeminacy. Yeats recalls that Wilde created a counter-hero of himself through his performance of effeminacy as authority: "I had met a man who had found him in a barber's shop in Venice, and heard him explain, 'I am having my hair curled that I may resemble Nero'" (*Memoirs* 285-6).

In *A Vision* "B," Yeats mentions Wilde in Phase 19 along with the equally transgressive figures of Gabriele D'Annunzio, Lord Byron and a certain actress, possibly referring to the great New Women of his time. This is the phase of the disunity of being, where "the being is compelled to live in a fragment of itself and to dramatise the fragment" (110). Yeats claims that these people's thoughts express an exciting personality which is "always an open attack; or a sudden emphasis, an extravagance, or an impassioned declamation of some general idea, which is a more veiled attack" (111).

Yeats's notes about Wilde that he finds "in Wilde, too, something pretty, feminine, and insincere, derived from his admiration for writers of the 17th and earlier phases, and much that is violent, arbitrary and insolent, derived from his desire to escape" (112). Here the disunity of being and the extravagant personality are not necessarily negative. The people belonging to this phase seem to signify the performative turn which is able to attack the discourse through a counter-performance of excess and difference.

After Wilde was convicted of sodomy and gross indecency in 1895, his "name quickly became the symbol both of gay culture and of the repression it inevitably calls down on itself whenever it goes too far in the direction of making itself public" (Eribon, *Insult* 145). Jason Edwards holds that "Wilde's death in 1900 made Yeats more determined to use his work as a vehicle to increase public sympathy for homosexual men," (45) mostly for Wilde and Roger Casement. For instance, in 1901, in his review of John Eglington's *Two Essays on the Remnant*, Yeats seizes the occasion to criticise the Irish state for airbrushing people like Wilde from the frameworks of recognition (*Later Articles* 53-59). Edwards refers to an unpublished letter of Yeats written to John Quinn in 1914, in which Yeats expresses his sympathy for "the generation of the green carnation," a flower which became symbolic of Wilde and homosexual recognition (54). In "The Catastrophe," Yeats criticised his contemporaries' reaction to Wilde's arrest and lamented that "[t]he World is getting more manly!" (*Memoirs* 284). Moreover, in a letter to Lady Dorothy Wellesley in 1936, Yeats criticises those political and social institutions which shame people because of their difference. Yeats clearly states that saving a nation cannot serve as an excuse for such public shaming:

> But suppose the evidence had been true, suppose Casement had been a homo-sexual [*sic*] & left a diary recording it all, what would you think of a Government who used that diary to prevent a movement for the reprieve of a prisoner condemned to death? Charles Ricketts & Lawrence of Arabia were reputed homo-sexual [*sic*] suppose they had been condemned on a capital charge some where [*sic*], what would

> you think of a Proffessor [*sic*] who insured their execution by telling the middle classes that they were homosexual. … I can only repeat words spoken to me by the old head of the Fenians years ago. 'There are things a man must not do even to save a nation.' (CL *InteLex* 6737)

The use of Greek, Roman and Celtic mythologies along with Oriental themes and Biblical frameworks in literature and theatre have always been able to represent repressed subcultures and forbidden desires in code thanks to their mainstream cultural position. Eribon highlights that references to ancient Greece[121] in literature have long been seen as "a locus of legitimation for loves between members of the same sex," (*Insult* 155) and allowed gay people "to provide themselves with a set of references that justified what Christian culture, social prejudices, and even the law condemned to silence" (156). Yeats refers to this in a letter to Lady Dorothy Wellesley in 1936, in the same year when the two of them played a game of joint ballad composition which was a kind of "sexual displacement-activity" (Foster, *Arch-Poet* 546):

> Your lines have the magnificent swing of your boyish body. I wish I could be a girl of nineteen for certain hours that I might feel it even more acutely. … Have you noticed that the Greek androgynous statue is always the woman in man, never the man in woman? It was made for men who loved men first. (CL *InteLex* 6759)

In addition, Yeats's first experience of Florence Farr's powerful queer stage presence in Todhunter's *A Sicilian Idyll* (1890) in Bedford Park was in a Greek context, as she played "a brazen Hellenistic New Woman with a hint of lesbianism" (Laity 622).

Yeats's admiration for ancient Greek drama through his readings of Friedrich Nietzsche and his use of the Apollonian-Dionysian dichotomy in

[121] See also David M. Halperin's monograph *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality: And Other Essays on Greek Love*. New York and London: Routledge, 1990.

his plays is well-known.[122] However, his interest in ancient Greece included the myth of Narcissus as well.[123] Hedwig Schwall has written about Yeats's frequent use of the story of Narcissus and the nymph Echo in his poems to articulate the Poet-Muse relationship (24), yet the same-sex aspects of the Narcissus story also feature in Yeats's works. Interestingly, the effeminate Narcissus staring at his own image was associated with Wilde at the time, and Thomas Nast created a caricature of Wilde-as-Narcissus. Moreover, in Wilde's tale "The Disciple" the pool admits that he also fell in love with Narcissus, as he saw his own image and beauty reflected in his loving eyes. Wilde often compared Lord Alfred Douglas to Narcissus and Hyacinth. In a letter to Robert Ross, he writes: "He is quite like narcissus – so white and gold. … Bosie is so tired: he lies like a hyacinth on the sofa, and I worship him" (Wilde, *Letters* 526).

More pressingly, in "At Stratford-on-Avon," (1901) Yeats expresses his sympathy for young effeminate boys, who prefer contemplation instead of physical activities, and he condemns toxic hyper-masculinity. When Yeats compares Shakespeare's Richard II and Henry V, he takes sides with Richard II, who had always been looked at as a sentimental, melancholy and weak king. Yeats equally warns against the idealisation of the hyper-masculine Henry V, who was so good at performing power and had "a resounding rhetoric that move[d] men" (*Essays* 108). People expected from Richard II a "rough energy," (106) but he had "nothing to give but some contemplative virtue" (106). Yeats continues that Shakespeare scholars "took the same delight in abasing Richard II that school-boys do in persecuting some boy of fine temperament, who has weak muscles and a distaste for school game. And they had the admiration for Henry that school-boys have for the sailor or soldier hero of a romance in some boys' papers" (104). Yeats concludes that Shakespeare did not celebrate such

[122] See Susan Jones's chapter "Nietzsche, Modernism, and Dance: Dionysian or Apollonian?" in her book *Literature, Modernism, and Dance*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013, pp. 44-70.

[123] Brian Arkins discusses Yeats's use of Greek mythology in *Builders of My Soul: Greek and Roman Themes in Yeats*. Savage, Maryland: Barnes and Noble Books, 1990. See also Elizabeth Muller's article "Defining Beauty: The Paterian Yeats." *International Yeats Studies*, Vol. 2, no. 1, 2017, pp. 24-45.

hyper-masculine heroes, but presented them with tragic irony.[124] According to Edwards, Yeats in his defence of Richard II "eulogised Wilde," (46) as Richard "shared Wilde's tragic destiny in being born in a masculine age antithetical to his own tender personality" (40).

In his essays about Wilde, Yeats associates Wilde's life experience with insult and melancholia. He connects Wilde to Christ as well as to a Lazarus-like figure who cries because Christ has healed him.[125] When everyone urged Wilde to run away from the insults, Yeats praised Wilde's strength in not running away: "he has resolved to stay to face it, to stand the music like Christ" (*Memoirs* 288). Wilde also identified himself with the figure of Christ in *De Profundis* (1897), where he mentions Christ's name more than sixty times and sees him as a contemplative artist like himself (Wilde 122).

After detailing how Wilde was humiliated in various towns and scorned by newspapers, Yeats highlights Wilde's obsession with a tale about Christ, which made a lasting impact on his imagination as well:

> One day he began, "I have been inventing a Christian heresy", and he told a detailed story, in the style of some early Father, of how Christ recovered after the Crucifixion, and escaping from the tomb, lived on for many years, the one man upon earth who knew the falsehood of Christianity. (*Memoirs* 136)

In the "The Catastrophe," Yeats yet again mentions Wilde's tale about Christ, which seemed to reflect Wilde's difficulties as a gay man, and which Wilde repeated to himself when he was in deep melancholia. In this story, Christ meets three people who are unhappy because he has healed them. Christ's meeting with an old man grasped Yeats's attention the most: "At last in the middle of the city He saw an old man crouching, weeping upon

[124] Interestingly, Garry Hynes' Druid Shakespeare in 2015 cast actor Aisling O'Sullivan as Henry V.

[125] Yeats tended to associate effeminate men with the figure of Christ. He made a comparison between Christ and the sexually transgressive Mohini Chatterjee as well, who was always described by men (including Wilde) as beautiful and attractive. See Rajbir Singh Judge's article "Dusky Countenances: Ambivalent Bodies and Desires in the Theosophical Society." *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2008, pp. 264-293.

the ground, and when He asked why he wept, the old man answered, 'Lord, I was dead and You raised me into life, what else can I do but weep?'" (*Memoirs* 286).

In his introduction to Wilde's *The Happy Prince*, Yeats recalls this tale once again and claims that it "adds something new to the imagination of the world" (*Prefaces* 150). Here Yeats more explicitly connects Wilde's life experience and melancholia with the one of the old man who weeps and tells Christ, "Lord, I was dead and you raised me into life, what else can I do but weep?" (*Prefaces* 150). This line can refer to the experiences of people who face social precarity and stigma, and whom the heteronormative world either wants to exclude completely or "heal" to include them in its repressive homogenising narrative. It implies that melancholia is part of this stigmatised life, which can cast a dark shadow even on the moments of greatest triumph: "This 'melancholy' arises from the unending, unfinishable mourning of the loss homosexuality causes to homosexuals, that is to say, the loss of heterosexual ways of life, ways that are refused and rejected (or that you are obliged to reject because they reject you)" (Eribon, *Insult* 37).

2.2 "Take but His love away": Queer Love and Broken Intimacies

Calvary is often interpreted in the context of the Easter Rising, but like most of Yeats's works, it offers several layers of meaning.[126] I focus here on the relationship between the three male characters in light of Wilde's legacy. I also look at Christ's performance of patriarchal authority which he assumes to hide his dreamy personality for which he was mocked. *Calvary* features an emotionally loaded quarrel and break-up between Christ and the disillusioned Lazarus and Judas, who rebel against Christ's and his invisible Father's authoritative efforts. Their quarrel is introduced by the image of a contemplative white heron who stares at himself and refuses to act in any way, which evokes the story of Narcissus. Yeats's subtle allusions to Narcissus in the subtext and to the raising of Lazarus can serve to legitimise the discourse about love between men. This episode of the Gospel of John (John 11-12) highlights the profound love and friendship between Christ

[126] The play was written in 1920, it was published in 1921, but it was never performed during Yeats's lifetime.

and Lazarus. The crowd tells Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill," (Coogan 167) and thus Christ stays with Lazarus to look after him. This episode portrays Christ in great despair, weeping because of the possibility of losing the man he loves so much, and when the crowd sees him weeping, they exclaim, "See how he loved him!" (168).

Moreover, Christ as the central character could serve to draw attention to men who are stigmatised in society for their difference. According to the song of Isaiah, Christ was "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him" (Wilde, *De Profundis* 121). For Wilde, Christ was also anti-authoritarian: "He would not hear of life being sacrificed to any system of thought or morals" (*De Profundis* 127). Portraying Lazarus as an unhappy rebel who turns against patriarchal authority—similar to Sylvia Plath's "Lady Lazarus"—could further reinforce the play's anti-authoritarian queer aesthetic.

Calvary presents several dramaturgical strategies which could be called queer, such as the questioning of fixed ideas of manhood, symbolic scenography, meta-commentary and a sense of masculinity entrapped in the wrong body or the self-doubting, sometimes unhappy masculinities (C. O'Brien 85-6). Moreover, there is a palpable tension between voices of exclusion and inclusion. On the one hand, the play features a vocabulary of exclusion and insult along with a performance of hyper-masculine authority, which work to ban emancipatory efforts. On the other hand, it presents recalcitrant, marginalised characters who claim freedom and visibility for themselves.

Calvary challenges our expectations on several levels: it disrupts, changes and fragments the linearity and orthodoxy of the biblical narrative to convey important messages about power, masculinity and difference. Alexandra Poulain in *Irish Drama, Modernity and the Passion Play* discusses in detail the ways in which Yeats goes against tradition in *Calvary*. For instance, she argues that Yeats distances himself from the traditional ritual of the Passion and neutralises its performative efficiency by forcing the Passion narrative

into the alien theatrical form of the Noh which it also challenges (56). Poulain's analysis outlines the two major interpretations of the characters: one that reads Judas, Lazarus, the Roman soldiers and the white heron as the marginalised subjects, who do not wish to ask anything from Christ and who claim freedom from the totalising narrative of the Rising. However, according to another reading, Christ appears as the marginalised subject, who cannot identify with the narrative of the Rising and the physical force it promotes (54-55).

In addition, the play inevitably invites another reading whereby Lazarus, Judas, Christ and the white heron are all marginalised by Christ's Father and the mocking crowd and soldiers, who represent the world which operates with the semblance of inclusion only to exclude those who do not wish to belong to its totalising narrative. Poulain contends that Yeats rewrote the Easter Rising as an ironic Passion play to show that the rebels' sacrifice "fails to include the whole nation within a single emancipatory narrative" (61). By stressing this lack of inclusion and the structures of exclusion, *Calvary* fosters a narrative of recognition for those who feel stigmatised. As Radio Éireann scriptwriter Warren O'Connell has observed, *Calvary* is "hymn of freedom of which Sartre or Beckett would have approved" (qtd. in Flannery 78).

Calvary, however, is also a hymn of dissidence and solitude: the refusal of inclusion and assimilation constitutes a seminal part of its queer dramaturgy. Sara Ahmed has explained that "[h]eteronormativity functions as a form of public comfort by allowing bodies to extend into spaces that have already taken their shape" (*Cultural Politics* 148). She calls this heterosexualisation which generates a feeling of discomfort and displacement in queer subjects whose bodies cannot sink into this space (148). *Calvary* is full of male bodies perceiving such discomfort: the resurrected Lazarus who is longing for death and solitude, the vulnerable Christ exposed to the mocking crowd, and the famished heron who cannot fulfil his "conventional" duty to take action and eat. Ahmed's main argument is that the maintenance of this feeling of discomfort is an indispensable part of rejecting the violence and

the traps of heteronormativity which either explicitly refuses queer subjects or assimilates them to create homonormativity (149).

Calvary is also about closetedness, and the use of the word "love" to describe the relationship between men has performative power. I do not suggest that these characters should be read as gay, but the play attempts to legitimise male tenderness and expressions of affection between men. For Sedgwick, "closetedness itself is a performance initiated as such by the speech act of a silence … in relation to the discourse that surrounds and differentially constitutes it" (*Epistemology* 3). Thus whenever the word "love" is used to describe the relationship between two men, it becomes a performative act which can function as a claim for the right to look:

> The right to look is not about seeing. It begins at a personal level with the look into someone's eyes to express friendship, solidarity, or love. … The right to look claims autonomy, not individualism or voyeurism, but the claim to a political subjectivity and collectivity. (Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look* 1)

This subjectivity can arrange the visible and the sayable, and here the expression of love between men becomes visible and sayable through the biblical framework and the implicit reference to Narcissus.

The quarrel between Christ, Lazarus and Judas is introduced by the image of a passive, contemplative white heron that should be fishing in the stream, yet he is not able to do anything but stare at his own image, "upon the glittering image of a heron" (*VPl* 781). He is so dumbfounded by his own image that he forgets to eat and drowns in the water. It is usually the white heron that causes confusion in readers and audiences, as the heron is the key symbol of the play and its meaning often depends on how we interpret the heron's role. This is an image which does not immediately make sense, which is one of the play's queer dramaturgical elements. If we consider the more hidden same-sex references and moments of the play, this heron could be read as a Narcissus-like figure, which not only implies self-love but love

of the same sex, especially because neither the heron nor Narcissus was aware that they were fascinated with their own reflections (Marcuse 167). Just like other symbolic, seemingly obscure figures in Yeats's plays such as the fairies, the white unicorn, the wind-like women of the Sidhe, this white heron can serve as a metaphor "for all that is marginal in human life," as Angela Bourke has remarked with regard to fairies in Irish literature (28). These symbolic creatures in Yeats's drama are queer in that they are all anti-reproductive forces, while reproduction is the foundational myth of (hetero)normativity. Like most of these symbolic figures, the heron only appears in the subtext, which indicates his symbolic, marginalised status in society: he is invisibly everywhere just like the supernatural creatures in Yeats's drama and the people belonging to marginalised subcultures within mainstream society.

The white heron thus evokes the story of Narcissus and resonates with Christ's experiences of loss in the play. According to Ovid, a young boy Ameinias fell in love with Narcissus, who, however, did nothing else but scorn the nymphs and the companies of young people. Hence Ameinias cursed him and said "May he himself fall in love with another, as we have done with him! May he too be unable to gain his loved one!" (92). In fact, what we call narcissism today characterised Narcissus before falling in love with his own reflection, when he still mocked people for their feelings and desires for him, but once he fell in love with his reflection—he did not know it was his own image—the other became more important to him than his own self.

Ovid's description of Narcissus features similar keywords as the ones we find in Yeats's play: the dream, the contemplation and the whiteness and motionlessness of Narcissus. And the solution to this complicated desire is death, transformation and then rebirth as a flower. Ovid writes that

> [w]hile [Narcissus] sought to quench his thirst, another thirst grew in him, and as he drank, he was enchanted by the beautiful reflection that he saw. He fell in love with an insubstantial hope, mistaking a mere shadow for a real body. Spellbound by his own self, he remained there motionless,

> with fixed gaze, like a statue carved from Parian marble. As he lay on the bank, he gazed at the twin stars that were his eyes, at his flowing locks, worthy of Bacchus or Apollo, his smooth cheeks, his ivory neck, his lovely face where a rosy flush stained the snowy whiteness of his complexion, admiring all the features for which he himself was admired. (92)

Like Narcissus, the white heron is also

> Motionless under the moon-beam,
> Up to his feathers in the stream;
> Although fish leap, the white heron
> Shivers in a dumbfounded dream.
> ……
> Although half famished he'll not dare
> Dip or do anything but stare
> Upon the glittering image of a heron,
> That now is lost and now is there.
> …….
> But that the full is shortly gone
> And after that is crescent moon,
> It's certain that the moon-crazed heron
> Would be but fishes' diet soon. (*VPl* 780-1)

The meta-commentary provided by the three Musicians regarding the white heron serves to express a discourse of exclusion, but it also challenges that discourse. One of the key phrases in *Calvary* is the repetition of "God has not died for the white heron" (*VPl* 780) three times at the beginning of the play and "God has not appeared to the birds" (*VPl* 787) at the end of the play after the crucifixion. On both occasions, it is uttered by the Second Musician, and the birds are constantly associated with the three male characters. Raymond Yeates' 1986 production of *Calvary* and *The Resurrection* stressed this connection as the three Musicians were played by

women wearing strange, bird-like costumes evoking the transvestites of *The Resurrection*: the production was infused with "insidious choral reminders of the bird world that mysteriously extends the thought of Lazarus and Judas" (Worth, *Calvary* and *The Resurrection*" 280). In his notes to *Calvary*, Yeats connects solitary, contemplative birds to the subjective age which includes the individual as opposed to the objective one which oppresses and excludes them: "such lonely birds as the heron, hawk, eagle, and swan, are the natural symbols of subjectivity, especially when floating upon the wind alone or alighting upon some pool or river" (*VPl* 789). The First and Third Musicians speak for Christ, the heron, Judas and Lazarus creating for them a countervisual claim to autonomy which refuses segregation and categorisation, and claims the right to existence (Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look* 4) The Second Musician, however, seems to represent the world which defines itself only by excluding others, such as heteronormativity and patriarchy. Thus the function of this repetitive phrase is to exclude the solitary white heron, the birds as well as Judas and Lazarus from the realm of normalcy, here represented by the invisible Father figure. It operates with the performative power of insult, whose aim is to mark the consciousness of those whom it excludes. It represent the visuality of authority which separates, segregates, classifies whom it visualises, counters desire and refuses all emancipatory efforts (Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look* 3). As a result, when Lazarus and Judas appear in the play, both terrify the crowds and represent the appearance of strangeness which has no place in the normative narrative.

The song for the folding and unfolding of the cloth at the end of the play continues this solitary bird imagery. The Second Musician insists on excluding them by claiming that "God has not appeared to the birds" (*VPl* 787), but the First and Third Musicians celebrate the lonely birds who have chosen their part and who are content with their savage hearts. The First Musician then portrays two swans flying next to each other, which in the context of the play's theme of strong male friendships, appears like an image of same-sex alliance: "why do they fling / White wing out white wing? / What can a swan need but a swan?" (*VPl* 788).

In literature, birds are often used as synonyms for queer people, effeminate gay men and forbidden desires, such as in Yeats's *The Land of Heart's Desire* or in Tennessee Williams's *Orpheus Descending* (see Haggerty 516). Edmund Dulac's painting *Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon as Medieval Saints* (1920) exemplifies the fusion of bird symbolism, Christianity and queerness. Ricketts and Shannon lived together all their life in a marriage-like relationship. In Dulac's painting, they are represented as monks, hinting at the homosociality of such all-male communities. The peacock feather can be seen as an implicit reference to the Victorian Aesthetic Movement whose members often used feathers and green carnations to express their homosexuality safely for other gay men (Al-Kadhi, "Hidden in plain sight") Interestingly, Julian Carter in *Queer Dance* mentions bird-women and swans as symbols of queer resistance and queer becoming, as "feathers do not lend themselves to conventional argumentative trajectories" (Carter 109).

Figure 9: *Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon as Medieval Saints* (1920) by Edmund Dulac. Source: tate.org.uk. Web. 29 Jan. 2021.

Figure 10: The Three Musicians in DancePlayers' *The Dreaming of the Bones* (2019) imitating the movement of birds. Photo taken from a video recording of the show provided by the director Melinda Szűts.

DancePlayers Company's 2019 production of *The Dreaming of the Bones* equally stressed the connection between birds and stigmatised subjectivities. Both the chorus (the three musicians) and the ghosts of Diarmuid and Dervorgilla (the stigmatised lovers excluded from the definition of Irishness) conveyed fragile, fluid, bird-like movements with their arms and heads, while the costumes included a half-

mask whose nose was reminiscent of beaks and the performers hair was styled to give an earthy, dishevelled impression.

In *Calvary*, Christ becomes both the violator and the victim. He represents patriarchal authority and poses as "all-powerful" (*VPl* 784). But masculinity is entrapped in the wrong body, as Christ fails to perform the role of conventional patriarchal authority. Poulain claims that Christ's "own power, a mere extension of his autocratic Father's, is the power of the Word with which he handles his creatures like mere puppets" (58-9). Christ tries to explain his authoritarianism with statements like "[m]y Father put all men into my hands" (*VPl* 784) and "I do my Father's will" (*VPl* 783). Instead of physical force, he uses emotional arguments to impose his power on Lazarus and Judas and make them feel uncomfortable. He emphasises how generous he has been to them, which operates like the "self-authorizing of authority" (Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look* 7) which makes certain forms of violence and insult look legal and benign.

Christ, however, is also contemplative, vulnerable and self-doubting. Before his quarrel with Lazarus, he "dreams His passion through" (*VPl* 781) and "[h]e stands amid a mocking crowd, / Heavily breathing" (*VPl* 781). He is the opposite of conventional images of masculinity, as "[h]e climbs up hither but as a dreamer climbs" (*VPl* 781) and he "wears away His strength" (*VPl* 781). Poulain contends that Christ's figure challenges the traditional Noh structure as well, in which Christ should be the *shite* (the one who acts), while here he is the passive *waki*, fulfilling the role of spectator: "he is the passive, visionary dreamer who conjures the shadows of the past onto the stage and hears their grievances" (*Irish Drama* 60). The word "mockery" and "mock" and "mockers" are mentioned only with reference to Christ, who has to go through this to obey his Father. In fact, Lazarus points out that Christ is performing a role that was forced on him: when Christ defends himself "I do my Father's will," (*VPl* 783) Lazarus reproaches him "[a]nd not your own" (*VPl* 783). This resonates with Mario Mieli's idea that stigmatised individuals sometimes internalise the figure of the oppressor in order to reject centuries of victimhood (131). This resembles not only

Christ's and Lazarus's behaviour but also Wilde's wish to resemble Nero and pose as a Carlylian hero.

Christ experiences exclusion and mockery due to his difference. His feelings are expressed by the First Musician:

> O, but the mockers' cry
> Makes my heart afraid,
> As though a flute of bone
> Taken from a heron's thigh,
> A heron crazed by the moon,
> Were cleverly, softly played. (*VPl* 781-2)

The fact that the three main characters can be read as both antagonists and protagonists also contributes to the non-hierarchical and more dialectical dramaturgical structure which is part of the play's queer dramaturgy. The crowd's mocking reaction to Lazarus, Judas and Christ positions all three characters in a lower dramaturgical position as the embodiments of strangeness and disruption. Yeats, however, gives voice to the stories and grievances of all three of them so that we can understand why Lazarus and Judas have to turn away from Christ, while at the same time sympathising with Christ's loss and situation.

Christ feels betrayed by the two men with whom he has shared a strong bond and who abandon him here because of his performance of masculine authority. Yet the two men's refusal to reciprocate his love increases Christ's longing for their companionship. As Ahmed explains:

> Even though love is a demand for reciprocity, it is also an emotion that lives with the failure of that demand often through an intensification of its affects (so, if you do not love me back, I may love you even more as the pain of that non-loving is a sign of what it means not to have this love). (*Cultural Politics* 130)

Ahmed draws attention to the intimate connection between lives that are "grievable" and lives that are "lovable" or "liveable" (130). But in *Calvary*, Christ—who is always represented as the figure most worthy of grievablity—is mocked and abandoned by everyone, which indicates his marginalised, "ungrievable" and thus "unlovable" position. Christ's despair at the loss of his companions yet again evokes the story of Narcissus who experienced a similar loss: "Whoever you are, come out to me! Oh boy beyond compare, why do you elude me? Where do you go, when I try to reach you? … Where are you fleeing? Cruel creature, stay, do not desert the one who loves you!" (Ovid 92-3).

Lazarus's grievance is that Christ "dragged [him] to the light" (*VPl* 782) despite his will to lay dead in "an old mountain cavern" (*VPl* 782). Lazarus laments that Christ "disturb[ed] that corner / Where [he] had thought [he] might lie safe for ever" (*VPl* 783):

> *Lazarus.* You took my death, give me your death instead.
> *Christ.* I gave you life.
> *Lazarus.* But death is what I ask.
> Alive I never could escape your love,
> And when I sickened towards my death I thought,
> "I'll to the desert, or chuckle in a corner,
> Mere ghost, a solitary thing." I died
> And saw no more until I saw you stand
> In the opening of the tomb; "Come out!" you called;
> You dragged me to the light as boys drag out
> A rabbit when they have dug its hole away;
> And now with all the shouting at your heels
> You travel towards the death I am denied. (*VPl* 782-3)

The way Lazarus describes Christ's "benign" violence here is evocative of the ways discourse forces queer people to escape from the safety of the closet only to categorise them as abnormal and prove the healthiness of normalcy. Dragging Lazarus to the light was an act of visualising him

despite his will, and as Mirzoeff explains, this kind of visualisation is "part of the labor of being analyzed" (Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look* 10). But Lazarus refuses this visualisation: he demands freedom, safety and solitude again among solitary birds, and commands Christ to take his controlling eyes off him. Interestingly, after Flannery's production of *Calvary*, an audience member asked MacLiammoir why he thought Lazarus was so unhappy about being brought back from the dead, and MacLiammoir answered with a question: "Madam, wouldn't you?" (qtd. in Flannery 79). This echoes Oscar Wilde's tale in which the old man turned to Christ: "Lord, I was dead and you raised me into life, what else can I do but weep?" (*Prefaces* 150). What is more, Christ's excessive love is also part of Lazarus's grievance: he wants to be dead to escape Christ's love. Heather Love considers such excessive, dissonant expressions of desire part of queer historical structures of feeling: "Queer desire is often figured as loving too much" (*Feeling Backward* 40).

The quarrel between Judas and Christ in *Calvary* is introduced by the First Musician who sings about the love between the two men:

> Take but His love away,
> Their love becomes a feather
> Of eagle, swan or gull,
> Or a drowned heron's feather
> Tossed hither and thither
> Upon the bitter spray
> And the moon at the full. (*VPl* 784)

Even though this passage can equally refer to the love of God, its dramaturgical position—the fact that it comes right after Lazarus leaves the stage and right before Judas appears—makes it an ambiguous reference that can imply the intimate bond between Christ, Lazarus and Judas. Judas wants to break away from the patriarchal authority represented by Christ and his Father: "I have betrayed you / Because you seemed all powerful. // And is there not one man / In the wide world that is not in your power?" (*VPl* 784). Judas continues: "I could not bear to think you had but to whistle / And I

must do; but after that I thought, / 'Whatever man betrays Him will be free'; And life grew bearable again" (*VPl* 785). Christ's performance of normative patriarchal authority also disturbs Judas. When Christ explains that his father put all men into his hands, Judas replies: "That was the very thought that drove me wild" (*VPl* 784), so both of his companions leave Christ because he is acting up and poses as an authority figure. He kisses Christ after which Christ is crucified, mocked and danced around by Roman soldiers/gamblers. Yet, as Worth explains in her review of Raymond Yeates' production, in that performance Judas expressed self-hatred for what he has done to Christ, thus suggesting feelings of love in Judas for the companion he has to betray in order to free himself: "A sudden awkward gesture of Judas, poking his head down, as in a spasm of self-hatred" ("*Calvary* and *The Resurrection*" 280).

Moreover, Yeats used *eros* as a political weapon and the crucifixion often equals to sexuality in his works. As Cullingford has explained, in the Free State years, "Yeats constructed the erotic in opposition to the Catholic sexual ethic, and to censorship" (*Gender* 8). The Roman soldiers dancing around the crucified body of Christ recalls Yeats's closing image of his essay "The Catastrophe," in which harlots began a mocking dance at the news of Wilde's condemnation: "When the verdict was announced the harlots in the streets outside danced upon the pavement" (*Memoirs* 291). Strikingly, in Yeates' production, the Roman soldiers were played by the same three women who embodied the three Musicians: so eventually Christ was danced around by bird-like androgynous figures who were not only wearing flowing kirtles to resemble birds but helmets and spears as well ("*Calvary* and *The Resurrection*" 281), thus reinforcing their gender ambiguity.

After these emotional quarrels, Christ's reaction is not rage or violence as it would be expected from an oppressive patriarchal authority, but sadness and a painful renunciation of the love of his two companions. Instead of blaming Judas or Lazarus, Christ's perception of his Father changes and he seems to realise that it was his Father who betrayed him by forcing on him this performance of masculine authority. While lying on the cross surrounded by

dancing men, he cries out: “My Father, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” (*VPl* 787).

While dancing around Christ’s crucified body, the Roman soldiers talk about quarrels and friendship between men and they are holding hands, which is a spectacle of male same-sex alliance. At the same time, it is also an ironic commentary on the main action, which mocks and insults Christ because he was unable to settle the quarrels and keep the love of the two men:

> In the dance
> We quarrel for a while, but settle it
> By throwing dice, and after that, being friends,
> Join hand to hand and wheel about the cross. (*VPl* 787)

The stage direction makes it clear that unlike Lazarus, Judas stays there and helps placing Christ’s body on the cross. Even though there are no details regarding the movements of the characters here, this scene must include some sort of physical contact between Christ’s body and Judas followed by the dancing gamblers holding hands.

Calvary also presents the contradictory dramaturgical impulses of the Promethean and the Orphic-Narcissistic worlds. Marcuse asserts that

> [t]he classical tradition associates Orpheus with the introduction of homosexuality. Like Narcissus, he rejects the normal Eros, not for an ascetic ideal, but for a fuller Eros. Like Narcissus, he protests against the repressive order of procreative sexuality. The Orphic and Narcissistic Eros is to the end the negation of this order—the Great Refusal. (171)

Marcuse explains that both Orpheus and Narcissus are akin to Dionysus—who, in the Orphic mythology is also often identified with Narcissus—and represent aestheticism and contemplation. Thus they become the exact antithesis of Prometheus: the voice which commands and represents patriarchal authority like the invisible Father/God figure in *Calvary*. In fact, Love has called attention to the importance of reading “the Orphic lament as

an effect of the particular losses suffered by queer historical subjects" (*Feeling Backward* 50). This Orphic lament and refusal is what characterises Lazarus's and Judas's behaviour towards Christ, as they refuse the Promethean totalising power performed by Christ upon his father's will.

Yeats's later play *The Resurrection* can enrich our interpretation of *Calvary*, as in the former one, the figure of Christ appears as a strangeness disturbing the world of reason and science represented by the Greek man. Christ is associated here with Dionysus and his worshippers, who consist of men dressed up as women dancing with one another in trance: "What a spectacle! In Alexandria a few men paint their lips vermilion. They imitate women that they may attain in worship a woman's self-abandonment" (*VPl* 915). The appearance of Christ at the end of the play forces the Greek man to confront this strangeness by touching Christ's body. Croft emphasises that in fact queerness arises mostly from the realm of the affection of touch, and stresses the great power of the press of bodies in queer performance, which has a potential to teach new ways of looking (14). The Greek man expects Christ to be disembodied, but he suddenly feels Christ's body and thus screams. This is "the shock of a man of science" (*VPl* 98) but also a kind of male homosexual panic which "became the normal condition of male heterosexual entitlement" (Sedgwick, *Epistemology* 185). Love refers to the importance of touch with regard to Christ who, after his resurrection in the Bible, instructs Mary Magdalene not to touch him (*Noli me tangere*), which Love sees as "an apt motto for queer historical experience" (*Feeling Backward* 40). Yet in this play Christ allows and even dares the Greek man to touch him. Even though Christ clearly belongs to what Love has called "a genealogy of untouched and untouchable figures, subjects constituted through refusal," (39) the climactic moment of the Greek man feeling the body of Christ serves to prove that such marginalised, untouchable subjects also exist. What is more, this scene introduces *eros* into the story of Christ's resurrection. Love continues that in fact such untouchable abject others become visible because of the violence that touched them (48), recalling Foucault's ideas in the "Lives of Infamous Men" where he argues that it is

the encounter with power that paradoxically makes marginalised subjectivities visible (161).

There was a Canadian production by director Christian Lapointe's Carte Blanche Theatre Company that experimented with the gender ambiguity of the figure of Christ. The production premiered in 2009 in Québec's Théâtre Péril and it reworked *Purgatory, Calvary* and *The Resurrection* as one play in which the character of Christ was played by a woman. The production took almost three hours, as Lapointe decided to present the three plays three times in a loop, which is important given that the number three is a recurring symbolic number in Yeats's drama.[127] Besides Lapointe's and Flannery's production, Raymond Yeates' double bill of *Calvary* and *The Resurrection* in September 1986 in the Peacock Theatre in Dublin also offered an androgynous portrayal of Christ. He was wearing a wreath made of flowers in stark contrast with the muscular Roman soldiers who were surrounding him, thus underscoring Christ's difference from conventional images of masculinity. As Worth explains in her review of the production, the Musicians were played by three women who were "strange, half-Japanese, half-Beckettian figures in long, rope-like wigs, wearing bleached layers of grey-white cloth with voluminous sleeves" ("*Calvary* and *The Resurrection*" 279).

Worth alludes to the gender ambiguity of these strange figures and how they mirrored other characters of the two plays: "Their not-quite human appearance in their stylised make-up and streaming, coarse-haired wigs, related them equally to the bird images of *Calvary* and the equivocal transvestites performing their Dionysiac rites in *The Resurrection*" ("*Calvary* and *The Resurrection*" 279). Worth thus discerned the affinity between the Yeats's bird symbolism and gender ambiguity, which is most palpable in *Calvary*. Worth continues that through these three women, Yeates brought Yeats's offstage transvestite dancers on stage, as they started

[127] See Aileen Ruane's PhD dissertation *Entre performativité et altérité : Les traductions québécoises du théâtre irlandais.* 2019. Université Laval. Chapter 5 of her PhD thesis looks at Christian Lapointe's rendition of Yeats's *Purgatory, Calvary* and *The Resurrection* in 2009 (pp. 316-395).

making dance movements as if acting out the worship of their savage god Dionysus (279). The production also emphasised the bond between the three men:

> Christ in blank white mask and blue robe faced Lazarus in skull mask and ragged pink, across the full distance of the stage, while Judas, in darker bronze colours, fell into the position of Christ's shadow as he reluctantly followed the direction written into the script: "He has been chosen to hold up the cross". (280)

Worth notes that in this production Lazarus and Judas "acquired real physical force … each seeking its own way of life" (280), which resonates with a recurring theme in queer literature: the impulse to escape from social structures and institutions that oppress them.

In *The Secret Rose* (1897), Yeats included a story "The Crucifixion of the Outcast" which appears like an early draft of *Calvary*. Its protagonist Cumhal is an artist and Yeats's description of him evokes Wilde: a man with a thin brown hair and pale face, who wore a short, parti-coloured doublet and pointed shoes. Just like in *Calvary*, the crucifixion provides the framework here: it happens in Cumhal's mind's eye at the beginning of the story and it becomes reality at the end. Cumhal sees the crosses and thinks that "just such another vagabond like himself was hanged on one of them" (*Collected Works in Verse and Prose* 7). The traces of violence towards people like him suddenly puts his body in discomfort, and he begins shivering and sweating at this vision. In search for a place to sleep, he is exiled into a cold out-house. When he raises his voice against his treatment, he is ignored, yet his response is not anger but art, and begins singing. The men of the town are enraged by the strange, effeminate singing man and they panic that he will spread this to the children too, thus they decide to silence him. The crosses are full, which indicates a mass murder of people these men found deviant in some way: "Then we must make another cross. If we do not make an end of him another will, for who can eat and sleep in peace when *men like him* are going about the world?" (*Collected Works in Verse and Prose* 13, my emphasis).

When they are ready to crucify him, they still continue his verbal humiliation by making it clear they are normal and respectable, while his kind is abnormal, and they compare him to the wind. Cumhal, however, speaks in his defence and expresses his pride in being like the wind: "'Friend,' answered the glee man, 'my soul is indeed like the wind, and it blows me to and fro, and up and down, a lid puts many things in my mind and out of my mind, and therefore am I called the Swift, Wild Horse" (*Collected Works in Verse and Prose* 15). The final image is very similar to that of *Calvary*: beggars, wolves and birds surround him ready to tear his body apart, but he calls them outcasts too and cries out at their betrayal just like Christ in *Calvary*: "'Outcasts,' he moaned, 'have you also turned against the outcast?'" (*Collected Works in Verse and Prose* 19).

Calvary can be interpreted in different ways, but considering the significant influence of Wilde's vicissitudes on Yeats, the play invites a criticism of the repressive power of normalcy which harms people who inhabit norms differently. Yeats's drama is, therefore, able to call the normative frame into question and create countervisuality for those who are left outside, thus making visible lives that are "exceeding the normative conditions of recognizability" (Butler, *Frames of War* 4).

3. Sadomasochism and Reversible Power in *The Cat and the Moon* (1926), *The King of the Great Clock Tower* (1935) and *A Full Moon in March* (1935)[128]

> "The most radical function of S/M is not primarily in its exposing the hypocritically denied centrality of erotically stimulating power plays in "normal" society; it lies rather in the shocking revelation that, for the sake of that stimulation, human beings may be willing to give up control over their environment" (Bersani, *Homos* 96).

This section explores the intersection between violence/power and sexual desire in three of Yeats's late plays *The Cat and the Moon* (1926), *The King*

[128] A version of this subchapter is going to be published in the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook of W. B. Yeats*, edited by Lauren Arrington and Matthew Campbell.

of the Great Clock Tower (1935) and *A Full Moon in March* (1935)[129] with a focus on sadomasochism[130] which Elizabeth Freeman has defined as "an erotic dialectic between two or more people that ostensibly focuses on the ritualized exchange of power" (238). I contend that through theatrical representations of sadomasochistic attachments based on reversible power, Yeats's late drama reveals the systemic failures of normative distributions of power, gender as well as sexual roles. I first discuss Yeats's unconventional relationship with sexuality and the importance of literary representations of sadomasochism. From there, I apply a dramaturgical approach, focusing on the potentials of the scripts to demonstrate that Yeats's plays convey crucial messages about power, the body and difference for contemporary audiences as well. The selected plays feature clashes between the unruly forces of seduction and the normative force of power. Their protagonists are defiant social outcasts (disabled beggars in *CM,* a Stroller in *KGCT* and a Swineherd in *FMM*) whose clash with power paradoxically earns them temporary visibility and authority.[131] These socially marginalised characters fail to meet normative standards of bodily being, which becomes an act of resistance, since the characters representing power (the Saint in *CM,* the King in *KGCT* and the Queen in *FMM*) are obsessed with bodily perfection. These master-slave relationships appear as sadomasochistic mostly due to their reversibility, which also renders them an element of excitement and playfulness.

3.1 Sexual Passion and Longing for Annihilation

Yeats's works are marked by unorthodox forms of sexual desire which derive largely from his life-long interest in the occult, the unavailability of Maud Gonne, and his close friendship with sexual and social radicals. In fact, Yeats experienced sadomasochistic practices through his involvement in the Golden Dawn in the 1890s: "[t]he Golden Dawn, like other occult societies, used its religious rites as displaced vehicles for the frustrated eroticism of its members: at his initiation into the 6/5 grade Yeats's hands

[129] I use the following abbreviations for the plays: *CM*, *KGCT* and *FMM*.
[130] I often refer to this term simply as SM.
[131] Michel Foucault discusses this phenomenon in his essay "Lives of Infamous Men" (161-2).

were tied behind his back, a chain was hung round his neck, he was bound to a cross, and he received the symbolic stigmata" (Cullingford, *Gender* 51-2). Yeats's early relationship with sexuality was indeed marked by frustration as well as feelings of shame and difference: he experienced anxiety, as he "lacked confidence in his masculinity, and being repeatedly refused weakened his self-esteem" (Cullingford, *Gender* 53).

His anxiety with sexual desire was transformed into an obsession and experimentation with sexuality by the 1920s and 1930s. *KGCT* and its revised version *FMM* were the products of Yeats's Steinach-operation in April 1934 which was "actually a simple vasectomy, intended to increase and contain the production of male hormone, thus arresting the aging process and restoring sexual vitality" (Foster, *Arch-Poet* 496). In these years, "[s]ex is an urgent, imperious presence, ultimately unsatisfying unless linked to some kind of revelation" (Foster, *Arch-Poet* 503). In 1936, Yeats and his lesbian friend Lady Dorothy Wellesley engaged in a game of joint ballad composition: the topics involved sex and sadomasochism too and their "collaboration on mildly salacious ballads acted as a kind of sexual displacement-activity" (Foster, *Arch-Poet* 546). What is more, "[a]s their friendship deepened, this shared currency became more explicit: he wrote for her a bawdy lyric about flagellation, never published" (Foster, *Arch-Poet* 546). Desire remained marked by restraint and absence for Yeats, who even reckoned that "the desire that is satisfied is not a great desire" (qtd. in Cullingford, *Gender* 43). Inevitably, the longing for annihilation became intertwined with sexual passion in Yeats's late drama:

> [a]ll our lives long, as da Vinci says, we long, thinking it is but the moon that we long [for], for our destruction, and how, when we meet [it] in the shape of a most fair woman, can we do less than leave all others for her? Do we not seek our dissolution upon her lips? (*Memoirs* 88)

Cullingford concludes that "[p]resumably the idea that death is preferable to consummation consoled the frustrated Yeats" (*Gender* 48).

The sadomasochistic aspects of Yeats's works have been mentioned by Cullingford and Poulain. In "Failed Collaboration," Poulain explored the mutual dependence, violence and the asymmetrical power distributions between the two beggars in *CM* (236-7). Poulain has emphasised the presence of a resistance in Yeats's plays related to queer versions of love and relationships, which "resists the play's drive towards unity" ("Failed Collaboration" 234). Literary and theatrical representations of such unruly relationships help reveal the often silenced histories of sexuality, race, nationalism and imperialism, as Freeman has noted (239). Poulain also pointed this out in *Irish Drama, Modernity and the Passion Play* arguing that the spectacle of the body in pain can help make visible the otherwise invisible violence imposed on marginalised individuals by various power structures (11). Since the focus of these studies is not explicitly sadomasochism, I explore this theme in more detail here to demonstrate the political importance of unorthodox representations of the body and power in Yeats's late drama.[132]

Yeats's move towards anti-naturalistic, total theatre techniques informed by his interest in Japanese Noh theatre from the early 1910s helped introduce pleasure and corporeality in his plays about power and violence. Eastern total theatre focuses on the body and fosters storytelling with a combination of dance, music, singing, gesture and movement. Yeats noted how the unusual mingling of singing and violence in *KGCT* and *FMM* outraged certain audience members: "I remember a famous war-correspondent saying in an aggressive voice as he left the hall, 'singing is a decadent art'" (*VPl* 1009). Physical theatre allows the "exploration of the more emotionally painful and suppressed aspects of the human psyche, including sadomasochistic sexuality and homoeroticism," (57) as Paul Allain and Jen Harvie have observed regarding the Butoh performances of Tatsumi Hijikata. In fact, Yeats's late drama is strikingly similar to what Kazuo Ohno and Hijikata named as Butoh in 1959: a dark style of performance

[132] For discussions of sadomasochism in Irish literature see, for instance, David Cotter's *James Joyce & the Perverse Ideal*. New York and London: Routledge, 2003 and Michael Patrick Lapointe's PhD dissertation *Between Irishmen: Queering Irish Literary and Cultural Nationalisms*. 2006. The University of British Columbia.

focusing on corporeality, combining Eastern (mostly Japanese) and Western theatrical conventions, including Jean Genet's and Antonin Artaud's theatre.[133]

As Yeats explained, *KGCT* is the first version of *FMM*: "a quite different verse play on the same theme, the woman dancing with a severed head" (CL *InteLex* 6143). By giving the Queen a speaking part and authority, Yeats rendered a more sadomasochistic undertone to *FMM* in which a woman and a Swineherd can both play powerful authorities. Yeats also delays the execution in *FMM* whereby the Queen lets the Swineherd provoke her for a long time as if enjoying it, whereas in *KGCT* the King kills the Stroller after his first acts of defiance. SM is thus more central to *FMM* by making the passive Queen of *KGCT* an authoritative matriarch, while *KGCT* is more about the tension between the authority of the King and two oppressed bodies who join forces against him in dance. These two plays also echo the infamously turbulent relationship between Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas in which "[t]he potential for intricate scenarios of sadomasochism was considerable" (Cave, "Wilde's Comedies" 213), and which is hinted at in Wilde's *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*.

By mingling power/violence and *eros*, Yeats's plays reveal both the potentials and vulnerabilities of the body as well as the injustices of historical power relations both within the Irish context and more globally. Yet such connections between the erotic and the violent are usually pathologised and condemned as ethically unacceptable (Newmahr 126). Moreover, those who exercise power do not confess to the excitement they derive from it (Bersani 87)—instead, emotions/pleasure/desire tend to get excluded from the realm of power. This repressive approach to the body characterised Irish nationalism's response to imperial oppression, ending up policing and sterilising sexual behaviours, especially those of women. Yet

[133] The three plays under discussion bear resemblance to Genet's famous play *The Maids* (*Les Bonnes*, 1947) which features sadomasochistic power games between three female characters (Solange, Claire and Madame), yet Genet wanted the female roles to be played by men.

Yeats's drama prioritises the body, and the often sadomasochistic undertones reveal the problems with historical distributions of power in society at large, interrogating the normative forces that urge (re)production by curing disabled bodies, policing women's bodies and oppressing the voices of social outcasts.

The reversibility of power central to SM can help raise awareness to the manipulative strategies of totalising political ideologies and institutions. Yet SM is still sexually marginalised and condemned as immoral both by normativity and cultural feminism (Jill Dolan 181), which tend to regard SM as a perpetuation of genocidal culture (Freeman 239) and a reinforcement of conventional sexual roles (Bersani 84). But Pat Califa rightly stresses that "the flesh should not be despised" (qtd. in Dolan 185), and the truth of the flesh can be represented mostly through pain (Dolan 185). As Geoff Mains notes, the practice and literary representations of SM can help people "be more aware of the elements of dominance and submission in all relationships" (qtd. in Bersani 84).

3.2 Erotic Power Games: Queer Temporalities and Switching

The Swineherd in *FMM* comes from the margins of society to challenge the Queen's authority and seduce power, which he begins by exclaiming: "I shall embrace body and cruelty, / Desiring both as though I had made both" (*VPl* 983). In the earlier version of the script, the Queen's reply was an acceptance of this erotic power game: "You cannot help but yield to such desire" (*VPl* 983). The Swineherd's lines identify the double-desire that marks all three plays: sexual desire and the desire for power over the other.

All three plays feature non-normative temporalities and authority figures who urge fast-paced action with pressing questions and commands. These authorities aspire to dominate the bodies of characters who represent a slower, unruly temporality aimed to produce only pleasure which is, however, worthless for power. As Freeman has observed, sexual deviants are often "seen as creatures whose very minds had gone temporally awry" (238) and who become "*analogies* for temporal catastrophe" (236). Freeman

thus defines SM "as the deployment of bodily sensations wherein the subject's 'normative timing' is denaturalized and deconstructed" (236).

In *CM*, the two beggars, especially the Lame Beggar, embody this non-normative time zone. The Blind Beggar is teasing the Lame Beggar because he is flighty and forgets things: "Nothing stays in my head, Blind Man" (*VPl* 797). Halberstam has stressed that forgetting advocates for "certain forms of erasure over memory precisely because memorialization has a tendency to tidy up disorderly histories (of slavery, the Holocaust, wars, etc.)" (*Queer Art* 15). Halberstam highlights that memory itself is a ritual of power, as it selects what is important, so forgetting becomes "a way of resisting the heroic and grand logics of recall and unleashes new forms of memory" (*Queer Art* 15). This forgetfulness appears in *FMM* as well where the Swineherd claims "my memory too is gone, / Because great solitudes have driven me mad" (*VPl* 981), thus countering the fast-paced action that the Queen demands and delaying his promised song until after his beheading.

The Lame Beggar also talks too much, which delays the two men reaching the Well of Saint Colman: "Get up. It's too much talk you have" (*VPl* 794). The two men move together on the stage: their bodies are constantly touching, as the Blind Beggar is carrying the Lame Beggar on his back. The Lame Beggar's forgetfulness and tardiness slow down the Blind Beggar and puts him in a fragmented slow time, as they have been together for forty years. Their shared temporal dissonance is interrupted by the Saint who speaks through the body of the First Musician and who stays invisible for most of the play. The Saint disrupts their slow and playful pace with his pressing question: "Will you be cured or will you be blessed?" (*VPl* 798). The Blind Man chooses to be cured thus accepting the homogenising attempt of the Saint which wants to cure disabled bodies to merge them into the realm of the able-bodied, as Poulain's article has insightfully explored: Yeats's drama "posits that normality is always desirable, and yearns to cure disabled bodies rather than accommodate them, physically and symbolically, within the space of social exchanges" ("Failed Collaboration"

236). When the Lame Beggar chooses to become blessed and as a reward gets cured as well, the Saint enjoins him with more questions, forcing him to express happiness with his new companion: “Are you happy?” (*VPl* 803), “Haven’t you got me for a friend?” (*VPl* 803), “Aren’t you blessed?” (*VPl* 804), “Aren’t you a miracle?” (*VPl* 804). These questions urge the Lame Beggar to make up his mind and begin dancing quickly, thus the flighty, slow and disabled Lame Beggar is not only cured, he is also manipulated into the fast-paced temporarily of the modern capitalist agenda which tolerates only production-oriented able bodies.

This pressing normative force appears in *KGCT* as well where the King cannot tolerate the defiant passivity of the Queen anymore, and urges her to speak and act. This is also a will to pin her down, suggesting that in her passivity, she is useless to society:

> A year ago you walked into this house,
> A year ago to-night. Though neither I
> Nor any man could tell your family,
> Country or name, *I put you on that throne*.
> And now before the assembled court, before
> Neighbours, attendants, courtiers, men-at-arms,
> *I ask your country, name and family,*
> *And not for the first time*. Why sit there
> Dumb as an image made of wood or metal,
> A screen between the living and the dead?
> All persons here assembled, and because
> They think that silence unendurable,
> Fix eyes upon you. (*VPl* 993, my emphasis)

The King is obsessed with time and presents his authoritarianism as benevolent, stressing that he saved her. Yet he expected action and transparency in exchange, which the Queen refuses to provide. She has mastery over her passivity which is a challenge to the authority of the King. When the Stroller arrives to claim a kiss and a dance from the Queen, the

King urges him in the same way: "What is your name?" (*VPl* 995). But the Stroller talks to him as his equal: "Send for the Queen" (*VPl* 995). While in *FMM*, the Swineherd's confidence is a source of excitement for the Queen, here it generates anger in the King: "He seems a most audacious brazen man, / Not caring what he speaks of, nor to whom, / Nor where he stands" (*VPl* 995). Hence he orders his death but puts the blame on the silent Queen:

> Stand where you are!
> Stand! All from the beginning has been lies,
> Extravagance and lies. Who is this man?
> Perhaps if you will speak, and speak the truth,
> I may not kill him. What? You will not speak?
> Take him, Captain of the Guard. (*VPl* 999)

The King thus blames the Queen's passive (sexual) behaviour for the murder of the Stroller, but the Queen claims agency over her body. What disturbs the King is that the two dissident characters refuse to show submission and act in a very different pace from what he demands. What matters to him is fast-paced action, hence the urging: "Do something, anything, I care not what / So that you move—but why those staring eyes?" (*VPl* 999).

In addition, what clashes here is the unruly temporality of seduction and the fast-paced modern temporality of production/power/truth. The ritual of seduction between the Stroller and the Queen destroys the King's mastery. Jean Baudrillard called power a "figure of anti-seduction *par excellence*" (*Seduction* 45), while "seduction has no power of its own, only that of annulling the power of production" (15). For power, seduction is useless as it does not produce anything, yet paradoxically it does produce something that destabilises power itself. When the Queen speaks her first line, the King believes she finally obeys, thus he demands her to sing a song of joy. However, her song draws attention to the patriarchal oppression of women's bodies: "He longs to kill / My body, until / That sudden shudder / And limb lie still" (*VPl* 1001). Since the King does not know what she means, he

suspects mockery: “I do not know the meaning of those words / That have a scornful sound” (*VPl* 1001). He attempts once more to enforce action from the Queen, demanding her to mock the Stroller’s severed head through dance:

> Dance, turn him into mockery with a dance!
> No woman ever had a better thought.
> All here applaud that thought. Dance, woman, dance!
> Neither so red, nor white, nor full in the breast,
> That’s what he said! Dance, give him scorn for scorn,
> Display your beauty, spread your peacock tail. (*VPl* 1001)

For the King, dance has nothing to do with pleasure: it is a tool which power can use to shame people. He wants the Queen to dance with a specific political purpose—that is the only way dance (and the arts) makes sense to power. What happens here is similar to what Poulain has discerned with regard to *CM* where queer disabled bodies challenge the production-oriented ethos of bourgeois capitalism through “an alternative paradigm of failed collaboration as unproductive, highly successful *jouissance*” (“Failed Collaboration” 239).

The Queen is not only unproductive in the eyes of power, but defies conventional attractiveness, which, however, the Stroller applauds. As Newmahr has explained, “particular SM-related traits often trump conventional attractiveness as social currency” (26). The Stroller had an image of the Queen’s beauty, yet when he sees her, he notes: “Neither so red, nor white, nor full in the breast / As I had thought. What matter for all that / So long as I proclaim her everywhere / Most beautiful!” (997). This implies a more fluid approach to femininity, but the King regards her as his possession, so he is deeply insulted by the remark and uses it as a justification for his murder of the defiant Stroller.

Instead of helping the King, the Queen joins forces with the Stroller to scorn him. The Queen’s dance with the head upon her shoulder confuses the

King's reality, especially when the First Attendant begins singing as Head. The gesture of placing the head on her shoulder draws a parallel between the Stroller's murder and the abuse of the Queen's body by the King. The Queen transforms here from a woman quietly accepting her oppressed status to a woman who claims the right to autonomy, which resonates with Farr's encouraging word: "all the women of many opinions are alike rousing themselves from their former deadly attitude of quiescent acceptance" (*Modern Woman*). Similar to the Queen's song, the Head sings about people who feel they have prerogative over certain bodies: "All those living wretches crave / Prerogatives of the dead that have / Sprung heroic from the grave" (*VPl* 1003). When the Queen kisses the Head, the King threatens with physical violence disturbed by this strange attachment, yet the ritual of seduction is so powerful that he kneels instead of striking, "laying the sword at her feet" (*VPl* 1003). The Queen thus employs the strategy demanded by the King, but turns it against him to evade power's traps.

The three plays' SM dynamics is also maintained by various moments of surprise, the possibility of the oppressed to turn against the oppressors: "the unexpected element, the *switching* … which takes the participants by surprise" (Hart qtd. in Freeman 247). Bersani also stresses that the most radical trait of SM is the prioritisation of pleasure over power: "the shocking revelation that, for the sake of that stimulation, human beings may be willing to give up control over their environment" (95).

The asymmetrical attachments of the three plays appear symmetrical within their asymmetry, as the characters always tease each other mutually, and this reciprocity of insult and manipulation is a sign of mutual attraction towards the other's body. Moreover, SM power relations in Yeats's late drama forge a clash between what Baudrillard called artificial power and real power. Artificial power is associated with seduction for Baudrillard, which "is stronger than power because it is reversible and mortal, while power, like value, seeks to be irreversible, cumulative and immortal" (*Seduction* 46). SM is therefore pure theatre which reveals that power too is reversible and that there is no difference "between those who enforce power

and those who submit to it" (*Forget Foucault* 51). In fact, reversibility connects masochism and sadism: "When the masochist gets his partner to humiliate him, it is ultimately the partner who is being humiliated by the masochist. From this perspective, masochism can be seen as a subtle form of sadism in which the roles are ironically inverted" (Benvenuto 61).

CM and *FMM* display unexpected yet delectable changes of agency. In the Blind Beggar-Lame Beggar relationship, the Blind Beggar appears as the domineering party even though he occupies the bottom position carrying his partner on his back. Yet the Lame Beggar talks back and steals from his companion, thus refusing submission. When the Blind Beggar accuses him of leading him into the wrong direction, the Lame Beggar retorts: "I have brought you the right way, but you are a lazy man, Blind Man, and you make very short strides" (*VPl* 793). Yet the Blind Beggar's resistance to his partner's mastery is also what revivifies their playful dialogue: "It's great daring you have, and how could I make a long stride and you on my back from the peep o' day?" (*VPl* 793). When the Lame Beggar starts talking back, their body position changes as the two men stand next to each other suggesting a more even distribution of mastery. When he gets up his companion's back again, he continues teasing the Blind Beggar who punishes him by pinching his leg: "But as I was saying, he being a lazy man—O, O, O, stop pinching the calf of my leg" (*VPl* 794).

The possibility of physical violence that can strike the Lame Beggar anytime appears, paradoxically, an exciting possibility: "If I speak out all that's in my mind you won't take a blow at me at all?" (*VPl* 795). Anytime the Lame Beggar contradicts him, he threatens him with his stick: "Is it contradicting me you are? Are you in reach of my arm? [*swinging stick*]" (7 *VPl* 98). The Lame Beggar's answers suggest an enjoyment of the anger raised in his partner, which he pushes further: "I'm not, Blind Man, you couldn't touch me at all; but as I was saying—" (*VPl* 798). Newmahr highlights the importance of such acts of pseudo-violence in SM dynamics: it means overwhelming the other by demonstrating that they could hurt them, but the participants are not necessarily fearful or tense (129). Thus the

two beggars play with the possibility of violence as a source of excitement. This comic element in Yeats, as Daniel Rhodes pointed out in a conference paper, helps readers confront difficult ethical issues ("'The Fragment of the Milky Way': Ectoplasm, Radium, and the Poetics of Materialization").

The Saint's abrupt interruption, however, ends their relationship, as he longs for a companion to experience the pleasure of domination. His voice makes both beggars kneel, as they feel they need to show submission to this disembodied voice of power. He offers a partnership proposal first to the Blind Beggar whereby he reveals his vulnerable side, pretending powerlessness: "I am saint and lonely. Will you become blessed and stay blind and we will be together always?" (*VPl* 798). When the Blind Beggar refuses him, the Saint turns directly to the Lame Beggar who accepts the companionship. The Lame Beggar aspires to become blessed so that his name would feature in a book, which is also a wish for authority. As Poulain has discerned, this proposal "mimes the diction of wedding vows" ("Failed Collaboration" 237) which is later consummated by the symbolic physical union of the Lame Beggar and the Saint.

In order to get full mastery over the Lame Beggar, the Saint pushes the beggars' relationship towards physical violence, which he enjoys as he starts laughing: "there he is in front of you and he laughing [*sic*] out of his wrinkled face" (*VPl* 800). When he is cured, the Blind Beggar catches sight of the skin of his black sheep on the Lame Beggar's back, which proves that while he thought he had mastery over him, the Lame Beggar was deceiving him. The Lame Beggar's attitude also changes towards his former companion, as being blessed gives him a sense of power. Thus when the Blind Beggar accuses him of being flighty, he proudly replies: "I am that flighty. [*Cheering up.*] But am I not blessed and it's a sin to speak against the blessed?" (*VPl* 801). When the Blind Beggar threatens him "I shall know where to hit," (*VPl* 801) the Lame Beggar becomes more authoritarian and at the same time protective: "Don't lay a hand on me. Forty years we've been knocking about the roads together, and I wouldn't have you bring your soul to mortal peril" (*VPl* 802). But the Blind Beggar starts beating him,

which turns into a fragmented, clumsy dance which will be countered by the fast-paced dance of the Lame Beggar-Saint formation at the end of the play. While the two beggars accepted each other's respective bodily marginality for forty years, this normative force only tolerates the Lame Beggar as submissive and able-bodied. The Saint soon becomes domineering: he enjoins the Lame Beggar to bend down his back so that he could get up, then to bless the road they follow and to dance, thus obtaining full mastery. This relationship is no more about playful teasing, but the Saint's pleasure of domination over the Lame Beggar's body.

The two beggars' bond is mirrored in the subtextual holy man-old lecher relationship which refers to Edward Martyn's and George Moore's homosocial friendship, as Yeats explains in his notes to the play (*VPl* 808). The old lecher is "telling over all the sins he committed, or maybe never committed at all, and the man of Laban does be trying to head him off and quiet him down that he may quit telling them" (*VPl* 797). Yet the holy man derives a secret excitement from the old lecher's stories of sexual exploits: "He wouldn't have him different, no, not if he was to get all Ireland" (*VPl* 797). In the earlier 1924 version, Yeats included an explicit reference to the romantic nature of their relationship: "Did you ever know a holy man but had a wicked man for his comrade and his heart's darling?" (*VPl* 797). The equally subtextual relationship between the cat Minnaloushe and the moon—which opens and closes the play as a song—equally implies reversible mastery: the moon manipulates the movements of the cat whose eyes change according to the phases of the moon, yet the moon might also be willing to give up his mastery: "Maybe the moon may learn, / Tired of that courtly fashion, / A new dance turn" (*VPl* 794).

In *FMM*, the surprise element lies in the Swineherd's restraint and defiance: he refuses to praise the Queen's beauty, to sing when the Queen demands it, and rejects submission towards her authority. This restraint is part of the symbols of pain in SM relationships (Dolan 182) and it is able to generate excitement. The Queen is visibly bored at the beginning of the play: "Some man has come, some terrifying man, / For I have yawned and stretched

myself three times" (*VPl* 980). What differentiates her authority from *KGCT*'s patriarch is that for her pleasure is more important than truth and production. She merges the realm of power with pleasure: "I and my heart decide. We say that song is best that moves us most. No song has moved us yet" (*VPl* 981). Even though the Swineherd admits he comes from the margins of society and wonders if disabled people can succeed as well ("But what if some blind aged cripple sing / Better than wholesome men?" (*VPl* 981)), the Queen allows him to participate regardless of his background or bodily ability. Yet he speaks to the Queen as her equal and expresses his wish to obtain power: "And they say / The kingdom is added to the gift" (*VPl* 980). He uses imperative mode and enjoins the Queen to observe his body carefully: "Queen, look at me, look long at those foul rags, / At hair more foul and ragged than my rags; / Look on my scratched foul flesh" (*VPl* 981). This is also an attempt to direct power's attention to the truth of marginalised bodies manifested through the pain of the flesh, thus claiming visibility.

The Swineherd's attempt to dominate the conversation rages the Queen, hence she delivers a verbal power demonstration:

> Remember through what perils you have come;
> That I am crueller than solitude,
> Forest or beast. Some I have killed or maimed
> Because their singing put me in a rage,
> And some because they came at all. Men hold
> That woman's beauty is a kindly thing,
> But they that call me cruel speak the truth,
> Cruel as the Winter of Virginity.
> But for a reason I cannot guess
> I would not harm you. Go before I change.
> Why do you stand, your chin upon your breast? (*VPl* 982)

This passage also expresses the Queen's sympathy for the Swineherd: she is both authoritarian and nurturing. But instead of leaving, he depicts their marriage night, positing himself in a position of mastery: "What gives you

that strange confidence? What makes / You think that you can move my heart and me?" (*VPl* 982). The Swineherd's answer implies that the Queen has no power over him at all: "Because I look upon you without fear" (*VPl* 982). This confidence is both enraging and attractive for the Queen who, instead of sending him away, demands him to praise her in a song. Yet to her surprise, the man who has come to seduce her, still refuses to do so: "I tended swine, when I first heard your name. / I rolled among the dung of swine and laughed. / What do I know of beauty?" (*VPl* 983). She demands once again: "Sing the best / And you are not swineherd, but a king" (*VPl* 983). The Swineherd ignores both the Queen's body and the prospect of power, even though he claimed to come for both: "[*Snapping his fingers*] That for kingdoms!" (*VPl* 983). This is a "show of rejection" (Benvenuto 61) which is in fact "a *mise-en-scène* directed by the masochist himself" (61) aimed at provoking his own humiliation and through that the humiliation of the other, and this shared defeat of the other causes mutual pleasure as the final erotic dance scene demonstrates.

The more defiant the Swineherd becomes, the more attraction the Queen expresses towards him, so instead of punishing him, she promises him her own power: "I leave this corridor, this ancient house, / A famous throne, the reverence of servants—/ What do I gain?" (*VPl* 983). Both characters appear as masochists, longing to experience pain and humiliation. Even though the Queen leaves the throne which seems like an act of submission, she suddenly regains her mastery and threatens to punish him: "he came hither not to sing but to heap / Complexities of insult upon my head" (*VPl* 984). Even when he offers the expected song, he implies that whatever he sings about her beauty is nonsense: "But first my song—what nonsense shall I sing?" (*VPl* 984). The Swineherd continues to play with power, goes up stage and asks defiantly: "Why should I ask? / What do those features matter?" (*VPl* 984). With his confidence, defiance and free movement on stage, the Swineherd makes the Queen's power and space his own, ridiculing her authority. He laughs at her and brings up an enigmatic, violent story from the past about a woman who bathed in blood, "the blood begat" (*VPl* 985) and she conceived a child in her sleep. This makes the Queen

drop her veil which seems like an act of submission, but this is when the Swineherd is beheaded offstage. The Swineherd dares the Queen to hurt him, but with this, he punishes the Queen: "masochism is a form of protest against the other …. Masochism is actually a 'do it yourself' way of punishing the other" (Benvenuto 61). The Swineherd's mastery over his own passivity—his persistent disobedience—becomes a way of mastering authority, which the Queen also achieved in *KGCT*: "As in the case of an artist who creates a representation of his own failure, it is in the active representation of the masochist's abjection that his mastery prevails" (Benvenuto 64).

The surprise continues when the Swineherd's head begins to sing after the beheading. The Queen symbolically conveys authority to the Head by lifting it above her head while dancing, then laying it upon her throne and expressing regret for her "virgin cruelty" (*VPl* 987): "I did you wrong" (*VPl* 987). The sadomasochistic dynamics goes on, as the Queen enjoins the Head to sing specifically for her: "She is waiting for his song" (*VPl* 988), but what she receives is laughter as the Second Attendant laughs as Head. When the Head eventually sings, the song itself suggests a mixture of violence and desire: "Jill murdered Jack. / Jack had a hollow heart, for Jill / Had hung his heart on high" (*VPl* 988). The Queen starts dancing to the song, moving away from the Head, "alluring and refusing" (*VPl* 988) performing the SM dynamics of their relationship. She begins laughing and singing, emulating the Swineherd, but the Second Attendant does not understand how violence and love can coexist like this: "She is laughing. How can she laugh, / Loving the head?" (*VPl* 988). The final phase of the dance reads as a consummation of this violent relationship marked by restraint and attraction: she presses her lips to the lips of the head, her body shivers to very rapid drum taps, then the drum taps cease, and she sinks slowly down holding the head to her breast (*VPl* 989). What happens here is an eroticisation of unpleasant experiences—the insults of the Swineherd and the traumatic story he brought up before his death—which Benvenuto has identified as one of the main traits of masochism which "is also a strategy

for deriving pleasure from something that was once extremely unpleasant" (64).

The three plays I have discussed above demonstrate that the reversibility of normative distributions of power imbued with pleasure, violence and playfulness lie in the centre of Yeats's late drama. Such representations reveal the injustices behind conventional power roles and the manipulative strategies of normativity, capitalism and patriarchy which aim to oppress everyone who defies their power. Thanks to the element of playful reversibility, the plays portray power as fragile, constructed, performable and thus destroyable. In the words of Dolan, the importance and the power of sadomasochistic representations in theatre lies in its potential "to explode the old images of gender and sexuality and to test the limits of what can be seen" (186). By staging bodies that access the pleasures and truths of the flesh through pain, "theatre can present the explicit danger of the visual and … discomfort prompted by looking, forc[ing] people to define morality that keeps them from seeing" (Dolan 186). Yeats's drama achieves this by representing disturbing, erotic-violent bonds which would otherwise be denied visibility.

4. Conclusion

Yeats's drama therefore abounds in various "queer historical structures of feeling" (Love, *Feeling Backward* 24) including melancholia, unexplained anxiety, repressed desires, will to escape from social/familial roles established by normative society as well as loss, failure, displacement, and a will to reverse historical distributions of power. I limited my discussion to five plays in particular to be able to provide substantial contextual details, references to production history as well as detailed dramaturgical analyses.

I have focused on five plays from different periods of Yeats's life to demonstrate that the clash between the queer and the normative is not simply the result of the emerging fascist politics of early twentieth-century Europe. Instead, his drama interrogates more generally all kinds of homogenising social and political institutions such as nationalism, imperialism, the traditional family, patriarchy, the Church, Victorian

puritanism and authoritarianism. I often referred to Yeats's remarks and networks which can testify to his interest in various gender and sexual possibilities. However, we need to recognise that the queer potential of his drama could work even without considering biographical, cultural or historical contexts, as queerness (in all sense of the word) pervades his scripts both as explicit *homoeros* and more implicit queer structures of feeling. It is equally undeniable that this resistant queerness comes predominantly from Yeats's anxiety with normative sexuality as discussed at the beginning of this chapter as well as from his close relationship with feminists and historical queer subjects. We have seen that queerness often appears on the margins of Yeats's plays such as in the subtexts, in coded references and through frameworks such as ancient Greek mythology, the supernatural, over-sentimentalised familial relationships, friendships and brotherhood.

Physical theatre techniques, however, can make these more hidden queer aspects more palpable. For instance, the production of Yeats's *The Dreaming of the Bones* by DancePlayers Company in Galway in 2019 applied physical theatre techniques to demonstrate that Yeats's drama can speak to contemporary audiences.[134] The play dramatises the clash between the nationalist master-narrative and sexual desire in the context of Ireland's colonial past. The ghosts of Diarmuid/the Stranger (Jeremie Cry-Cooke) and Dervorgilla/the Young Girl (Kashi Cepeda) ask forgiveness for the sin they committed against the Irish nation when they prioritised their love over the Irish nation and as a result, "brought the Norman in" (*VPl* 773) and "sold their country into slavery" (*VPl* 773). More broadly speaking, the play is about two stigmatised Irish people whose desire is impossible and who ask for recognition from another Irishman: "If some one of their race forgave at last / Lip would be pressed on lip" (*VPl* 773). The show helped highlight

[134] For a detailed performance analysis see my review of the production entitled "Precarious Bodies and Physical Theater: A Review of DancePlayers' *The Dreaming of the Bones* by W. B. Yeats." *Wheels and Butterflies*, special issue of *International Yeats Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1, edited by Alexandra Poulain and Margaret Mills Harper, Clemson UP, 2021, pp. 89-99.

how Diarmuid and Dervorgilla tried to create visibility for themselves through the power of dance, gestures and storytelling.

The dissonance between the Young Man's and the ghosts' stage presence also visualised the contrast between the naturalistic theatre tradition represented by the Young Man and the new, more powerful anti-naturalistic way of theatre-making embodied by the two ghosts. Yeats thus interrogates the naturalistic style of drama which relies on the text, facial expressions, and fixed notions of identity, while anti-naturalistic theatre tells the story through a combination of dance, singing, music, gesture and movement, focuses on the body and operates with more fluid notions of identity. More interestingly, the ghosts' hands and bodies were close throughout the production but never touched. This suggests that the play speaks more broadly about and to those people who, for some reason, are not allowed to express their love, who cannot kiss or hold hands in public without being judged and condemned by society, and who are forced to feel ashamed of their story and desires. The show visualised the ghosts' despair through their body position and after all the rejection and insult they received, they left the stage smoothly, almost unnoticed. This is similar to Love's description of Pater's "disappearing subjects" (*Feeling Backward* 59): "so complete the world's refusal of [them] that [their] only response is to evanesce, to become transparent" (60). Building on the physical theatre elements of Yeats's plays can indeed highlight how much his drama is able to speak to the present by addressing the still very complex relationship between nationalism, sexual desire, alterity and the body.

I apply a similar methodology in my following chapter on D'Annunzio: I focus mostly on D'Annunzio's scripts though a dramaturgical approach with occasional references to his plays' production history and their cultural, historical and biographical contexts where it can contribute to my argument. In the chapter's conclusion, I refer briefly to a contemporary production to demonstrate how his play texts are used (on rare occasions) today. Such dramaturgical readings combined with contextual references reveal that Yeats's and D'Annunzio's plays are not mere historical objects tied to a certain period of time, interpretation or political ideology. Instead, they

convey important messages about oppressed individuals' clash with power in general, which makes their plays topical today. The queer structures of feeling in D'Annunzio's plays are similar to the ones I have discovered in Yeats's drama, as D'Annunzio was equally involved in significant queer and feminist cultural circles. However, in D'Annunzio, the clash between the queer and the normative appears in much more violent forms in predominantly female characters who aim to destroy patriarchal rule, tyrants and the cult of respectability that police women's behaviour, as I discuss in my following chapter.

Figure 11: The rejected lovers Diarmuid and Dervorgilla in DancePlayers' *The Dreaming of the Bones* (2019). Photo taken from a video recording of the show provided by the director Melinda Szűts.

CHAPTER 3

D'ANNUNZIO'S QUEER DRAMA

"And this is how 'the feminists' are made, those whom you refer to with a slight sarcastic smile: but the women who today are aspiring to raise their own awareness and their own mission in the family and in society, like many have done before through a myriad of challenges and hostility, and demand that the loftiness of ideals, the nobility of works, the equity of rights be acknowledged in them too, are not 'the feminists': they are the women, they are the true women, they are all the women"[135] (Duse, "La Duse parla del femminismo" qtd. in Mariani 132-3).

Introduction

The above quote is from an interview with Eleonora Duse from 1913 entitled "La Duse parla del femminismo" (Duse speaks about feminism), which I have already mentioned in Chapter 1. I will occasionally refer back to this interview, as it helps contextualise the feminist and queer facets of D'Annunzio's drama. Given their close relationship and Duse's lifelong impact on D'Annunzio's thinking and dramatic imagination, it is by no accident that his drama is critical of normative society, family and the institution of marriage. Just like for Duse, "the essence of D'Annunzio was liberty" (see "Intervista a Giordano Bruno Guerri" 00:02:43-00:02:47): he, in fact, hated the idea of fascism ("Intervista a Giordano Bruno Guerri" 00:02:13-00:02:17), supported women's rights, sexual freedom and divorce, and he had a fluid approach to sexuality and gender.[136] Indeed, most of his plays portray the institution of marriage, normative society and the

[135] "E così si creano «le femministe», quelle che voi chiamate con un lieve sorriso di sarcasmo, così: ma le donne che oggi aspirano, ad innalzare la propria coscienza e la propria missione nella famiglia e nella società, come molte, atraverso mille sforzi e mille ostilità hanno già fatto, e chiedono sia riconosciuta anche in esse l'elevatezza degli ideali, la nobilità delle opere, l'equità dei diritti, non sono le «femministe»: sono le donne, le vere donne, sono tutte le donne."

[136] For a detailed analysis of D'Annunzio's progressive views of women's rights and sexuality associated with his Fiume project see Chapter 1 and Guerri's book *Disobbedisco*: *Cinquecento giorni di rivoluzione. Fiume 1919-1920*. Milan: Mondadori, 2019.

conventional family as constructs that threaten the liberty of the individual. Hence his dissident protagonists always fight against the representatives of such oppressive institutions. Gabrielle Brandstetter highlights that D'Annunzio's interest in expressing the freedom of the body and free movement on stage came from the performances he had seen in Rome, Milan and in Paris after 1910s, including dances by Isadora Duncan, Loïe Fuller and Ruth St. Denis (101-109).[137]

Like Yeats, D'Annunzio was an unconventional thinker whose unorthodox approach to sexuality, the body and society went against the norms of his time, and displayed sexual exorbitancy. The types of *eros* that appear in his plays are almost exclusively desires that were considered outside of the law in his time: adultery, spiritual and carnal incest, homoerotic desires, and sadomasochistic attachments. As Ross has explained, any kind of non-reproductive or amoral desires were deemed as obscenity in early twentieth-century Italy, as these offended the national sentiment according to Article 339 of the 1889 Zanardelli Code and later Article 112 of the 1926 laws of Public Security ("La carezza incompiuta" 404-7). Foucault has also observed that such desires "were infringements of decrees which were just as sacred as those of marriage, and which had been established for governing the order of things and the plan of beings" (*History of Sexuality* 1: 38). Similar to Yeats, D'Annunzio prioritised the needs of the body, and considered it impossible to renounce sensuality which for him was the major source of inspiration (Guerri, *La mia vita carnale* 81). He thus put pleasure before anything else and he was interested in sadomasochistic sexual experiences: "Sap the body, exhaust it with orgy, with lack of sleep, then on this horrible exhaustion pour the mighty *wine*. Marvelous effects"[138] (qtd. in Guerri, *La mia vita carnale* 76). In fact, D'Annunzio's interest in a wide range of sexual experiences helped him escape tradition and norms: "Orgy

[137] To express women's emancipation and the freedom of the body on stage, D'Annunzio used shawls designed by Mariano Fortuny whose aim was to permit "the greatest possible freedom of movement" (Brandstetter 101), to suggest in-betweenness (105), allow "an individualized assertion of female identity" (109) and guarantee "singularity and individuality" (105) through the fabric itself. Duse, Duncan, St. Denis and the *Ballets Russes* dancers were all Fortuny shawl owners.

[138] "Fiaccate il corpo, esauritelo con l'orgia, con la mancanza del sonno, poi su questa orribile stanchezza versate il *vino* possente. Effetti meravigliosi."

liberates me from civilisation, tradition, customs, from everything that over the centuries have diminished mankind"[139] (qtd. in Guerri, *La mia vita carnale* 81). As Chomel has emphasised, sexual desire in D'Annunzio's plays acts as a catalyst to bring repressed feelings and resistance to the surface (157), and he inverts all kinds of relationships in search of a new equilibrium (153).

For D'Annunzio, sexual freedom was crucial. His conquest of Fiume in 1919 merged politics with pleasure, as it abounded in gay and bisexual adventures among D'Annunzio's legionaries (Guerri, *La mia vita carnale* 83). Guerri, however, makes sure to preserve D'Annunzio's heterosexual image in the reader's mind stating that even though he allowed and approved of such practices, he was never involved in them:

> It doesn't follow, therefore, that he was ever attracted to homosexuality, not even as an experiment, not even in a world like that of Fiume populated by men and women omnivorous of sex and regardless of the fact that he chose as his friend and close collaborator … the homosexual Guido Keller.[140] (*La mia vita carnale* 83)

In fact, it does not matter whether D'Annunzio was ever attracted to his own sex or not: his interest in same-sex relationships and unorthodox forms of desire is unquestionable, which is enough to make his drama queer in every sense of the word.

This chapter aims to demonstrate that similar to Yeats's plays, D'Annunzio's drama equally reveals the systemic failures of normativity, patriarchy and the family along with the violence these impose on marginalised individuals. Queer readings of his plays are necessary in order to make them more accessible and topical to contemporary and more international audiences with the help of gender. D'Annunzio's plays have never been interpreted outside of their historical contexts and production

[139] "L'orgia mi libera dalla civiltà, dalla tradizione, dal costume, da tutto quel che ne' secoli ha diminuito l'uomo."
[140] "Non risulta, infatti, che sia mai stato attratto dall'omosessualità, neppure per prova, neppure in un mondo come quello fiumano, popolato da donne e uomini onnivori di sesso, e benché si fosse scelto come amico e stretto collaboratore … l'omosessuale Guido Keller."

histories, even though plays are not mere historical objects tied to a certain period of time. His scripts can convey messages about difference and non-normative sexuality which D'Annunzio might not have even intended to reflect on, yet the scripts contain those potentials.

D'Annunzio scholarship still tends to discuss D'Annunzio's women with a focus on their immorality and perversity, avoiding in-depth analyses of the plays' interrogation of patriarchal structures and normative masculinity. Unlike most of the roles written for women around the turn of the century, D'Annunzio created extremely difficult roles for them to fit the expectations of the queer icons of the time including Sarah Bernhardt, Eleonora Duse, Emma and Irma Gramatica and Ida Rubinstein who were only interested in complex roles. Moreover, these women were all famous for their defiant temperament both in life and on stage, especially Bernhardt whose motto was "quand même" (despite everything, at every cost) for which D'Annunzio admired her (see Minnucci 9). The presence of these famous and infamous New Women in the first productions of his plays inevitably entailed that the plays engaged in contemporary debates about the sexually ambiguous New Women who always posed a threat to heterosexuality and the institution of marriage. The reviews cited in the respective subchapters will demonstrate that contemporary critics' reactions to D'Annunzio's provocative female characters reflected society's reaction to the emergence of New Women whom they condemned as bestial, immoral, perverse, loud, indecent and unrespectable—in short, enemies of the nation's stability, morality and bourgeois respectability and threats to heterosexuality.

Even though my approach here is dramaturgical, focusing on the queer potentials of the scripts, I begin each subchapter with references to the plays' contexts and production histories, relying on Giovanni Antonucci's notes to the plays and materials consulted in Il Vittoriale, which helps us see how D'Annunzio flirted with his audiences in ambiguous ways. The arrangement of the plays in the subchapters follows a thematic rather than a chronological order. In terms of queer theory, I build on mostly the same queer theorists and themes as in the previous chapter: Heather K. Love, Sara Ahmed, Michel Foucault, Leo Bersani, Didier Eribon, Nicholas Mirzoeff

and Sergio Benvenuto. The two chapters' similar structure helps underscore that what connects Yeats's and D'Annunzio's drama is their openness to a wide range of sexual and gender possibilities thanks to the artists they worked with. As a result, both of them advocated for a nationalism which would operate with fluid notions of national and sexual identity.

Following the structure of my chapter on Yeats, I have selected five plays from different periods of D'Annunzio's life in order to illustrate that recalcitrance towards power, normative sexuality and patriarchy runs through all his dramatic works. First, I look at *The Dead City* (La cittá morta, 1896) and *Fedra* (1909) whose characters suffer from the invisible violence of moral prudery and experience a constant sense of displacement and shame because their sexual desires—incestuous sentiments and same-sex desires—fall outside of the boundaries set up by society.[141]

Moving on, I provide a detailed queer reading of D'Annunzio's most (in)famous and subversive play *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien* (1911) which was written for Ida Rubinstein. *Le Martyre* introduces male and female *homoeros* into a religious narrative and highlights the sadomasochistic erotic power games between Christianity's famous martyr and Emperor Diocletian, framing Sebastian's longing for Christ as a sexual desire.

The third subchapter includes dramaturgical readings of *Francesca da Rimini* (1901) and *The Daughter of Iorio* (La figlia di Iorio, 1904), which confront the reader/audience with the oppressive force of the family/community. Similar to my discussion of Yeats's *LHD*, this subchapter explores the violence of family expectations which force happiness on its melancholy members who, however, wish to escape, as they cannot find their place within the traditional family. Even though I organised the selected plays according to the themes most central to them, there are some overlaps between the subchapters, as all plays include some amount of sadomasochism, lesbianism, male homoeroticism and criticism of patriarchy. In fact, as Cestaro has noted, criticism of patriarchy and

[141] Incest is present in Yeats's drama as well in his rewritings of Sophocles' *Oedipus King* as well as in *On Baile's Strand* where Cuchulain feels a sort of attraction for his own son when he still does not know he has a son. However, I have not covered this issue in Yeats, as this theme is not as prevalent in his plays as in D'Annunzio's drama.

patriarchal capitalism can be interpreted as a path towards sexual liberation (9). Quotations from the plays are taken from the Grandi Tascabili Edizioni Newton (1995) edition of D'Annunzio's plays consisting of three volumes edited and annotated by Giovanni Antonucci. In absence of published English edition of D'Annunzio's plays, I provide my own translations, and whenever I quote directly from the primary texts, I include the original Italian text in the footnotes.

It is also rarely underlined that D'Annunzio's protagonists are full of anxiety: they suffer from an unexplained existential *malaise* and melancholia connected to unconventional desires and societal judgements. Strikingly, these characters foreshadow D'Annunzio's unexplained melancholia that characterised his later years and which was pointed out by his friend Marguerite Radclyffe Hall whose melancholy invert protagonist Stephen in *The Well of Loneliness* impressed D'Annunzio: "Perhaps something of the 'outsider' in Stephen Gordon, the central protagonist, accorded with his own sense of isolation, of being divided from others by an exceptional nature and situation" (Ormrod 843). Belonging to a marginalised group in society due to her sexuality, Radclyffe Hall "always had an instinctive sympathy for the underdog, whether it was the poor, the oppressed, inverts, or social outcasts" (842). When their friendship began in 1934, D'Annunzio was already in his seventies and suffered from profound depression (843). Una Troubridge's recollections show that John (Radclyffe Hall) recurrently referred to D'Annunzio as her "unhappy friend" (qtd. in Ormrod 844), and wished that he "should be granted relief from this incubus of hopeless melancholy and isolation" (qtd. in Ormrod 844).

Besides D'Annunzio's strong-willed women, his unorthodox male characters deserve attention as well. His male protagonists often assume a submissive role or feel the pressure to act up and perform patriarchal authority, displaying how societal pressures push individuals towards violence. As Günsberg has explained: "Masculinity in D'Annunzio's plays is very much tied in with femininity" (141). D'Annunzio's strong, revengeful women and hesitant, failed men in fact help reveal the systemic failures of historical distributions of power, gender and sexual roles and

propose alternatives. The plays abound in authoritative characters who try to contain the unruly behaviour of individuals they label as immoral or sexually deviant. Therefore, power always clashes with desire/seduction in D'Annunzio with desire always succeeding in undermining power in some way. These authoritative characters are not always men, as another important clash in D'Annunzio's drama is between dissident, independent women and women who act as gatekeepers of patriarchy and the family. Hierarchy is central to these relationships, yet the intimate and confidential same-sex relationships of the scripts are marked by a sense of equality, tenderness and tolerance, both the sisterhood and the brotherhood bonds.

Despite these thematic overlaps between D'Annunzio's and Yeats's drama, the form and style of D'Annunzio's plays are very different from what Yeats created. Unlike Yeats's short one-act plays, D'Annunzio wrote long three- and five-act plays in archaic French and Italian which could take four to six hours to perform on stage including several long solo dance scenes. Moreover, while Yeats preferred smaller, intimate spaces for the production of his plays to create the effect of ritual, D'Annunzio aimed to achieve this ritualistic experience by presenting his plays on huge stages or open air ones where thousands of people could watch the show. Yet despite these differences, both playwrights' aim was to foster the storytelling through total theatre elements and a focus on the physicality of the body, hence music, singing, dance, gesture and movement play a central role in both D'Annunzio's and Yeats's drama. What is more, these total theatre elements are always assigned to dissident characters who use them as a weapon against power.

D'Annunzio's drama equally features an intersection between sexual desire and violence/death. Love has explained that "[t]he history of Western representation is littered with the corpses of gender and sexual deviants. Those who are directly identified with same-sex desire most often end up dead; if they manage to survive, it is on such compromised terms that it makes death seem attractive" (*Feeling Backward* 1). D'Annunzio's plays are indeed "littered" with the corpses of sexual deviants, yet what makes these negative representations affirmative is the way these characters take

their body and death in their hands, choosing death as a way of resisting the oppressive social environment that makes their life and desires impossible. It is not by accident that Love has warned against the dismissal of such dark representations of queer experiences and stressed the importance of countering stigma by incorporating it (*Feeling Backward* 2). Mentioning Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* as an example, Love explains that "[d]espite complaints about their toxicity, such tragic, tear-soaked accounts of same-sex desire compel readers in a way that brighter stories of liberation do not" (*Feeling Backward* 3). Situating unorthodox characters in a context of suffering and violence—thus in backward feelings—can "serve as an index to the ruined state of the social world" (Love, *Feeling Backward* 27) and draw more attention to the injustices of historical power distributions. Love continues that these feelings can register the authors' painful negotiation of the coming of modern homosexuality (4) regardless of their sexual orientation or intention and even if impossible love in D'Annunzio's play is often framed as an adulterous or stigmatised heterosexual romance.

1. Defying Moral Prudery: Incestuous Desires and Same-Sex Intimacies in *The Dead City* (1896) and *Fedra* (1909)

> "How can you expect that the woman who earns her own existence or the woman who has remained alone, surrounded by such a humiliating and ironic atmosphere, should not get offended and rebel! The laws don't make her equal to men …: and men do not only regard her as intellectually and physically inferior, but the more she becomes like a man in what she thinks and does, the more she will be diminished in their eyes"[142] (Duse, "La Duse parla del femminismo" qtd. in Mariani 131).

There is more than a decade between the composition of D'Annunzio's first play *The Dead City* and *Fedra*, but both plays demonstrate D'Annunzio's attempts to create a new kind of Italian theatre. He tried to distance himself

[142] "Come volete, dunque, che la donna, la quale guadagna la propria esistenza o che la donna che è rimasta sola, circondata da una tale atmosfera umiliante ed ironica, non si offenda, non si ribelli! Le leggi non le fanno eguale all'uomo [...]: e gli uomini non solo la ritengono da meno intellettualmente e fisicamente, ma tanto più l'abbassano nel livello della loro stima, quanto più loro si avvicina per quel che pensa e per quel che fa."

from the realist bourgeois drama of his time by introducing total theatre elements into the storytelling and by recreating a classical theatre set in modern times. *The Dead City* does not yet include dance, music and singing, but mingles the classical with the modern and centres on the needs and physical experiences of its characters. What is more, the two plays' lead female roles were shaped and embodied by the most charismatic women of the time. Anna in *The Dead City* was first played by Sarah Bernhardt in Paris on 21 January 1898 in Théâtre de la Renaissance. She was replaced by Eleonora Duse on 20 March 1901 in the Teatro Lirico di Milano, whose lifelong fight for women's emancipation considerably influenced D'Annunzio's drama. The same role was later played by Emma Gramatica as well (Antonucci 1: 50-1). Fedra's character was played by Emma Gramatica's sister Irma Gramatica in 1909 in Milan with no success. Emma Gramatica replaced Irma in 1914 in Milan's Teatro Lirico, and the character was played by Ida Rubinstein in 1923 in the Paris Opera and in 1926 in Rome's Teatro Costanzi (Antonucci 2: 271) under Rubinstein's own artistic direction. This means that the play's lead role was embodied by the most influential feminist actor-activists of the time, many of whom were queer. As Antonucci noted, *The Dead City*'s success was thanks mostly to Bernhardt and Duse, even though Duse's performance was interrupted by the audience for a moment, as the audience was perturbed by the lead male character's (Leonardo's) murder of his own sister and shouted "Murderer" (1: 51) at the actor during the performance. Emma Gramatica and Rubinstein turned *Fedra* into a success despite the audience's general hatred for the character of Fedra because of her incestuous desire and proud, domineering personality. In spite of the play's relative success, after the 1926 Italian production it was not staged again until 1988 when Massimo Castri's direction portrayed an autoerotic Fedra and male characters "of dubious virility"[143] (Antonucci 2: 272). Unlike *Fedra*, *The Dead City* was first written in French specifically for Bernhardt, as D'Annunzio wished to emulate Oscar Wilde who wrote *Salomé* in French for her (Antonucci 1: 53).

[143] "di dubbia virilità"

Paradoxically, collaboration with these independent New Women helped D'Annunzio get away with the often socially perturbing themes and characters of his plays in a bourgeois society for which morality and decency were the main points of reference. This does not mean, however, that he was not criticised—after the first production, for instance, a critic pointed out that "Fedra's moral insensibility is maybe the greatest defect of this play"[144] (qtd. in Granatella 699). Later in 1926, Silvio D'Amico from *La Tribuna* claimed that it was because of Fedra's character that D'Annunzio's play could not be regarded as a tragedy: "because we don't see spiritual conflict: she doesn't know any moral law; she shouts her fury without restraint, and the play's contrast is reduced to the clash between her bestial carnality and the chastity of the horse tamer Ippolito"[145] (qtd. in Granatella 756) What we can see here is attempts by reviewers to criminalise the powerful, assertive woman, deny her any heroic function and exalt the male character despite his moral faults, such as his violence against women, which the text clearly refers to with regard to Ippolito's and his father's past.

What saved the play in the 1920s, however, was Rubinstein's incomparable presence: "she appeared, in compensation, miraculously plastic and statuary"[146] (*Corriere d'Italia* qtd. in Granatella 740). *Il Corriere della Sera* highlighted "Rubinstein's charm" (qtd. in Granatella 743) and that "in her thin and supple body she seems to catch the thrill of the gloomiest desires"[147] (qtd. in Granatella 744). Critics were always in awe of the fluidity of Rubinstein's body which contributed to the storytelling in itself and helped reinforce the presence of unorthodox desires in the performances, appearing both as a source of fascination and disruption. Thanks to this plasticity of movements she was "proclaimed a worthy heir of Sarah Bernhardt"[148] (qtd. in Granatella 746). *Il Tevere* also noted with regard to *Fedra* in 1926 that "her silent elasticity, and those long thin hands,

[144] "L'insensibilità morale di Fedra è forse il difetto maggiore di quest'opera."
[145] "perché non vediamo conflitto spirituale: ella non sente nessuna legge morale, grida senza ritegni il suo furore, e il contrasto dell'opera si reduce al cozzo tra la sua imbestialita carnalità, e la 'castità' del domatore di cavalli Ippolito"
[146] "essa apparve, in compenso, mirabilmente plastica e statuaria."
[147] "nel corpo sottile e flessuoso pare di sorprendere il fremito delle passioni più fosche."
[148] "viene proclamata degna erede di Sarah Bernhardt."

that Greek but bent nose, make her an accomplished player. … [T]he pain, the desire, the hatred of which she is capable reside in her mortal body"[149] (qtd. in Granatella 753).

When D'Annunzio described *Fedra*, he claimed that "in the end there is always an ethical conflict that is not related to social taboos or laws but to transpersonal and divine ones"[150] (qtd. in Antonucci 2: 273). In this subchapter, however, I go against this claim and demonstrate that both plays are very much about disrupting social taboos. I start with a detailed analysis of the five-act play *The Dead City*, then I move on to the shorter three-act play *Fedra* to demonstrate how the clash between stigmatised sexual desires (incest and lesbianism) and moral prudery reveals the violence of patriarchal society towards women.

While in France Napoleon decriminalised incest in 1810 (Benvenuto xvi), in Italy it was considered as a crime, and thus a much more problematic thematic choice for the plays. Benvenuto points out that today incest is often portrayed in cinema in a positive light suggesting that "[y]ou can't rule others' hearts" (xvii), which is exactly what these two plays convey, even though in the end such controversial desires lead to death. In fact, as Benvenuto explains, classic psychoanalysis at the time saw a direct connection between incest and homosexuality, regarding the latter one as the result "of the mother's missed incestuous desire" (23):

> Many homosexual men experienced an overly strong attachment to the mother during the early oedipal relationship. Remaining "faithful" to her, they were unable to transfer sexual feelings to other women without experiencing incest fantasies and accompanying prohibitions—thus they changed their orientation from women to men. (Moore and Fine qtd. in Benvenuto 24)

[149] "la sua elasticità silenziosa, e quelle lunghe mani sottili, quel suo naso greco ma ricurvo, la rendono una giocatrice compiuta. … [I]l dolore, il desiderio, l'odio di cui ella è capace risiedono nel suo corpo mortale".
[150] "È quindi, in fondo sempre un conflitto etico ma non legato ai tabù e alle leggi sociali dell'uomo quanto piuttosto a quelle trans-personali e divine."

These are very outdated views today, but we need to bear in mind that until 1986, this association and such pathologisations of homosexuality were the dominant trends in psychoanalysis. Foucault has also observed that in our Western society since the eighteenth century, incest occupies a central place exactly because it posits the family as the obligatory focus of affects and love (*History of Sexuality* 1: 108). This makes sexuality "'incestuous' from the start" (108-9) for Foucault, and "it is constantly being solicited and refused; it is an object of obsession and attraction, a dreadful secret and an indispensable pivot" (109).

Both plays by D'Annunzio portray this controversial dichotomy of incestuous desire and thus engage in his time's debates about sexuality and the family. While the prohibition of incest became a universal principle for all societies, Foucault notes that only psychoanalysis "allowed people to express their incestuous desire in discourse" (*History of Sexuality* 1: 129): "At a time when incest was being hunted out as a conduct, psychoanalysis was busy revealing it as a desire and alleviating—for those who suffered from the desire—the severity which repressed it" (130). D'Annunzio's theatre, however, made masses of people engage in a debate about such controversial desires simply by confronting them with their existence.

What further connects the two plays is that their characters suffer from anxiety and melancholia because they love and desire outside of social norms, yet their anxiety remains unexplained for most of the plot creating a sense of repressed feelings. D'Annunzio himself noted with regard to *The Dead City* that music, dance and singing helped portray that his "characters were felt throbbing in the torrent of the wild forces, aching because of their contact with the world"[151] (qtd. in Antonucci 1: 52). Chomel has also explained that all characters are paralysed by contradictory feelings and frozen time (59).

Besides incest, *The Dead City* features lesbian intimacies as well, which, however, tend to remain unnoticed in scholarship, as even Chomel's feminist reading of the play avoids mentioning this theme despite its

[151] "le mie creature fossero sentite palpitare nel torrente delle forze selvagge, dolorare al contatto della terra".

prevalence. Even though Chomel stresses the importance of closeted desires in the play and the characters' wish for liberation (54), she does not allude to the unmissable homoerotic desires that equally contribute to the plot. Both female and male homoeroticism play an important part here, even though the play's conflict arises from non-normative heterosexual desires, as the blind Anna's husband Alessandro desires Anna's friend Bianca Maria, while Bianca Maria desires her brother Leonardo and vice versa. However, desire is equally palpable between Anna and Bianca and between Alessandro and Leonardo.

1.1 *The Dead City*

Figure 12: Eleonora Duse (Anna) and Ines Cristina Zacconi (Bianca Maria) in *The Dead City*, 1901. Photo purchased from Il Vittoriale degli Italiani.

Similar to Yeats's *LHD*, *The Dead City* begins by showing the lead female characters in the act of reading. The blind Anna is listening to her close friend Bianca Maria reading an excerpt from *Antigone* about *eros* which no one can avoid, portraying the two women in a relationship of intimacy and mutual dependency. Bianca Maria needs the emotional support of Anna, while Anna needs someone to read for her. As Anna phrases it, "You see what I cannot. And I see what you cannot"[152] (64). The quotation from *Antigone* is also a description of Bianca Maria's character and foreshadows her prohibited desire for her own brother Leonardo: "And I myself am already outside the laws"[153] (56). Bianca's anxiety becomes corporeal here, as she begins gasping and her hands are shaking. Even though the play's main conflict arises from Bianca's and Leonardo's incestuous desire for each other, this

[152] "Tu vedi quell che io non vedo. Io vedo quell che tu non vedi."
[153] "Ed io medesimo già fuor delle leggi"

scene is undeniably homoerotic. Bianca Maria keeps admiring Anna's beauty which is accompanied by touching each other's hair and hand, kissing each other on the mouth (81), and placing their head in one another's lap: "Your eyes are always beautiful and pure, Anna"[154] (56) and "How beautiful you are, Anna!"[155] (57), which Bianca Maria repeats several times, holding Anna's hands and speaking tenderly (60). Since this is embedded in an atmosphere of unexplained anxiety and sadness, initially it feels like as if the closeted desire was a lesbian one: "I understand, Anna. The hour that passes, in the light, gives sometimes an unbearable anxiety. It seems we are awaiting something that never happens. Nothing happens for a long time"[156] (57). Anna's anxiety also seems to be unexplained, as she admits to her nurse "I don't know: something holds me tight, like a knot; and then…I don't know what kind of fear…"[157] (60).

The posture of these women displays an almost constant physical intimacy in Act I, which I believe requires more scholarly attention, given the length of these scenes. It is not only Bianca who initiates this physical intimacy: Anna also reaches out to touch Bianca's face gently and weave her fingers in her hair, which has been identified as a frequent motif in lesbian representations. Contemporary queer cinema, for instance, abounds in moments of so-called "hairplay" between women, most famously *Reaching for the Moon* (2013), *Carol* (2015) and the series *Orange is the New Black* (2013-2019). Croft has explained the importance of small caresses and gestures between people of the same-sex that might be nonverbal expressions of desire: "The slide of a hand across a hipbone might be just as much as act of coming out as an announcement offered in words" (14). The question Croft poses is relevant in relation to the bond between Bianca and Anna and the subtle same-sex intimacies in D'Annunzio's drama in general: "How does queerness exist in the realm of affect and touch, and what then

[154] "E i vostri occhi sono pur sempre belli e puri, Anna"
[155] "Come siete bella, Anna!"
[156] "Io comprendo, Anna. Anche a me l'ora che passa, nella luce, dà qualche volta un'ansietà insostenibile. Sembra che noi attendiamo una cosa che non accade mai. Nulla accade, da lungo tempo."
[157] "Non lo so: qualche cosa che mi stringe, come un nodo; e poi...non so quale paura..."

might we find out about queerness through these pleasurable and complex bodily ways of knowing?" (14).

Figure 13: Eleonora Duse and Ines Cristina Zacconi in *The Dead City*, 1901. Archivio Eleonora Duse, Istituto per il Teatro e il Melodramma, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice.

When Bianca takes Anna's hands and kisses them, she asks: "Don't you feel my lips on your soul?"[158] (63). Anna's response reads like a confession of love and the stage direction states that she exclaims this "with a secret despair"[159] (63): "They are burning, Bianca Maria. And they weigh, as if all the richness of life were gathered in them. Ah, how tempting your lips must be! All the promises and all the persuasions must be in them"[160] (63). Strikingly, such physical intimacy appears only between women and between the two male characters Leonardo (Bianca's brother) and Alessandro (Anna's husband), never between members of the opposite sex. When Anna praises Bianca to Alessandro "Bianca Maria's hair is soft! Have you felt it, Alessandro? I would love to have them always among my fingers, like a spinner"[161] (66), Alessandro replies: "Oh, I have never dared to touch them"[162] (66). Bianca acts like the center of all forms of sexual desire in this play, which Anna articulates too: "All of us are attracted to her as if to a well of life. … Only she can extinguish our thirst"[163] (91). The constant reference to thirst equally implies the sexual desire between Anna and Bianca, which has to be satisfied or extinguished with water. Thus thirst reads like a longing for the fulfilment of these repressed desires, as the same

[158] "Non sentite le mie labbra su la vostra anima?"
[159] "con una segreta disperazione"
[160] "Bruciano, Bianca Maria. E pesano, quasi che in loro sia raccolta tutta la ricchezza della vita. Ah come debbono essere tentatrici le tue labbra! Tutte le promesse e tutte le persuasioni debbono essere in loro."
[161] "Sono morbidi i capelli di Bianca Maria! Hai tu sentito, Alessandro? Io vorrei averli fra le mie dita, come una filatrice."
[162] "Oh, io non ho osato di toccarli."
[163] "Tutti siamo attirati verso di lei come verso una sorgente di vita. … Ella sola estingue la nostra sete."

motif appears between Alessandro and Leonardo as well. As Rockney Jacobsen stated, "[h]unger, thirst, and sexual arousal are the three paradigmatic appetites" (624), and in the arts, the former two are often used as a symbol of sexual desire. Bianca always mitigates the thirst that the other characters complain about, which thus becomes a symbolic gesture of partly fulfilling their sexual desires for her. John Newman, for instance, has demonstrated the parallel between the eating/drinking domain and the emotional domain, interpreting hunger/thirst as a symbolic expression of desire for emotional stimulation ("Eating and Drinking as Sources of Metaphor in English" 218-9).

For Bianca, however, Anna represents this force of life and instead of longing for Leonardo, she keeps returning to Anna: "Anna, Anna, I don't want to leave you anymore, I don't want to part from you ever again! I would like to escape with you, go far away with you, remaining always at your side"[164] (97). Moreover, in Act IV, Anna tells Alessandro that she thought she was the source of Leonardo's anxiety (109), which implies the assumption that Leonardo was sad because of the intimate relationship between the two women which distracted Bianca's attention from him.

The intimacy between Alessandro and Leonardo is framed as a relationship of brotherhood, yet only these same-sex relationships read as honest in the play, while all the other ones are exaggerated with grandiose expressions of idealised love. The reason for Leonardo's growing anxiety is ambiguous: it can be due to the prohibited desire for his sister or because of the possibility of losing Alessandro if Alessandro loves Bianca. When Anna exclaims that Leonardo is very ill (67), Alessandro talks about him tenderly and expresses his worry about his health, recalling their past intimacy: "How many nights he stayed awake with me, reading aloud those great verses which exhausted him like shouts, too disproportionate for our human breath"[165] (67). When Leonardo enters, he is trembling. His anxiety prevents him from speaking and his first gesture is to touch Alessandro's shoulder (68), lamenting why

[164] "Anna, Anna, io non vorrei più lasciarvi, non vorrei distaccarmi da voi mai più! Vorrei fuggire con voi, vorrei andare con voi lontano, rimanere sempre al vostro fianco".
[165] "Quante notti egli ha vegliato con me, leggendo ad alta voce quei grandi versi che lo affaticavano come gridi, troppo smisurati per nostro respiro umano!"

Alessandro did not share with him that special vision he had just had: "I cannot tell, I cannot tell what I have seen. Ah you, you should have been there, Alessandro"[166] (68) Even though Anna and Bianca are present too, Leonardo speak only to Alessandro: "Ah, why weren't you there, by my side?"[167] (69). Leonardo then takes Alessandro's hand and they are about to leave together, both men ignoring Bianca's affection. Even in Act II, when Alessandro is alone with Bianca, he is looking for Leonardo:

> I am not less sad than you, Bianca Maria, for him. I was looking for him, hoping…For some days, when he is with me, he seems to be chased by the anxiety of revealing a secret to me. I then let silence fall on us; and wait, not less anxious than him. … And I don't dare to interrogate him, fearing that I will tear with force a word from him which his soul cannot yet tell me. And we suffer together, obscurely.[168] (74)

This secret refers to Leonardo's love for Bianca and this scene includes Alessandro's expression of love for Bianca. However, Alessandro's concern for Leonardo reads as if they were in a romantic relationship and it is much more honest than the expressions that follow. Alessandro literally invades Bianca with his love despite Bianca's lack of consent. She exclaims several times "Hush! Hush! You speak like a drunk…"[169] (77) and "Hush! Hush! I'm suffocating…"[170] (78) Yet Alessandro is not willing to stop: he continues to bombard her with exaggerated expressions of love, praising her beauty and claiming that they cannot live without each other. This not only reads as dishonest and out of the blue, but as a forced performance of heteronormative notions of love. Bianca, in fact, notices this performative element: "No, no…You are drunk with yourself. What you see in me is in

[166] "Non so dire, non so dire quel che io ho veduto. Ah tu, tu dovevi essere là, Alessandro!"
[167] "Ah, perché non eri là, al mio fianco?"
[168] "Io non sono meno triste di voi, Bianca Maria, per lui. Lo cercavo, sperando... Da qualche giorno, quando egli è meco, sembra di continuo incalzato dall'ansietà di rivelarmi un segreto. Io allora lascio cadere su noi il silenzio; e aspetto, non meno ansioso di lui. … E io non oso interrogarlo, temendo di strappargli a forza una parola che la sua anima non può ancóra dirmi. E noi soffriamo insieme, oscuramente."
[169] "Tacete! Tacete! Voi parlate come un ebro…"
[170] "Tacete! Tacete! Mi sento soffocare…"

your pupils. Your word creates from nothing the image that you want to love"[171] (79).

Scene IV, Act II reinforces the dishonesty of this previous scene of love, as Leonardo and Alessandro are alone and their diction and physical posture are highly ambiguous. They are looking at the mountains from the balcony and Leonardo touches his arms and a confidential dialogue follows in which Leonardo comes out to Alessandro about his prohibited desire. Initially, he is afraid of this confession, which hurts Alessandro:

> So I am not your soul's brother anymore? For how many days I have been waiting for you to speak, for you to confess your pain to me… Don't you trust me anymore? I am not that one for you who understands everything, to whom you can tell anything?[172] (85)

Leonardo's answer resembles a confession of love: "Yes, yes, Alessandro, you are always that person… What do I not owe you? What had I been, before I got to know you, before communicating with your soul? Who was I? I owe you everything: the revelation of life…You made me live from your flame"[173] (85) Alessandro wants him to confess his secret so much that he is standing close to him holding his hands firmly, which perturbs Leonardo as if the secret was related to his feelings for Alessandro: "Yes, I will speak, I will tell you… But do not look at me from so closely, don't hold my hands…Sit down there…Wait…wait until there is more shade…I will tell you…I need to tell you…to you…to you only…Horrible thing"[174] (86). Here Leonardo already judges himself for his incestuous desire and his anxiety derives from his assumption that everyone around him would judge

[171] "No, no… Voi siete ebro di voi medesimo. Quel che voi vedete in me è nelle vostre pupille. La vostra parola crea dal nulla l'immagine che voi volete amare."
[172] "Non sono più dunque il fratello della tua anima? Da tanti giorni aspetto, da tanti giorni aspetto che tu mi parli, che tu mi confessi la tua pena... Non hai più fede in me, dunque? Non sono più per te quello che comprende tutto, a cui tutto si può dire?"
[173] "Sì, Sì, Alessandro, tu sei sempre quello... Che cosa non ti debbo io? Che ero io, prima di conoscerti, prima di comunicare con la tua anima? che ero io? Tutto ti debbo: la rivelazione della vita... Tu mi hai fatto vivere della tua fiamma".
[174] "Sì, parlerò, ti dirò... Ma non mi guardare così da vicino, ma non mi tenere le mani... Siedi là... Aspetta... aspetta che ci sia più ombra… Ti dirò… Bisogna che io ti dica… a te… a te solo… Orribile cosa!"

him as immoral. This fear of societal judgement eventually pushes him to commit violence against his own sister to kill the source of his prohibited desire.

This dialogue recalls Foucault's words in "Friendship as a Way of Life," where he discusses masculine monosexuality during World War I:

> One can wonder how, in these absurd and grotesque wars and infernal massacres, the men managed to hold on in spite of everything. Through some emotional fabric, no doubt. I don't mean that it was because they were each other's lovers that they continued to fight; but honor, courage, not losing face, sacrifice, leaving the trench with the captain—all that implied a very intense emotional tie. It's not to say: ''Ah, there you have homosexuality!'' I detest that kind of reasoning. But no doubt you have there one of the conditions, not the only one, that has permitted this infernal life. (139)

Eribon, however, points out that historians of homosexuality have agreed that intimate brotherhood bonds during these wartime experiences have contributed to the development of gay culture in Europe in the 1920s (*Insult* 330-1).

When Leonardo confesses the truth, Alessandro's sudden melancholia can be directed both at his feelings for Bianca and for Leonardo. What is more, the fact that Leonardo feels ashamed in front of Alessandro assumes a relationship of love and desire between the two men. Ahmed explains that shame is like an exposure before the other, but it "is only felt given that the subject is interested in the other; that is, that a prior love or desire for the other exists" (*Cultural Politics* 105). This means that shame is not exclusively a negative relation to the other: "shame is ambivalent" (105). In this case, Alessandro acts as the ideal other for Leonardo, whose opinion matters and whom Leonardo fears losing by revealing his secret: "In shame,

I expose myself that I am a failure through the gaze of an ideal other" (106) and "my shame confirms my love" (106).

The same ambiguity marks Leonardo's realisation that Alessandro loves his sister. The way he phrases his anger suggests that the main source of pain lies in Alessandro's feelings for Bianca: "He loves her, he loves her. Since when? How? What happened between them? ... Ah, God, God, everything in me is infected; everything gets contaminated…And this thirst that consumes me!"[175] (103). Even when he confronts Bianca, he wants to know whether Alessandro loves her and not vice versa: "And he…he told you that he loves you? When? When did he tell you? Answer!"[176] (104-5). It is also striking that the two men never show anger towards one another, and even when they are standing above Bianca's corpse in Act V, the two men continue their physical intimacy with Alessandro consoling the trembling Leonardo. Moreover, when Alessandro wants to leave him, he exclaims "taken by an invincible terror" (114): "No, no, don't go, don't leave me…Let's stay here, let's stay here for a while!"[177] (114). Chomel has noticed this surprising intimacy that remains between the two men even after both of them lose their love because of the other: "the presumed superman is only a man in pain, trembling, terrified, and Alessandro's fraternal compassion confirms this interpretation"[178] (64). Even though I agree with this idea, Leonardo should not be criticised by scholarship because he is not masculine in the conventional sense and therefore is never able to meet the standards of the virile heroic superman. Failing to meet this idea of masculinity draws attention to the pressure such notions put on men, forcing them to deny their feelings and perform a role. The male characters, however, should be criticised because of the way they abuse Anna's and Bianca's feelings and bodies, maintaining a patriarchal society (even if deeply homoerotic) which blames women even for their own repressed desires.

[175] "Egli l'ama, egli l'ama. Da quando? Come? Che è accaduto tra di loro?... Ah, mio Dio, mio Dio, tutto è infetto in me; tutto si contamina... E questa sete che mi divora!"
[176] "Ed egli... ti ha detto egli che t'ama? Quando? quando te l'ha detto? Rispondi!"
[177] "No, no, non andare, non mi lasciare...Rimaniamo qui, rimaniamo qui ancóra!"
[178] "il presunto superuomo è solamente un uomo dolorante, tremante, atterrito, e la pietà fraterna di Alessandro conferma questa interpretazione."

The two men never touch Bianca's body in the final act, but when Anna arrives, she rushes to her corpse in despair, lies on her, touching her body, face and hair gently as if protecting her from male abuse, and cries out "Ah!... I can see! I can see![179] (114). This moment of miracle signals the importance of Bianca for Anna who, even in her death, heals her soul and body. It is remarkable that Bianca's body is almost exclusively touched by Anna in the play not by the male characters whose approach she refuses. This final scene reveals that the most sincere and profound relationships of the play are, in fact, same-sex ones, whose repression and the forced heteronormative ideas of romance push the plot towards physical violence.

1.2 *Fedra*

Incest and lesbian undertones appear in D'Annunzio *Fedra* as well, D'Annunzio's final Italian verse tragedy written in 1909. It is often read as a drama about Fedra's conflict with her own self (Antonucci 2: 273). However, this approach risks assuming that the fault is only with Fedra and ends up pathologising and criminalising her, while at the same time ignoring the violence of the play's male characters and the repressive environment that determines her desperate actions. The play is set in Trezene and builds on Hellenistic mythology inspired by Euripides's and Seneca's *Fedra*, Racine's *Phèdre* and Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads* (Chomel 164). D'Annunzio's version recreates the story and puts an end to the victimisation of Fedra. She claims her own death for the sake of her own liberation from society which condemns her and treats her as a deviant outsider. Her death, however, appears ambiguous: it can be seen both as self-sacrifice and as murder, since Ippolito's (her stepson's) guardian goddess Artemis's arrow injures Fedra's body as a way of punishing her. Yet Chomel has stressed that this is "a sacrifice which is not committed for a man or in the name of a man, the founding hero of society, religion and tradition …. Fedra consciously sacrifices herself in the name of herself and only for herself, to create her own poetic myth"[180] (181-2). Moreover,

[179] "Ah!... Vedo! Vedo!"

[180] "Un sacrificio che non è compiuto per un uomo o in nome dell'uomo, l'eroe fondatore di società, religione e tradizione … Fedra consapevolmente si sacrifica in nome di se stessa e per sé soltanto, per creare il suo mito poetico."

Fedra's sacrifice points out the systemic failures of a society which treats stigmatised individuals in a way that they feel the only possible escape from judgement is death, hence the play's motto "Oh, liberating death"[181] (275).

In D'Annunzio's version, Fedra is in love with her stepson Ippolito, but when a Theban slave is sent as a gift for him, Fedra decides to kill her out of jealousy, then incites her husband Tèseo to kill Ippolito, accusing the stepson of harassing her. This version, however, stresses the violence of Tèseo and Ippolito towards women and introduces hints of lesbian sadomasochism into the relationship of Fedra and the Theban slave. Woodhouse has also noted that "[o]n the surface the plot conforms to tradition, but D'Annunzio introduces a new sensuality and new sadomasochistic elements" ("D'Annunzio's Theatre" 335). Even though everyone treats her as an immoral outsider, D'Annunzio's Fedra claims her own story and does not let herself be humiliated by society, hence she takes her own life and claims herself a winner before dying, thus defying the moral prudery which drives society. D'Annunzio also described his drama as a play which "excludes victimisation, moralism, and remorse"[182] (qtd. in Chomel 166). More importantly, Fedra's character illustrates how the oppressed begin acting like their oppressors to evade victimhood. Fedra's behaviour is a mixture of feelings of shame and inferiority because of her foreign (Cretan) background and because of her incestuous desire. Her behaviour displays a will to power as a revenge on a society that has tried to erase her.

The play begins with eight women on the stage: seven mothers are mourning their sons who died in battle and are waiting for a ship to bring their sons' unburied corpses back home, and their lamentation suggests the uselessness of such sacrifice. The nurse Gorgo calls for Fedra several times, yet she arrives with delay and upon her arrival she fails to console the mothers and calls them mad: "Why are you angry with us, Titànide [Fedra's other name]?"[183] (279). This rigidity and anger towards the mothers indicates Fedra's unease with motherhood and disguises her shame for her

[181] "O morte liberatrice"
[182] "esclude vittimismo, moralismo e rimorso."
[183] "Perché t'adiri contra noi, Titànide?"

incestuous feelings for her stepson. When a man Eurito brings news of her husband's victory, Fedra interrupts his narrative and begins controlling it with interrogating questions: "Man, do not tremble! Don't lose breath!"[184] (285). She is ruthless and commanding, which functions as a shield to protect herself from people who judge her and see her intensity as delirium. Her presence is highly corporeal: the state direction indicates that she makes abrupt often dance-like movements (288), and talks loudly, yet this is sometimes replaced with a "melodious sadness"[185] (287), often changing temperament from one extreme to the other. When she learns that a Theban woman will arrive as a gift for Ippolito, she makes a sudden jump in frenzy and wants to see her immediately: "I want to see her! I want to / see her! Where do you hide her? / Down there in the black ship?"[186] (294). In her frenzy, Fedra has a vision of Aphrodite and her imaginary dialogue with her reflects her sense of discomfort in society: she feels mocked by the goddess, but then submits to her and kneels, feeling persecuted by her: "Goddess, I beg you. Why / are you persecuting me?"[187] (296). Her discomfort becomes corporeal, as she begins shivering and wincing.

This visionary meeting is followed by Fedra's confrontation with the Theban slave Ipponòme, which introduces a sinister intimacy between the two women. Fedra applies the weapon of seduction here in order to kill her. Fedra leans above the prisoner and scrutinises her, promising that she will be kind to her (299). The seduction begins here, as Fedra claims: "You are beautiful!"[188] (299), as a result of which the thus far suspicious and terrified woman starts trusting her: "How beautiful, how / great you are, Queen / of the islands!"[189] (299), replies Ipponòme in awe. Ipponòme does not want to be the mistress of Ippolito, and asks Fedra how strong his yoke will be (299). Fedra calls her fragile and doubts if her bones could resist the first grasp of the hunter, yet Ipponòme claims she is strong (300). Fedra seems to be increasingly interested in her, asks her questions and seems to admire her

[184] "Uomo, non tremare! Non perdere respiro!"
[185] "con accenti di melodiosa tristezza"
[186] "Voglio vederla, voglio / vederla. Dove l'hai? / Giù nella nave nera?"
[187] "Dea, t'imploro. Perché / mi perséguiti?"
[188] "Sei bella!"
[189] "Come bella, come / grande sei tu, Regina / d'isole!"

self-description as a strong, fast and warrior-like woman with which she tries to impress Fedra. The stage direction indicates that Ipponòme is deluded by the ambiguous approach of Fedra (300). Fedra promises her to take her to an island before her marriage to Ippolito, and Ipponòme begs her to protect her (301). Even though Fedra promises to crown her, her behaviour starts changing and Fedra eventually stabs her.

After the cruelty of Act I, Act II focuses on the vulnerability of Fedra and the violence of Ippolito and Tèseo, as if providing the background for Fedra's cruelty. Fedra remains alone with Ippolito who confesses to her that something ails him but he does not know what exactly (331). In this moment of intimacy, Fedra takes his head in her hands and kisses him on the mouth (332). Even though he is only her stepson, his reaction to this scene is physical violence and verbal humiliation: "He opens his eyes, shakes his head; grabs the wrists of the woman and pushes her away"[190] (332). He also stigmatises her:

> Leave me alone.
> Let me leave so that I don't hear
> your insane cry anymore,
> so that you don't contaminate me
> with your breath, oh you infirm.[191] (334)

This is followed by Fedra's beautiful lines about her love for him, yet Ippolito's reaction is violence and a threat that he will humiliate her in front of his father: "he grabs the woman by the hair, who falls; he is about to hit her but he refrains"[192] (338).

Fedra's physical expression of her incestuous desire acts as a catalyst to bring patriarchal violence and misogyny to the surface. Chomel has emphasised Ippolito's exaggerated aggression towards Fedra:

---

[190] "Apre gli occhi, squassa il capo; afferra pei due polsi la donna, la disgiunge, da sé la strappa"
[191] "Lasciami. / Lascia ch'io parta, ch'io non oda più / il tuo grido insensato, / che più non mi contamini del tuo / alito, o inferma."
[192] "afferra per i capelli la donna che cade; e fa l'atto di colpirla ma si rattiene."

> Ippolito rejects her, insults her, shouts his despise on her and Fedra retorts accusing him of being like his father, the man who seduced and abandoned her sister Arianna, who raped her when she was a child, put her on his ship as a loot, the violent predator lacking morality who pushed to death Antelope, Ippolito's mother.[193] (174)

This scene thus unveils patriarchal abuse of women's bodies and criticises Ippolito's imitation of his father, which Fedra clearly sees as a forced performance. She continuously refers to Ippolito as a little, shy and tender boy, which disturbs him: "You talk to me as to a timid little boy"[194] (316) and later he cannot even free himself from Fedra's embrace, he needs another woman to help him. Ippolito's violent reaction appears even more exaggerated given that Fedra is not his real mother. Seeing his cruel rejection, Fedra begs him to kill her, as she fears society's and her husband's reaction that awaits her once Ippolito tells his father about the kiss.

When Tèseo arrives, Fedra's body position suggests vulnerability, hiding her face and repeating that she wants to die: "Shame keeps me from speaking"[195] (345). Fedra cannot overcome shame for a long time, it inhabits her body as she is crouching before her husband. As Ahmed has argued, "[t]he difficulty of moving beyond shame is a sign of the power of the normative" (*Cultural Politics* 107). Yet eventually Fedra manages to move beyond shame and accuses Ippolito of harassing her, which is true, as Ippolito was indeed dragging her by the hair and almost killed her just because she dared to confess her desire for him. In Act III, Ippolito is already dead, as Tèseo cursed his son and called upon Poseidon to avenge him, so Poseidon caused Ippolito's horse to rear, drop and attack his master, tearing out his innards. In the last act, everyone judges Fedra who, however, refuses to feel ashamed of her love, and stays next to Ippolito's corpse,

[193] "Ippolito la respinge, la insulta, le grida il suo disprezzo e Fedra ritorce accusandolo di essere come il padre, l'uomo che ha sedotto e abbandonato sua sorella Arianna, che ha rapito lei ancora bambina e l'ha caricata sulla sua nave come bottino di guerra, il predatore violento e senza moralità che ha spinto alla morte Antelope, madre di Ippolito."
[194] "Mi parli come a timido fanciullo."
[195] "La vergogna mi tien la bocca."

describing herself as someone who has subverted the ancient laws: "My name is ineffable like the name which subverts ancient laws to impose her arcane law"[196] (360).

This moment could be an example of Mirzoeff's idea of countervisuality which is "the assertion of the right to look, challenging the law that sustains visuality's authority in order to justify its own sense of 'right'" (*The Right to Look* 25). Fedra was stigmatised because of her perceived embodied difference—very much like Wilde who is Mirzoeff's primary example for the countervisual claim (152)—hence she repositioned her stigma as a heroic resistance to patriarchy and Ippolito's normative family. Even though according to Carlylian/fascist/nationalist heroism[197], a woman could never become a hero, here Fedra becomes what Mirzoeff would call "countervisual hero" (154) or "counter-hero" (146), very much like Sojourner Truth who represented herself as a hero of abolition in the United States, challenging "the gendering of heroism as inevitably masculine" (147).

Fedra achieves the impossible here: despite the pressure and the power of the normative world around her, which makes her the source of shame, she manages to detach herself from it, confirming the power of the non-normative. Fedra does not necessarily refuse shame here—instead, she embraces shame which "means embracing the 'non' rather than assimilating to the norm" (Ahmed, *Cultural Politics* 121). Love has also underscored the queerness of turning shame into a transformational energy with regard to Hall's invert character Stephen Gordon (*Feeling Backward* 106). Ahmed, however, warns against reducing shame or pride to queer feelings: "rather, the question is how to be affected by one's relation to, and departures from, the normative in a way that opens up different possibilities for living" (121). Before Fedra sacrifices herself, she claims that Ippolito can be hers in the realm where society does not reign and that she has won (361). She thus

[196] "Il mio nome è ineffabile come il nome di chi sovverte antiche leggi per pore una sua legge arcana."

[197] As I have indicated earlier, Carlyle's ideas of heroism became the major point of reference for fascist visuality: "Carlyle denied the very possibility of reform and emancipation" (Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look* 143) and he was Hitler's favourite author in the Berlin bunker (130).

proclaims "superiority to the forces which have destroyed her" (Woodhouse, "D'Annunzio's Theatre" 335). Chomel rightly argues that "Fedra appears in this tragedy as the champion of women, not in the name of Aphrodite, according to the traditional role, but in the name of the woman against the abuse and violence of the masculine world"[198] (174). Although it is highly problematic that Fedra kills an innocent young woman in the play, it can be argued that it saves Ipponòme from becoming Ippolito's slave for a lifetime—death liberates her from patriarchal abuse just as in Fedra's case.

Even though Act I presents Fedra as a ruthless, jealous *femme fatale*, Act II generates sympathy for her and gives her the opportunity to raise her voice against patriarchal abuse of women's bodies. As a result, by Act III, the reader can understand her reason for turning the two patriarchs against one another and choosing death as an escape. Most readings of this play focus on Fedra's cruelty and immorality, but why does her behaviour raise more outrage than the immorality of the male characters? The play clearly invites a criticism of patriarchy's hypocritical moral prudery which applies a double standard to women's sexual behaviour, judging them as immoral, while allowing men to commit any kind of violence against women.

2. A Queer Martyr: *Homoeros* and Sadomasochism in *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien* (1911)

> "This play puts on stage and distorts, under the most improper conditions, the story of one of our most glorious martyrs. The character of Saint Sebastian is taken in this play by a woman! A dancer!! And a Jewish dancer!!! which does not prevent D'Annunzio from claiming: 'We confirm on our part that this profoundly religious (!) work is the lyrical glorification of not only Christ's admirable athlete but of the entire Christian heroism'"[199] (*La Semaine Catholique* qtd. in Granatella 792).

[198] "Fedra si presenta in questa tragedia come il campione del genere femminile, non in nome di Afrodite, secondo il ruolo tradizionale, ma in nome della donna contro il sopruso e la violenza del mondo maschile."

[199] "Cette pièce doit mettre en scène et défigurer, dans les conditions les plus inconvenantes, l'histoire de l'un de nos plus glorieux martyrs. Le personnage de S. Sébastien est tenu dans cette pièce par une femme ! une danseuse !!! et une danseuse juive !!! Ce qui n'empêche pas M. D'Annunzio de dire : « Nous affirmons sur notre foi que

This section explores the sadomasochistic power games in *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien* (1911) which was written in French specifically for Ida Rubinstein. In "D'Annunzio's Theatre," Woodhouse has mentioned the sadomasochistic elements of D'Annunzio's plays, focusing on *Fedra*, applying this term to every scene which includes a sudden shift from love to violence or vice versa between characters (335). In my analysis, however, I call sadomasochistic those scenes which mingle love and cruelty in ambiguous ways and include a constant reversibility of power roles. Günsberg has also identified sadomasochistic elements in D'Annunzio's drama, investigating the alternation of submissive and dominant roles that D'Annunzio's male and female characters often assume (140). Significantly, Günsberg highlights reversibility, ritual, switching and the element of play as central to sadomasochistic relations in D'Annunzio. She stresses that some of D'Annunzio's female characters only pretend to assume the submissive position only to reject it afterwards: both "the feminine pretence of taking up these positions and the switching of positions that these female characters also undertake" (140) can "signal the ritualistic dynamic at work in sadomasochism itself as performance" (140).

As I have already pointed out in my Yeats chapter, what differentiates sadomasochism from a simple master-slave relationship is the playfulness and reversibility of power distributions that maintain an element of excitement and erotic longing. However, this does not imply that sadomasochistic relations are exempt from fascistic master-slave dynamics: they build on those historical and gendered power distributions but constantly challenge them by presenting those historically irreversible and desexualized relations as reversible and erotic. As Bersani has argued, sadomasochism "removes masters and slaves from economic and racial superstructures, thus confirming the eroticism of the master-slave configuration" (89). These erotic portrayals of master-slave relations draw attention to the fact that such asymmetrical power distributions still exist:

---

cette ouvre profondément religieuse (!) est la glorification lyrique, non seulement de l'athlète admirable du Christ, mais de tout l'héroïsme chrétien »."

such representations thus gesture "toward the possibility of encountering specific historical moments viscerally, thereby refusing these moments the closure of pastness" (Freeman 243). What sadomasochistic practices can also do, according to Foucault, is to allow the participants to forge new personal identities:

> The idea that S&M is related to a deep violence, that S&M practice is a way of liberating this violence, this aggression, is stupid. We know very well what all those people are doing is not aggressive; they are inventing new possibilities of pleasure with strange parts of their body—through the eroticization of the body. ("Sex" 165)

In sadomasochistic relations, power appears as fluid, reversible, mortal and deeply erotic, whereas power always presents itself as immortal, irreversible and exempt from sexual desire (see Baudrillard, *Seduction* 46) Yet the power game between characters in *Le Martyre* is reversible and works as "an erotic dialectic between two or more people that ostensibly focuses on the ritualized exchange of power" (Freeman 238). Even though sadomasochism is often seen a formation that places men on the dominant sadistic side, while situates women on the submissive, masochistic side, *Le Martyre* subverts this tradition by casting a woman as Sebastian whose masochism becomes a form mastery over the emperor Diocletian. As Benvenuto has defined it, "masochism is a form of protest against the other" (61), therefore masochism becomes a form of sadism in D'Annunzio in which "the roles are ironically inverted" (61).

The excerpt from *La Semaine Catholique* at the beginning of this subchapter illustrates the outraged reaction of French Catholics to the performance of D'Annunzio's Saint Sebastian by Rubinstein. Hartford has observed that before D'Annunzio's *Le Martyre* there was no queer Sebastian in literature, only in the visual arts (45). D'Annunzio therefore created the first queer Sebastian not only on the stage but in literature too by using the biblical framework and references to Greek and Roman gods associated with

homosexuality or bisexuality. Hartford is the first scholar who stresses that this play's queerness works on more than one level: "Its subtlety lies in its weaving of numerous queer signs of different order around Sebastian, associating them with him without actually ascribing them to him" (45-6). Moreover, Hartford discusses D'Annunzio's ambiguous motifs in the play which can be read both as signs of homoerotic content and as signs of a deeply religious piece, such as the smell of lilies referred to throughout the play. The lily is mentioned in the Bible and can be seen as a sign of Sebastian's purity, yet the lily was also the emblem of decadents associated with homosexuality: "Queering uncertainty here is reinforced by the always-existing possibility of viewing the lily simply as a token of Sebastian's purity, itself bolstered by his devotion to the Light of the World. Symbolically and religiously speaking, the result is deliberately, provocatively confusing and open: queer" (47). Sebastian's longing for Christ works in similarly ambiguous ways both as a sign of faith and an insatiable sexual desire, as this play turns the Passion of Christ into an erotic and homoerotic dance. Hartford also hints at the masochistic content of the play: it offers a spectacle of male passivity as Sebastian begs his archers to shoot him to death, crying "Encore, encore!" (47), as if enjoying the pain or having sexual intercourse with them.

My analysis moves along the lines of Hartford's ideas, but offers a more detailed dramaturgical analysis of the queer potentials of the script and the sadomasochistic erotic power games between Sebastian and Emperor Diocletian. Their relationship is built on a seemingly unchangeable hierarchy, yet seduction and desire eventually make power reversible. The play's ambiguous mysticism helped D'Annunzio combine eroticism with violence and pain in a context which could be read as both religious and profoundly homoerotic. As in the case of *Fedra*, what *Le Martyre* offended was public morality, hence *La Semaine Catholique* claimed that "[i]t is impossible not to see in this scandalous representation one of these attempts to corrupt the public spirit and morality which the judeo-masonic sect does

not cease to pursue by all means"[200] (qtd. in Granatella 712). It is also worth noting that parallel to this contempt for sexual and gender ambiguity, there was an obsession with androgyny in late nineteenth-century French culture, and artists often employed androgyny as a way of "destabilizing normative representations of masculinity" (Eribon, *Insult* 172). Eribon considers androgyny as one of the attempts "to assert a sexual 'difference' that ran against established norms, and there were attempts to claim that homosexuality in fact represented the most perfect realization of masculinity or of moral duty" (204). In fact, this is exactly what D'Annunzio suggested by queering a Christian martyr with the help of Rubinstein and situating the character in an undoubtedly homoerotic relationship with Diocletian.

2.1 Ida Rubinstein's *Travesti* Sebastian

The queer aspects of the script were accentuated by Rubinstein's performance in *Le Martyre*. After Bernhardt and Duse, D'Annunzio began working with Rubinstein, who was famous for her defiance and independence, and who became the main Sapphic icon of the time. *Le Martyre* was a decisive moment in Rubinstein's career too, as before that, she only played *femme fatale* characters, while the role of Saint Sebastian was a different, more androgynous *mise-en-scène* of gender identity (Haitzinger and Ostwald, "Ida Rubinstein as Saint Sébastien"). Haitzinger and Ostwald argue that in fact Rubinstein's established otherness in Parisian avant-garde helped link the elements of body, voice and eroticism to otherness in the production ("Ida Rubinstein as Saint Sébastien").

To prepare for the play, D'Annunzio retreated to a medieval-styled mansion Chalet Saint-Dominique, where Rubinstein visited him and shot arrows at pine trees: "St. Sebastian against the tree—a Daphne. The unity of beings—the boundaries between species abolished" (D'Annunzio qtd. Fleischer 49). Furthermore, he addressed Rubinstein as his "Brother" and Rubinstein signed her letters to him in the masculine as "Le Saint". What is more, D'Annunzio's villa at Lake Garda is full of images and sculptures of Saint

[200] "Il est impossible de ne pas voir dans cette représentation scandaleuse l'une de ces entreprises de corruption de l'esprit publique et de la moralité publique que la secte judéo-maçonnique ne cesse de poursuivre par tous les moyens."

Sebastian. His Mausoleum features a statue of Saint Sebastian, while the Funerary Room contains a painting portraying San Francesco embracing a naked D'Annunzio, and a long corridor is decorated with images of the Passion. D'Annunzio was thus not afraid of situating himself in homoerotic contexts: when he was nineteen, Olga Ossani saw him naked leaning to a tree in Villa Medici and she exclaimed: "San Sebastiano!" (qtd. in Chomel 191). Later the same scene was repeated between him and Rubinstein but in reversed roles: "seeing the marvelous naked legs closely, I throw myself on the ground – and I kiss the feet … and murmur, as if in a dream: Saint Sebastian?"[201] (qtd. in Chomel 191). The production history of *Le Martyre* with Rubinstein as Sebastian demonstrates the queerness of this piece, as the boundaries between on- and offstage became obliterated for Rubinstein and D'Annunzio, which, according to Halberstam, is a characteristic of queer dance and it happened in 1913 as well when Nijinsky performed *The Rite of Spring* in Paris (*Wild Things* 53). These examples also illustrate that a performance can be made queer by the contexts in which it is created and by the actors who perform it. *The Rite of Spring* emerged from the same cultural contexts as *Le Martyre*, hence Halberstam's idea that the queerness of *The Rite of Spring* "should be considered then alongside the emergent 'gay' communities out of which both the ballet and the music emerged" (58) is relevant for *Le Martyre* as well. While *The Rite of Spring* was the culmination of the intimate collaboration between three queer men (Diaghilev, Nijinsky, Stravinsky), *Le Martyre* was the endresult of the queer

Figure 14: *San Francesco e il lebbroso* by Guido Cadorin, 1929, depicting Francesco embracing D'Annunzio. Source: literary.it. Web. 29 Jan. 2021.

[201] "vedendo da vicino le meravigliose gambe nude, mi getto a terra – e bacio i piedi, salgo su pel fusolo alle ginocchia … e mormoro, come trasognato: Saint Sébastien?"

relationship between Rubinstein, the painter Romaine Brooks and D'Annunzio, and D'Annunzio's close friendship with composer Claude Debussy, costume designer Léon Bakst and choreographer Michel Fokine.

The 1911 production of *Le Martyre* in Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris was part of D'Annunzio's attempt to realise his dream theatre: namely a Théâtre de Fête which would have been built in the Esplanade des Invalides in Paris with the help of Mariano Fortuny and Countess Béarn's private theatre (Fleischer 25). This project would have included Isadora Duncan's dance company which was supposed to perform a piece before the premiere of *Le Martyre* (Fleischer 25). As Chomel explains, the play was informed by the internationalism of Paris, the avant-garde and the liberating quality of the French language compared to D'Annunzio's mother tongue (183). What is more, Rubinstein did not only become the first female Christian hero on the stage but she also controlled the production, as she financed every aspect of the performance. The play was written in French between 1910 and 1911 for Rubinstein and was presented to a bourgeois public. The incidental music was written by Claude Debussy for orchestra and chorus with solo vocal parts, and the performance involved 150 musicians, 80 chorus members and 70 actors (Chomel 184). As Antonucci observes, the play was partly the product of D'Annunzio's profound friendship with Debussy and his wish to deepen the connection between music and poetry (Antonucci 3: 2). D'Annunzio's former composer Ildebrando Pizzetti noted that the music written by Debussy for the piece helped stress the sense of anxiety and discomfort of the characters through its mysticism inspired by Maeterlinck: Debussy "intoned softly and exquisitely the hectic, fearful and disconsolate mysticism of Maurice Maeterlinck"[202] (qtd. in Antonucci 3: 2-3). Léon Bakst made the set designs and the costumes, Mikhail Fokine created the choreography and Armand Bour the stage direction. As Chomel has observed, the relative success of the play was thanks to the fact that it was put together by artists whose fame was already established in Paris (184). Besides the internationalism of the production, the narrative itself combined

[202] "intonò sommessamente e squisitamente, il misticismo trepido, pauroso e sconsolato di Maurice Maeterlinck"

elements from different periods and cultures: Roman, Greek, Christian, medieval references. Debussy's music equally made use of global sources from different time periods, while Bakst's stage designs were highly eclectic and in the midst of all this, Rubinstein was miming, singing and dancing. (Haitzinger and Ostwald, "Ida Rubinstein as Saint Sébastien") Thus the entire production and the play text itself resisted homogeneity and celebrated the intersection of cultures and otherness.

Since the play was written in a period of creative frenzy thanks to D'Annunzio's stay in Paris, it was the first in which he managed to realise total theatre. D'Annunzio based the dramatic expression on dance and gesture for the first time: "Liberated from the narrative module, D'Annunzio indulges in the verbal melody which mingles with the musical notes, while the tenuous thread that keeps the action together is entrusted to the visual impact of the scenography and to the dance"[203] (Chomel 185). Despite the excellence of the artists involved, the play's first production in 1911 brought less success than it was expected, as the play put the audience in huge discomfort, testing their patience with the slowness of the development and the five hour duration of the performance (Chomel 184). Another problem was the Jewish and lesbian dancer Rubinstein in the role of a Christian saint presented to a bourgeois public whose standards of morality were offended by the queerness of the main character.[204]

Interestingly, Rubinstein's voice—her Russian accent and husky voice—was perceived as one of the most provocative aspects of the performance. Marcel Proust's remark makes it clear that Rubinstein made a significant contribution to the queerness of D'Annunzio's drama itself: "Everything that is strange about D'Annunzio takes refuge in the accent of Mme Rubinstein" (qtd. in Haitzinger and Ostwald, "Ida Rubinstein as Saint Sébastien"). She was mocked as representing Saint Barbara not Sebastian, which is a reference to barbarians and foreigners who cannot speak the

[203] "Libero dal modulo narrativo, D'Annunzio si abbandona alla melodia verbale che pare confondersi con le note musicali, mentre il tenue filo che lega l'azione è affidato all'impatto visuale della scenografia e alla danza."

[204] For more information on how this production revealed cultural anxieties see Charles R. Batson's monograph *Dance, Desire, and Anxiety in Early Twentieth-Century French Theatre: Playing Identities*. New York: Routledge, 2016.

language properly (Haitzinger and Ostwald, "Ida Rubinstein as Saint Sébastien"). Even though she was often accused of destroying D'Annunzio's words with her accent, D'Annunzio insisted on working with her, as he saw the potential in her queer stage presence.

When D'Annunzio prepared for the staging of the play, he asked medieval scholar Gustave Cohen if women ever played male parts in mysteries, but Cohen said no, to which D'Annunzio replied: "That doesn't matter: Ida will be Saint Sébastien, even if the Church takes umbrage" (Cohen qtd. Fleischer 44). Indeed, the Archbishop of Paris banned French Catholics to attend the performance, and put all of D'Annunzio's works on the list of prohibited texts: "It is instantly demanded of Catholics to abstain from attending the offensive representations for the sake of the Christian conscience"[205] (*La Semaine Catholique* qtd. in Granatella 712). The review that appeared in *Il Marzocco* in May 1911 lamented that both this play and the earlier *Fedra* disillusioned audiences because D'Annunzio inverted the original myths and complicated them: "too many were disappointed because they expected the rough ingenuity of the medieval mystery exactly like then – at the time of *Fedra* – they were expecting that pure and simple –mostly simple – remake of the Greek tragedy"[206] (qtd. in Granatella 789). The performance was not a big success, but Rubinstein's fluid movements on the stage mesmerised some critics: she was called a creature "who could even be a saint, because she does not have the earthly aspects of man or woman anymore"[207] (*Il Marzocco* qtd. in Granatella 791). Cocteau called this queer ambivalence of Rubinstein-as-Sebastian as a "not yet" quality: "a not-yet-being-able-to-recognise a definite identity, a determinable gender, with the ambiguity remaining unsolved" (Haitzinger and Ostwald, "Ida Rubinstein as Saint Sébastien").

[205] "il a instamment recommandé aux catholiques de s'abstenir d'assister à des représentations offensantes pour les consciences chrétiennes."
[206] "troppi strillano delusi perché si aspettavano oggi la rozza ingenuità del mistero medievale proprio come allora – al tempo di *Fedra* – si aspettavano il rifacimento puro e semplice – soprattutto semplice – della tragedia greca."
[207] "che ben può essere un 'santo' perché non ha più nulla dell'aspetto terreno dell'uomo o della donna."

The play's performance in the 1920s, however, brought more success: it was performed at the Paris Opera in 1922, 1923, 1924 and in La Scala di Milano in 1926 still featuring Rubinstein as Sebastian. Yet after 1926, it was not produced again until 1948. Directors kept the queer aspect of Sebastian until 1988 when Jean Pierre Vincent staged the first male Sebastian played by Bruno Wolkowitch in Villa Giulia. In 1995 Ezio Maria Caserta also replaced the genderqueer martyr with a male actor Aldo Reggioni (Antonucci 3: 5), even though the whole point of D'Annunzio's play was to exalt heroism, which is for the first time not male-centred and not necessarily heterosexual.

D'Annunzio used the frameworks of Christianity as well as ancient Greece and Rome to confront the audiences with same-sex and sadomasochistic desires. The persecution of Christians, for instance, works here as a metaphor for the persecution of homosexuals. D'Annunzio portrayed Sebastian as someone who uses his authority to protect people who are different like himself, and D'Annunzio uses Christians as a synonym for people whose identity is different from the normative one. The play blurs the line between mystical love, heterosexual love and homosexual desire. As Chomel observes "the saint embodied by a woman represents plastically the union of the two sexes in a spectacle that plays with ambiguity. Ambiguity between eroticism and mysticism, between sacred and profane, between divine love and sensual love, between Adonis and Adonaï"[208] (193-4). Sebastian is both a de-sexualised saint, an emissary of God and at the same time an irresistible seductive force associated with Adonis and Orpheus.

2.2 *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien*

The play consists of a prologue and five mansions and it is set in ancient Rome. As Chomel has observed, the setting bears resemblance to the political atmosphere of D'Annunzio's life and his own personal situation, namely his defiance of political authorities, his interest in non-normative

[208] "il santo, impersonato dalla donna, rappresenta plasticamente l'unione dei due sessi in uno spettacolo che è tutto giocato sull'ambiguità. Ambiguità tra erotismo e misticismo, tra simboli sacri e profani, tra amore divino e amore sensuale, tra Adonís e Adonaï."

forms of sexuality and occult practices: "all driven by mystical aspirations, religious desecration, contaminations, perversions, Angelism and Satanism"[209] (192). The action refers to an event that happened at the end of the III. Century D. C. during Diocletian's and Massimiano's rule: the martyrdom of a Christian saint, head of the imperial army, who, according to Chomel, chooses death because of his militant faith (184). Yet the play invites another reading as well in which Sebastian finds liberation in death as a way of escaping from the totalising power and suffocating love of the emperor who wants to contain and possess him both in terms of power and sexual desire.

The prologue is delivered by a Nuncius (messenger) who addresses the audience in the name of God: he tells them to sit through the play as if they were at mass and promises them that they will witness the sacred suffering of an adolescent martyr who attains eternal youth through his blood sacrifice (105-6). But after this, the messenger begins using the words "infinite love," "desire" and "body" and compares the story that is coming to the tears that Christ cried over Lazarus. The love between Christ and Lazarus features in the subtext throughout the play like in Yeats's *Calvary*, which is relevant because Sebastian's story here evokes Christ's Passion too: both in the sense of crucifixion/death/resurrection and in the sense of sexual desire. Jione Havea in "Lazarus Troubles" offers a queer reading of the relationship between Lazarus and Jesus starting out from an excerpt from the *Secret Gospel of Mark* whose authenticity is questioned by many scholars, but the queerness of its description of Lazarus and Jesus is nonetheless remarkable: "And after six days Jesus told him what to do and in the evening the youth comes to him, wearing a linen cloth over his naked body. And he remained with him that night, for Jesus taught him the mystery of the kingdom of God" (qtd. in Havea 157).

Besides the Christ-Lazarus relationship in the subtext, there are five same-sex bonds that evolve through the five mansions: that of the two brothers

[209] "tutta percorsa da aspirazioni mistiche, dissacrazione religiosa, contaminazioni, perversioni, angelismo e satanismo."

Marco and Marcellino; then Sebastian's love for Christ contrasted with Diocletian's desire for Sebastian; the bond between Sebastian and his archers; and there is much intimacy between Ida-as-Sebastian on stage and the character of the Enfevered Woman.

The first mansion revolves around the twins Marco and Marcellino who are about to sacrifice their lives for their different beliefs: they are tied to two pillars facing each other and their song about brotherly love begins the play accompanied by Claude Debussy's music:

> Brother, and what will become of the world
> relieved from our love?
> In my soul your heart is heavy
> like stone placed in a sling.
> I weigh it; from that Shadow there
> towards the Big Day I throw it.
> Brother, and what will become of the world
> relieved from our love?
> I was sweeter than the dove;
> you are prouder than the goshawk.
> Always, never! Never, always!
> Iron cannot scare you, fire cannot tame me.
> Beautiful Christ, what will become of the world
> relieved from all Your love?[210] (108)

As Hartford has stressed, this song was sung by two *contralti* (46) which is a classical female singing voice, thus this scene associated the brothers with femininity and introduced "homosexual innuendoes" (46) to their lines. Moreover, this mansion draws attention to the strategies of totalising systems which do not tolerate difference and dissidence, as the

[210] "Fratello, e che sarà il mondo / alleggerito di tutto il nostro amore? / Nell'anima mia il tuo cuore è greve / come la pietra nella fromba. / Io lo peso; di là dall'Ombra / verso il Grande Giorno lo scaglio. / Fratello, e che sarà il mondo / alleggerito di tutto il nostro amore? / Io ero più dolce della colomba; / tu sei più fiero dell'astòre. / Sempre, mai! Mai, sempre! / Ferro non ti sgomenta, fuoco non mi doma. / Bel Cristo, che sarà il mondo / alleggerito di tutto il Vostro amore?"

representative of normative authority (the Prefect) is imposing verbal and physical violence on two marginalised individuals here, whose bodies are in a precarious position. Just like in D'Annunzio's *Fedra*, death appears as the only way to escape the violence and judgements of a normative, authoritarian society, hence Marco exclaims: "Death is life"[211] (114).

This passage establishes the intersection between the love of Christ and love between men. While the twins are signing, Sebastian is leaning on his huge bow and contemplates the two young martyrs in silence, while the crowd—the representatives of Diocletian's empire—feel insulted by the song, hence they call for Julius Andronicus. They call for Sebastian too, repeating several times that he is the emperor's close friend. But none of them take action, so they turn to declare "oh Julius Andronicus, you love these twins who don't have a star. You love them! You love them!"[212] (109). In fact, by Julius Andronicus and Augustus, D'Annunzio probably implied the same character and power itself: Emperor Diocletian, whom Sebastian refers to as Caesar later.

The Prefect is forcing the twins to withdraw their belief in God and obey, but even on the edge of death sentence, they persevere and disobey. This refusal of obedience pervading the play makes it a hymn of dissidence which is part of its queer dramaturgy, as in the case of Yeats's *Calvary*. Ahmed has argued that heteronormativity generates a feeling of discomfort in queer subjects whose bodies cannot sink into the space created by normativity (*Cultural Politics* 148). This play is full of male bodies experiencing discomfort, they do not fit in, but they find a melancholy pleasure in this discomfort and are driven by a very strong death drive combined with a constant sex/life drive. Marco tells the Prefect: "No, judge. For the living God, no, I do not want to obey"[213] (110). But the Prefect says he is delirious and should not speak in the name of his brother: "One we are. Look. We are one face, one gaze, one song, one love. We are a heart

[211] "La morte è vita."
[212] "Per I Dioscuri, tu ami, o Giulio Andronico, questi gemelli che non hanno stella. Tu li ami! Tu li ami!"
[213] "No, giudice. Per il Dio vivente, no, non voglio obbedire."

hardened seven times more"[214] (110). Later, he also romanticises their solitude: "We are alone, alone, completely alone, with one love"[215] (111). Interestingly, Croft has called such scenes of queer solitude in theatre a form of protest and dissidence (19). Marco calls himself the athlete of Christ which establishes a connection between his figure and Sebastian's. The stage direction states that Sebastian is still watching the twins in rapture and melancholy, which brings in a constant queer gaze in the spectacle. Sebastian's ecstasy at the sight of the two boys is so great that he forgets about his bow, hurts himself and starts bleeding. This moment expresses Sebastian's sympathy for the two martyrs and signals that he belongs to them, even though he is in the service of the Roman Empire which imposes violence on them.

This moment introduces Sebastian's close bond with his archers who, seeing him in pain, start admiring him: "Pain makes you stronger. We love you, sir, we love you. Leader with beautiful hair, your archers love you. Your archers love you. You are beautiful. You are beautiful like Adonis"[216] (112). The crowd tells that during this scene, they smell a strong odour of lilies, which invites ambiguous interpretations and can be a sign of Sebastian's chastity/purity as well as his ardent sexual desires. The text associates both Adonis and Apollo with Sebastian, even though Adonis and Apollo usually do not feature in the same myths. But as Hartford points out, Adonis shares a lot with Apollo's lover Hyacinthus whom Apollo accidentally killed (59).

When the mother of the twins appears, she compares the silent Marcellino to his sisters: "O Marcellino, you are sweet. You have been the sister of your sisters"[217] (114). Marcellino claims he wants to die as he cannot lose this war, but then he loses sight of his brother's face and begins weeping. The Prefect is about to use this moment to force them to obey, but in this moment Sebastian raises his voice for the first time: "Here, suddenly, Sebastian breaks his vigilant immobility. And the unexpected sound of his

[214] "Uno noi siamo. Vedi. Noi siamo un volto, uno sguardo, un canto, un amore. Noi siamo un cuore sette volte temprato."
[215] "Soli siamo, soli, pienamente soli, con un solo amore."
[216] "Più forte tu sei del dolore. Noi t'amiamo, signore, ti amiamo. Duce della bella chioma, i tuoi arcieri ti amano. I tuoi arcieri ti amano. Sei bello. Sei bello al pari di Adone."
[217] "O Marcellino, tu sei dolce. Tu eri la sorella delle tue sorelle."

voice strikes the people with amazement and fear"[218] (121). But to the crowd's surprise, he encourages the boys' resistance and makes them strong in their dissidence again. This establishes a moment of queer alliance to which the crowd responds immediately, as Sebastian should serve the Roman Empire as the Head of Archers instead of encouraging disobedience to it:

> Sebastian, Sebastian, what lunacy, what kind of rage takes hold of you as well? The head of archers, friend of Augustus, is unfaithful to his lord. Look at him. He is upright in his delirium. … Cannot be true, cannot be true. You, you, beautiful Archer, you, so beautiful.[219] (121)

There is still a strong smell of lilies and the stage direction claims how proudly Sebastian stands the insults: "Sebastian remains upright and firm, without responding"[220] (122). It is notable that to express the fact that Sebastian is standing tall and proud even though he is insulted, the Italian text uses the word "eretto," that is "erect," which further intensifies the sexual tension between male characters in the play, as Sebastian is "erect" while looking at Marco and Marcellino. In the meantime, the crowd's anger increases: "O Leader, o Leader, you have betrayed us, you have betrayed us. … O divine! Your odour, Adonis, is dead"[221] (126). Strikingly, Sebastian is referred to as Leader (*Duce*) by his archers, thus the audience saw a woman dressed up as a man on the stage playing a dissident Christian, signing in a soprano voice and referred to as *Duce*.

The play's physicality also increases from the moment of Sebastian's first movements. When Sebastian takes up his bow and arrow, stretches the bow with all force shooting the arrow towards the sky, it does not fall back, hence he exclaims: "And now I disarm myself! I am surely the Archer of the

[218] "Qui, subitamente, Sebastiano rompe la sua immobilità vigilante. E il suono inatteso della sua voce percuote di stupore e di spavento gli uomini".
[219] "Sebastiano, Sebastiano, che demenza,che rabbia afferra anche te? Il capo de' sagittarii, l'amico di Augusto, è infedele al suo signore! Guardatelo! Eretto egli è nel delirio. … Non è vero, non è vero. Tu, tu, bell'Arciere, tu, così bello!"
[220] "Sebastiano rimane eretto e incrollabile, senza rispondere."
[221] "O Duce, Duce, tu ci hai traditi, tu ci hai traditi. … O divino! Il tuo profumo, Adone, è morto."

Sign!"[222] (131). He orders his archers to undress him and leave his legs and feet completely naked. Half-naked, he begins a rapturous dance, and commands the twins to start singing with him: "Brothers, what would become of the world relieved from our love?"[223] (133). The musical instruments intone the dance with a so-called "titanic gasping"[224] and the boys begin singing (133). His half-naked body was thus moving to the *contralto* voice of two boys and instruments imitating the sound of gasping bodies, making it a highly homoerotic dance. Sebastian languishes like in an ionic dance, but suddenly he turns his head like a warrior, and the dance is described as a pyrrhic dance. Ionic dance is usually highly voluptuous, sexually loaded, which explains why this dance scene caused the biggest outrage in more conservative and Catholic theatre critics and audiences. Also, as Laura McClure explains: in ancient Greece, "[a]s foreigners and exotics, courtesans performed Ionic dances, 'notorious for their softness and lasciviousness'" (121). Pyrrhic dance also originates from ancient Greece, but it was an armed, war dance, and its name comes from "Pyrrhos," meaning funeral pyre (Goulaki-Voutira 3). Strikingly, it was Achilles "who first performed this dance next to the funeral pyre of his dead friend, Patroclus" (Goulaki-Voutira 3), thus this scene carries an extra layer of homoeroticism through its coded reference to the widely acknowledged homoerotic bond between Achilles and Patroclus. More significantly, this dance could be performed both by men and women, and Plato has stressed its role in exercising a man's as well as a woman's body (see Goulaki-Voutira 3).

The second mansion abounds in female characters and the figure of the Enfevered Woman appears. Seven female magicians begin this mansion singing and praising Sebastian, therefore women are praising a female-looking leader. Here Sebastian appears like a Christ-like figure, as he tries to prove that he can heal people and perform miracles but they do not believe him. In his despair, he depicts the miracle of Christ bringing Lazarus back to life, and the stage direction states that his voice made visible this

[222] "E ora io mi disarmo! Io son l'Arciere sicuro del segno."
[223] "Fratelli, che sarebbe il mondo alleggerito di tutto il nostro amore?"
[224] "respiro titanico"

scene of marvel which terrified the crowd (146). Moreover, this mansion includes intimacy between Sebastian and the Enfevered Woman who asks him if "[i]t is maybe shameful that [her] life is burning for the love of Love?"[225] (151). Sebastian sees the emissary of Christ in this woman (Chomel 186), thus his approach to her involves much tenderness. Sebastian goes closer to her, looks at her and talks to her softly, whispering as if fearing to wake her up (152). She begins to talk about Christ and Lazarus, how Christ looked at Lazarus, waiting for him to move, then he said "Lazarus, come out" but he did not answer—instead, he turned towards Christ and both of them cried looking at each other (152). Sebastian does not understand many of her mysterious references, which, he says, are not in the Book, and then he touches her wrists to wake her up. The stage directions make it clear that they touch for a long time in this scene and they start singing together about love.

The third mansion centres on the sadomasochistic relationship between Diocletian and Sebastian, and exemplifies what Bersani has defined as the most radical trait of SM: the idea that human beings may be willing to give up control over their environment for the sake of sexual pleasure (95). Chomel has noticed the importance of reversibility to the play: "The situation is reversed almost as an evidence that the erotic/mystic relationship between the victim and the executioner is reversible"[226] (189). Even though it is Diocletian who orders the execution of Sebastian, he is more a victim than Sebastian, since Diocletian loses what he wants, while Sebastian achieves what he has been longing for (death and nearness to Christ), thus desire makes power reversible here. The crowd is praising Diocletian and asks him to liberate them from the Christians, but instead of listening to them, Diocletian begins confessing his love to Sebastian. He does so five times, offering all his love and power to Sebastian if he renounces his faith: "Hail, beautiful youth! … I greet you, leader of the cohort of Émesa, whom

[225] "È forse vergogna se la mia vita brucia per amor dell'Amore?"
[226] "La situazione è rovesciata quasi a riprova che il rapporto erotico/mistico tra la vittima e il carnefice è reversibile."

Apollo loves …. For my glory, Sebastian, I love you too"[227] (162) and "I wish to crown you in front of all the gods"[228] (162). But Sebastian responds, "Caesar, I already have my crown"[229] (162). With this, Sebastian sets himself up as a firm counter-power to the emperor's political authority in the narrative. Sebastian's authoritative voice and refusal of submission and humbleness in front of power both enrages and excites Diocletian, hence he continues:

> You are too beautiful. And it is right that you be crowned, before all the gods. If you have dreams, I don't want to know about them. I love you. You are dear to me. Tell me, haven't I given you honours, benefits, adornments, beautiful weapons and glorious hours? … And I always turned my sweetest face towards you.[230] (162-3)

The emperor's lines recall what Newmahr has defined as "benevolent dictatorship" strategy in sadomasochistic games, when the party performing the role of power presents his/her authoritarianism and cruelty as nurturing.

Since Sebastian acknowledges the emperor's kindness to him ("You were generous to me, my lord"[231] (163)) the emperor feels entitled to touch Sebastian's shoulder which is both a power demonstration and a physical expression of desire. However, Sebastian insists that he has chosen his god and does not need anything from the emperor, which makes Diocletian furious. He laughs at Sebastian, but then looks at him with awe again: "He is too beautiful! I want you to sing, to sing your last song, similar to the hyperborean swan …. This I want. Obey"[232] (165). Yet Sebastian claims

[227] "Salve, giovine bello! … Io ti saluto, duce della coorte di Émesa, che Apollo ama …. Per il mio lauro, Sebastiano, anch'io t'amo."
[228] "Io voglio coronarti, innanzi a tutti gli dèi."
[229] "Cesare, io l'ho già la mia corona."
[230] "Sei troppo bello. Ed è giusto che sii coronato, davanti a tutti gli dèi. Se tu fai sogni, io non voglio saperlo. Io t'amo. Mi sei caro. Di', non t'ho io colmato di onori, di benefizi, di adornamenti, di belle armi e d'ore gloriose? … Ed io rivolsi sempre verso di te la mia faccia più dolce."
[231] "Sì, tu mi fosti liberale, signore."
[232] "È troppo bello! Io voglio che canti, che canti l'estremo suo canto, simile al cigno iperboreo …. Questo io voglio. Obbedisci."

firmly that "I am my own sacrificer. I tell you this"[233] (166). This is a refusal of domination: Sebastian claims control over his body and death, and he is willing to sacrifice himself for himself alone like Fedra. He refuses to sing to the emperor because his lips are too heavy with love for Christ, which makes the emperor jealous.[234]

Sebastian eventually offers him a dance, and commands him to watch it and listen carefully without trembling (166). Diocletian perceives this dance as a sign of Sebastian's submission to him, yet it only serves to mock power by demonstrating how power can be weakened through seduction. As he takes pleasure in Sebastian's erotic movements, Diocletian is willing to give him all his power just to experience this erotic stimulation. According to the stage direction, the emperor is becoming intoxicated with every single gesture of him, and the music begins to possess and bend Sebastian's body: he remains in a curved and reversed position, motionless like a son of Niobe, then rises again and transfigures, and his voice is transmuted by the flame of his profound heart (167). In this moment, Sebastian proudly exclaims: "Have you seen the One I love? Have you seen?"[235] (167), as he has a vision of Christ while dancing, but Diocletian misunderstands him and assumes he is the one Sebastian loves. Diocletian calls him the Prince of Youth and his body ambiguous (170). Both women and men admire the spectacle, the women of the Bible also exclaim: "How beautiful! How

Figure 15: Illustration of Sebastian's "The Passion of Christ" dance by André Édouard Marty, 1911. Source: corpusweb.net. "Ida Rubinstein as Saint Sébastien". Web. 29 Jan. 2021.

[233] "Io sono il mio sacrificatore. Questo vi dico."

[234] This restraint and refusal to sing bears resemblance to Yeats's sadomasochistic play *FMM* which equally portrays a power game between a marginalised character and a power figure, with the former one refusing the Queen's offer to obtain her power thus paradoxically annulling power itself.

[235] "Avete visto Colui che amo? L'avete voi visto?"

beautiful! The rings of his hair on his determined forehead are the clusters of sorrow!"[236] (167).

This is a dance of dissidence, love and sorrow, which are all relevant to queer dramaturgies and queer dance: the sorrowful queer body physicalises pain and desire here. As a result of his dance, Sebastian suddenly sees the object of his love: he has a vision of Christ descending from the Golgotha at the end of the dance which appears as an orgasm, especially because the text uses the adjective "erect" several times. In his amorous vision, Sebastian accepts the emperor's offer and his hand reaches towards Diocletian. The two men are holding hands on stage, but Sebastian suddenly cries out "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, to me! Help, my Lord! Save me, my force, my flame, my King!"[237] (172). In his frenzy, he throws away and breaks the symbols of power he is holding in his hands and curses the emperor, hence he is immediately sentenced to death. But the emperor forbids everyone to touch his body, considering Sebastian as his possession only. Maurice Galerno from *Le Monde Orphéonique* highlighted this scene of Sebastian's refusal of political authority: "The emperor loves Sebastian for his great beauty. And he wants to crown this beauty with jewels and glory. He is ready to forgive him. … But Sebastian chose the only God. … The Saint with an enormous cry, as if coming out of a turbid nightmare, throws Victory at the emperor's feet and curses it"[238] (qtd. in Granatella 797). Yet even this review failed to recognise or name the sexual nature of Sebastian's longing for Christ.

Sebastian claims that his body is one with Christ just like Marco claimed he was one with his brother: "I and Christ are One. I open my arms. We are One"[239] (173). Diocletian once again leans towards him to say he can still change his mind and can be a god, but Sebastian exclaims that Christ reigns.

---

[236] "Come è bello! Come è bello! Le anella della chioma sulla sua fronte ostinata sono i grappoli del dolore."
[237] "Gesù, Gesù, Gesù, a me! Aiuto, Signore! Soccorrimi, o mia forza, mia fiamma, mio Re!"
[238] "L'imperatore ama Sebastiano per la sua grande bellezza. E questa bellezza vorrebbe coronare di gemme e di gloria. È disposto a perdonargli. … Ma Sebastiano ha scelto il Dio unico. … Il Santo con un grande grido, come uscendo da un torbido incubo, butta ai piedi dell'imperatore la Vittoria, e lo maledice."
[239] "Io ed il Cristo siamo Uno. Apro le braccia. Siamo Uno"

He is sentenced to death, and the chorus sings: "O Eros! Cry!"[240] (173), which indicates that the figure of Sebastian in this play embodies sexual desire itself which power wants to contain and abuse. Yet Sebastian denies this pleasure from Diocletian, as death means closeness to his object of desire (Christ) and he seems to enjoy being killed by the men he is fond of so much (his archers). This masochistic acceptance of death is also a way of punishing Diocletian:

> inasmuch as he cannot avoid being the target of violence, the masochist prefers to inflict it upon himself—and in this manner extract a kind of desperate pride. This self-destructive behaviour is enjoyable because, through the act of attacking himself as his own sadistic object, he is able to participate in the sadistic enjoyment of the person abusing him. (Benvenuto 63)

More interestingly, Diocletian's willingness to give up everything for Sebastian and Sebastian's refusal of his totalising love reflect what happened between Rubinstein and Romaine Brooks at the time. As Vicki Woolf explains: "Ida wanted to give her life to Romaine completely. She was willing to sacrifice everything on the altar of Romaine's love: her career, her fortune, her house, her past, her future" (89), but "[t]o Romaine this passion was daunting. It was this strength of commitment which Romaine found too overbearing: 'I can't be loved like that'" (90). To complicate things, after refusing Ida's love, Romaine engaged in her one and only heterosexual relationship with D'Annunzio himself but with inverted roles, as Romaine was the pursuer in the short-lived and one-sided relationship (90). This offers an interesting queer biographical background to the plays written for Rubinstein, even though biography is not my focus here. It is nonetheless interesting that a lesbian artist who has only desired women, all of a sudden desired D'Annunzio and that he became the third party in such a famous queer love triangle.

[240] "O Eros! Piangete!"

The fourth mansion of *Le Martyre* equally conveys sadomasochistic undertones, but the emphasis here is more on Sebastian's erotic enjoyment of pain rather than his torturers' enjoyment of power over him. Sebastian is awaiting his death tied to a laurel tree. He is strongly driven by death drive while his archers are confessing their love to him: "We love you, we love you, sir. You could have become a god. But you are the god of our dreams and the dream of our youths"[241] (175). What happens here is that Sebastian insists that he should be killed by his own archers, and he is trying to convince them to kill him with their arrows: "he demands his death from them as a supreme sign of love"[242] (Chomel 188). This mansion is about love and death and recalls very much Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis* and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, because the archers have to kill the one they love: "From the depth of my heart, I summon your love, Archers! I call you from the depth of my heart! … The one who aims most acutely than others with his arrow … stabbing me with the rod …. He, for sure, I will know loves me, and loves me for ever"[243] (177). And this is followed by a prolonged scene of archers shooting their arrows at Sebastian's body, while he is crying "Your love! Your love!"[244] (178), and the archers cry out to their dying love, throwing away their arrows: "Their hair is entangled with the feathers of the arrows embedded in his young muscles"[245] (178). And they cry: "We have killed our love! … Women, do not cry, he will live again!"[246] (179), and when the women take his corpse off the stage, the chorus is mourning him singing "O Eros, cry!" (179).

The archers' ritualistic murder of Sebastian reads as an act of penetration, given Sebastian's orgasmic enjoyment of the pain caused by the arrows. Harford has stressed the presence of "a continuum of penetrative acts in association with masculine beauty. Through this system of exchanges one is

[241] "Noi t'amiamo, t'amiamo, signore. Potevi essere un dio. Ma tu sei pure il dio dei nostri sogni e il sogno delle nostre giovinezze"
[242] "chiede loro la morte come suprema prova d'amore"
[243] "Dal profondo, dal profondo, io chiamo il vostro amore, Arcieri! Dal profondo, dal profondo, vi chiamo! … Colui che mira più diritto d'ogni altro con la sua freccia … trafiggendomi con tutta l'asta. Colui, certo, io saprò che m'ama, che m'ama per sempre."
[244] "Il vostro amore! Il vostro amore!"
[245] "I loro capelli s'impigliano alle penne delle frecce affondate nei giovani muscoli."
[246] "Abbiamo ucciso il nostro amore! … Donne, non piangete. Ei rivivrà."

invited to view the mortal, yet exalted penetrated victim as a portmanteau of both the participants and the acts themselves" (46-7). Sebastian's passivity towards the violence inflicted upon him is also part of his sadistic masochism, as he clearly achieves mastery over his passivity (his relentless refusal of Diocletian's offers): "while the masochist needs to ensure mastery over the other, it is even more imperative for him to master his own passivity" (Benvenuto 64). Thus "it is in the active representation of the masochist's abjection that his mastery prevails" (64), which echoes Yeats's Swineherd character in *FMM,* who punishes the Queen with his constant refusal to do what is expected from him. Sebastian makes himself unavailable and unfindable for Diocletian and by extension for power itself: to use Bersani's words, Sebastian makes himself "unfindable as an object of discipline" (99). Thus his masochistic surrender becomes an exercise of counterpower and resistance to power itself: Sebastian is both "an object of the exercise of power and an agent of power (Bersani 102).

Finally, in the last mansion, we find Sebastian in Paradise. He is the one whom God has chosen and crowned, so the chorus of the Apostles claims: "John has given you his space. / You will drink from his glass, / oh Sebastian!"[247] (182). Reference to John is relevant here, as John is referred to as the beloved disciple of Christ in the *Gospel of John*, and John is also sometimes identified with Lazarus of Bethany, further deepening the male homoerotic bonds of the play. In the end, Sebastian exclaims "I come, I rise. I have wings"[248] (182) which, after the various hints at penetrative acts, can read as an erotic culmination/orgasm but it can be interpreted as a sign of religious purification. It is this ambiguity that renders so much queer potential to D'Annunzio's drama. *Le Martyre* thus illustrates how the biblical framework and ancient Greece and Rome can serve to make visible and sayable same-sex desires on stage. It equally demonstrates that the queer body is both utterly vulnerable and exposed to insults, yet at the same time powerful and full of potential. Rubinstein's body and voice helped emphasise all this, thus her Sebastian became "an iridescent figure open to a

[247] "Giovanni t'ha dato il suo posto. / Tu berrai nella sua tazza, / o Sebastiano!"
[248] "Io vengo, io salgo. Ho le ali."

variety of projections" (Haitzinger and Ostwald, "Ida Rubinstein as Saint Sébastien"). It is by no accident that Hartford compared the text to Antonin Artaud's *Héliogabale* and defined it as "a good example of a culturally religious and syncretic queer-martyr text" (47).

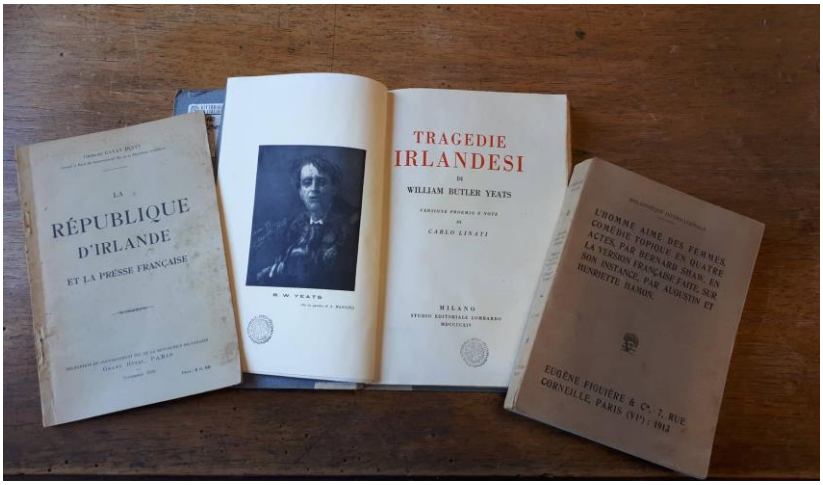
Representations of sadomasochistic attachments in *Le Martyre* thus reveal the mechanism of relationships of submission-domination and eroticise these historically painful and traumatic experiences. As Bersani has put it: "S/M is a kind of X ray of power's body, a laboratory testing of the erotic potential in the most oppressive social structures" (89). D'Annunzio represented these power relations as deliberately sadomasochistic, which can read as a way of interrogating the implicit sadomasochism that characterises capitalist authoritarian regimes which, however, always deny their own sadism (see Mieli 168). In such erotic power games, everyone gets the chance to tease and humiliate the other, thus parodying authority itself and posing a challenge to it. In Mieli's words, "[t]he liberation of sadomasochism and the liberation of homosexuality overcome the traditional roles which are put in opposition by sadism and masochism" (184).

3. The Pressure of the Family and Community in *Francesca da Rimini* (1901) and *The Daughter of Iorio* (1904)

> "[T]here is no one who does not see how paralysed and fake the social life between the two sexes is even when there are favourable, or even accessible conditions for love and even when there are none. In the latter case, it cannot be replaced with anything; in the former, the possible relationships are made difficult, impossible, at times, immediately exposed to malicious gossip and slander; they are reverberated then due to common judgements and prejudices into a sinful colour which, in fact, almost always arises in the same *dramatis personae*, the primary 'suspect', as Lancelot's book in *Paolo and Francesca*"[249] (Duse, "La Duse parla del femminismo" qtd. in Mariani 129).

[249] "[N]on vi è chi non veda come tutta la vita sociale fra i due sessi ne rimanga paralizzata e falsata, e se esistono condizioni favorevoli, accessibili, direi quasi, all'amore, e se non

Similar to Yeats's drama, D'Annunzio's *Francesca da Rimini* (1901) and *The Daughter of Iorio* (1904) underscore the pressure and invisible violence the normative family and the community in general impose on its members. These plays also reflect Duse's criticism of normative relationships and society's impossible expectations towards women whom society blames and shames for everything. D'Annunzio's characters are often torn between the traditions of the community and a longing for freedom and individualism, which is portrayed most visibly in *Francesca da Rimini* and *The Daughter of Iorio*, whose male and female characters all aspire to find alternative ways of living and loving. These two plays formulate a criticism of the institution of the family which puts an immense pressure on women in particular, as Duse has also underscored: "I do not understand why the strength of the institution of the family considers itself based preferably on honest wives or adulterous ones for the same thoughtlessness"[250] (qtd. in Mariani 132). Patriarch as well as matriarch figures appear as gatekeepers of the community in D'Annunzio's drama, bearing resemblance to Yeats's *LHD*, which D'Annunzio knew very well, as he owned Carlo Linati's translation of Yeats's early tragedies, and his annotations demonstrated a specific interest in *LHD*.



esistono. Nel secondo caso nulla si ha da sostituire; nell'altro le possibili relazioni sono rese difficili, impossibili, talora, esposte immediatamente alla maldicenza e alla calunnia; riflesse poi, in forza dei giudizii e dei pregiudizii comuni di una tinta peccaminosa, la quale, per appunto, suscita quasi sempre nelle stesse *dramatis personae*, il primo «sospetto», come il libro di Lancillotto in *Paolo e Francesca*."

[250] "E non comprendo perché la saldezza dell'istituto della famiglia si ritenga basata preferibilmente sulle mogli oneste od adultere per la stessa incoscienza."

Figure 16: D'Annunzio's books on Ireland, including Carlo Linati's translation of Yeats's plays. Source: my own photo taken in Il Vittoriale degli Italiani.

Ahmed has emphasised the importance of the clash between family and its displaced members in queer studies. As Ahmed explains in "Happy Objects," "the family sustains its place as a 'happy object' by identifying those who do not reproduce its line as the cause of unhappiness. I call such others 'affect aliens': feminist kill-joys, unhappy queers, and melancholic migrants" (30). D'Annunzio's melancholy characters experience a constant sense of displacement and wish "to leave a certain world behind" (Ahmed, "Happy Objects" 47). Ahmed underlines that normativity demands that people let go of certain histories that cause melancholia (50), like the normative characters do in D'Annunzio's two plays discussed in this section. Yet D'Annunzio's main characters refuse to let go of their suffering, which conveys a crucial message: "it is the very exposure of these unhappy effects that is affirmative, that gives us an alternative set of imaginings of what might count as a good or better life" (Ahmed, "Happy Objects" 50).

Francesca as well as Aligi and Mila in *The Daughter of Iorio* are associated with perversion, immaturity, melancholia and sterility, which, as Love noted, were the qualities associated with queers in the twentieth century, and the association of homosexuality with loss and melancholia still runs very deep (*Feeling Backward* 6). Inevitably, the omnipresence of melancholy characters who feel displaced in traditional social and family roles in D'Annunzio's plays must have introduced homoerotic undertones to the first productions and this is partly what allows queer readings today. First, I provide some details about the production history of the respective plays, followed by a dramaturgical analysis focusing on the characters' feeling of displacement within the family/community which wants to contain them.

3.1 *Francesca da Rimini*

Francesca da Rimini is D'Annunzio's recreation of Dante's story of Paolo and Francesca in a five-act verse play rewritten for Eleonora Duse.

D'Annunzio's version highlights the violence of male characters and shifts the focus to Francesca's discomfort and anxiety, introducing two new characters: Malatestino (brother to Francesca's husband Gianciotto) and Francesca's servant and closest friend Smaragdi. The character of Malatestino was first played by a woman, Emilia Varini, which introduced a very strong element of same-sex desire in the play's first production on 9 December 1901 in Rome's Teatro Costanzi. Most reviews applied a policy of silence regarding this cross-dressing element, while *Il giornale d'Italia* found it apt that such an evil character was embodied by a woman, reflecting the time's deeply-rooted misogyny:

> Malatestino, Gianciotto's other brother, singular figure of a fierce and malicious adolescent, who cannot be embodied but by a woman: and forgive me, madam Varini, this public accusation of ferocity and perfidy that I have to anticipate today, since it is her to whom the arduous role will be entrusted.[251] (qtd. in Granatella 296)

The performance took six hours and the reception was controversial including both applause and whistles from the audience (Antonucci 1: 226). According to Woodhouse, the play's favourable reception was only due to the sumptuousness of the staging, as they used genuine medieval antiques for props and furnishing ("D'Annunzio's Theatre" 330). Later in 1927, in Giovacchino Forzano's direction as part of a fascist project to promote Italian tragedy, Malatestino was played by a male actor Filippo Scelzo (Antonucci 1: 227). This production was a much bigger success, which shows that violence was more acceptable from a man than from a woman. However, the play was not produced again until 1944.

Francesca da Rimini is set against the backdrop of the battle between the *ghibellini* of Rimini (Paolo's family (Malatesta), supporters of the emperor) and the *guelfi* of Ravenna (Francesca's family (Polenta), supporters of the Pope). This battle is also a family conflict within the Malatesta family

[251] "Malatestino, altro fratello di Gianciotto, singolare figura di adolescente perfido e feroce che non potrà essere incarnata che da una donna: e mi perdoni la signora Varini questa pubblica taccia di ferocia e di perfidia ch'io debbo anticipare oggi, poiché a lei verrà affidata l'ardua parte."

whose male members (Gianciotto (or Giovanni), Malatestino and Paolo) all fight for Francesca's attention, even though the arranged marriage between Francesca and Gianciotto would serve to settle peace between the two families.

The play underlines Francesca's anxiety and melancholia which can be consoled only in the company of women. But the possessive male characters of her own family (her brother Ostasio) and the three men of the Malatesta family tear her out from this consoling atmosphere and push her life towards tragedy. Her character's melancholia was criticised by theatre critics, calling her "a somewhat pale and faded heroine"[252] (qtd. in Chomel 95). Like so many of D'Annunzio's melancholy protagonists whose desires are non-normative, Francesca finds escape from judgement only in death, thus this play reads as "a negative judgement on the normative values of a crystallised society"[253] (Chomel 106) that raises such anxieties in its subjects. Similar to Yeats's *The Dreaming of the Bones* informed equally by the story of Paolo and Francesca, D'Annunzio's drama revolves around the theme of impossible love which is doomed impossible by society and the family, thus resonating with "the historical impossibility of same-sex desire" (Love, *Feeling Backward* 21). Even though Jacques Lacan called love an exercise of failure in general, Love adds that "[a]lthough such assertion is true for everyone, some loves are more failed than others" (21). Just as "[s]ame-sex desire is marked by a long history of association with failure, impossibility, and loss," (21) the desires and romances that feature in D'Annunzio's plays are equally marked

Figure 17: Emilia Varini in the role of Malatestino, 1901. Source: Archivio Eleonora Duse, Istituto per il Teatro e il Melodramma, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice.

[252] "un eroina alquanto pallida e stinta"
[253] "un giudizio negativo sui valori normativi di una società cristallizzata."

by failure, impossibility and broken intimacies both between same-sex characters and between men and women.

Despite the presence of anxiety and melancholia in the play, it begins with a group of confident, cheerful and assertive women in the house of the Polenta family (Francesca's home) who are teasing a jester: "Wretched me, I thought I was entering / the house of the gentlemen of the Polenta family / yet I find myself among chattering women"[254] (237). The women do not let themselves be mocked by the jester and continue to tease him: "Are you being perky?"[255] (237), "Would you like to restart the fight?"[256] (237). This playful atmosphere ends, however, as Francesca's brother Ostasio approaches, as the women seem to be afraid of him. Ostasio acts as a normative authority here: he attacks his own brother, deceives his sister to "defend" the family, threatens the jester and wants to censor what can be said and by whom. In Scenes II and III of Act I, Ostasio decides over the fate of Francesca: he arranges her marriage to the virile Gianciotto Malatesta for the sake of the families' peace. When talking to the jester, Ostasio also expresses his despise for effeminate men such as Gianciotto's younger brother Paolo: "So / you do not know Messer Paolo, the Beautiful, / who loves jesters so much and if he sees them around / plays music and sings…"[257] (242). Yet the jester provokes him and exclaims "Long live Messer Paolo Malatesta!"[258] (242). which is followed by threats from Ostasio. Ostasio despises singing men like Paolo as well as jesters: "These jesters and courtiers / are the plague of Romagna, worse / than the imperial rascals. Tongues of girls, / they know everything, / they say everything …"[259] (243).

Moreover, Ostasio is disturbed by Francesca's melancholia and is suspicious of her bond with the women around her:

---

[254] "Meschino me, ch'io mi credeva entrare / in casa dei signori da Polenta / e mi ritrovo in questo passeraio!"
[255] "Ti ringalluzzi?"
[256] "Vuoi rinfrescar la zuffa?"
[257] "Dunque / tu non conosci Messer Paolo, il Bello, / che tanto ama i giullari e se li vede / intorno volentieri e suona e canta…"
[258] "Evviva Messer Paolo Malatesta!"
[259] "Questi giullari et uomini di corte / sono la peste di Romagna, peggio / che la canaglia imperiale. Lingue / di femminelle, tutto sanno, tutto / dicono ... ."

> And that Cyprian slave,
> who is so dear to my sister,
> now makes me suspicious, given
> that she is a bit of a fortune-teller;
> because I know she tells fortune from dreams…And, for days, I see
> my sister full of thoughts
> and almost in pain
> as if she had some deadly dream;
> and also, just yesterday, I heard
> her uttering an enormous sigh
> as if something was ailing her heart
> and heard Samaritana
> tell her: 'What ails you, sister? Why are you crying?[260] (243-4)

This scene demonstrates that in patriarchal systems men feel entitled to possess women and make decisions about their lives without involving them, as Ostasio chooses Francesca's future husband—he even recalls Francesca's desperate question to him: "Who will you give me to?"[261] (248). When his brother Bannino arrives in Scene IV, he confronts Ostasio and reproaches him for what he is doing to Francesca's life: "But you shut up, who, while I am in battle, are conspiring with the notary"[262] (250). Ostasio despises him because he is only a step-brother, therefore he is not part of the family: "He is from another nest"[263] (250). Bannino reminds Ostasio how tender he used to be and implies that he had an incestuous relationship with his father: "How you were caressing him, oh tender boy! Do you understand me now? I know that thing and you know it too. May

[260] "E quella schiava / cipriana, che tanto è cara a mia / sorella, ora mi dà sospetto, essendo / ella un poco indovina; perché so / ch'ella fa certe indovinazioni / per via di sogni... E, da più giorni, io veggo / la mia sorella piena di pensieri / e quasi dolorosa / come se avesse fatto qualche sogno / funesto; et anche, / ieri proprio, l'udii / che gittava un grandissimo sospiro / come avesse una pena nel suo cuore / e udii Samaritana / dirle: «Che hai, sorella? Perché piangi?»."
[261] "A chi mi date voi?"
[262] "Ma taci tu che, mentre io sono allo sbaraglio, vai facendo le trame col notaro."
[263] "Egli è d'un altro nido."

God wither your right hand!"[264] (251). This triggers a violent attack from Ostasio and he is ready to kill him: "Ah feminine lie! Bastard, today is your day"[265] (251). What enrages Ostasio here is that Bannino wants to unveil a story which would desecrate the family, yet eventually the threat of physical violence silences Bannino: "I won't tell it…Forgive me! Ah!"[266] (251), but Ostasio stabs him in the stomach anyway and exclaims: "Christ, save my father and my house from the traitors!"[267] (252).

These scenes of male violence are followed by a scene of equality and tenderness between women. It creates a visible contrast to the violence of the patriarchal family, as Francesca chooses the women around her as her own non-biological family where she feels fully accepted and loved. These scenes convey a strong sense of sisterhood and spiritual as well as physical intimacy, especially the scene with her sister Samaritana. The dialogue between the two women conveys an ambiguous diction. Samaritana tells Francesca while the other women sing around them: "Wish I could still do / my small bed next to yours! / Wish I could feel you at night!"[268] (253). Samaritana is clearly afraid of losing Francesca because of her marriage to Gianciotto: "I have never been separated from you, from your breath. My life had nothing but your eyes"[269] (254).

Francesca makes similarly ambiguous statements to her dearest servant Smaragdi, treating her as her equal: "And tell me: what will you do, Smaragdi, without me?"[270] (256). These women do not want Francesca to leave Ravenna and marry into the Malatesta family based in Rimini, and Francesca does not want to live without them either, hence she plans to bring Smaragdi with her:

> I will not leave you; come
> with me, Smaragdi, to the city of Rimini,

[264] "Quante carezze tu gli facesti, o tenero figliuolo! M'intendi ora? m'intendi? Io so tal cosa che anche tu sai. Iddio ti secchi la destra mano!"
[265] "Ah menzogna di femmina! Bastardo, oggi è il tuo giorno"
[266] "Non lo dirò… Perdono! Ah!"
[267] "Cristo guardi mio padre e la mia casa dai traditori!"
[268] "Ch'io faccia ancora / il mio piccolo letto accanto al tuo! / che la notte io ti senta!"
[269] "Non mi son mai divisa da te, dal tuo respiro. La mia vita non s'ebbe che i tuoi occhi."
[270] "E dimmi: che farai tu qui, Smaragdi, senza di me?"

and you will be with me, and there we will have
a window looking at the see:
and I will tell you all my dreams
so that you discover the traces of joy and pain;
……
Would you like me to take you with me, Smaragdi?[271] (256)

This passage conveys tenderness and even though Smaragdi is her servant, Francesca never gives her orders: instead, she lets her decide for herself. In fact, this passage reads like a proposal for companionship and mimes the diction of wedding wows, especially because Smaragdi's answer is that she would walk through flames just to be with her (256). Even when the women catch sight of Paolo and admire his beauty, they almost mourn Francesca who does not seem to be at ease with her parting either: "O sister, sister, / don't cry anymore. I'm not crying anymore. Don't you see / I'm laughing? Ah I'm crying and laughing, / and it doesn't want to stop"[272] (261). These intimate bonds between Francesca and other women evoke Eribon's idea that those people who suffer "the traumatizing brutality of insults and attacks" (*Insult* 25) tend to build a circle of chosen relationships mostly through friendships as a means of creating a non-biological family and finding self-affirmation in them, which has been characteristic of gay lives too (25).

Although Francesca is about to marry Gianciotto, she will fall in love with Gianciotto's younger brother Paolo who, unlike Gianciotto, is an effeminate man, and his beauty is mocked by men representing normative masculinity such as Ostasio or Malatestino. But the women surrounding Francesca admire Paolo: "He is the most beautiful knight of the world, / really. Look / how he is wearing the long hair / which falls back on / his shoulders, in an

[271] "io non ti lascerò; ché tu verrai / meco, Smaragdi, alla città di Rimini, / e sarai meco; e là vorremo avere / una finestra verso la marina: / et io ti conterò tutti i miei sogni / perché tu vi discopra / le facce della gioia e del dolore; //Vuoi dunque ch'io ti prenda meco, Smaragdi?"
[272] "O sorella, sorella, / non pianger più. Non piango più. Non vedi / che rido? Ah piango e rido, / e non mi basta!"

Anjou fashion…"[273] (258). Chomel, however, seems to criticise his character because of its "inherent lack of moral force"[274] (100) and because Paolo lives only for pleasure without thinking about the consequences (100). Yet Paolo's character is important, as it proposes a different kind of masculinity which is tender, not competitive, puts pleasure before violence and treats women as his equals. His lack of physical strength and his beauty should not be mentioned as negative traits of his character. His function in this play is to offer an alternative for conventional manliness and normative masculinity.

Instead of idealising violence like the other male characters, Paolo feels ashamed of it, which attests to his non-normativity. At the beginning of Act II, Francesca is in Rimini in the Malatesta Tower during a battle between the *guelfi* and *ghibellini*. In Rimini, Francesca finally meets Paolo who confesses to her that he has just committed violence: "Making violence / was medicine for my illness, / that night: making violence. / And I killed Tindaro Omodei / and burnt down his houses"[275] (274). He looks for consolation in Francesca and does not hide his vulnerable side from her, thus their bond resembles the one between the women and Francesca. Moreover, in this scene Francesca appears much more confident than Paolo, and they participate in a fight together like comrades. Before Paolo arrives, Francesca is in the company of two men who are supposed to supervise the fire on the top of the tower, and they are very patronising towards Francesca, worrying about her anxiety: "She rarely smiles/ She is always clouded / with thoughts and angry. She doesn't have peace"[276] (265). They do not want to light the fire, fearing Francesca will hurt herself, yet she refuses this condescending approach: "Light it! I want it"[277] (269). Since they refuse to obey, she takes action and lights it herself, thus refusing the passive and vulnerable role traditionally assigned to women. When the battle begins, she admits to Paolo:

[273] "Egli è il più bello cavalier del mondo, / veramente. Vedete / com'egli porta la capellatura / lunga che gli ricasca / fin su le spalle, all'angioina..."
[274] "inerente mancanza di forza morale"
[275] "Far violenza / fu medicina al mio malore, in quella / notte: far violenza. / E uccisi allora Tindaro Omodei / et arsi le sue case."
[276] "Rado sorride. È sempre annuvolata / di pensieri, e crucciosa. Non ha pace."
[277] "Accendi! Voglio."

I won't breathe
enclosed in my rooms among
my trembling women, when people fight
in the city… Give me a nice helmet,
my brother-in-law.[278] (272)

Paolo also gives her a bundle of darts and Francesca threatens the enemy:

Ah savage,
savage! Do you think
my hand is trembling? Do you think
you can intimidate my soul?
I am ready for any kind of mortal game;
and I won't lose
until everything is lost.[279] (277)

This battle scene is yet another addition by D'Annunzio and proposes an acknowledgement of women's power and gender equality. Francesca becomes her lover's equal companion here, which is what Duse herself was missing from Italian families where married women could not even become equal companions of their husbands:

> Because the oriental prejudice of the woman as slave, not materially slave but morally, still perpetuates in our country; the prejudice of the woman who, if a girl, she does not have to know, if a bride, she does not have to want, if a spinster, if she is disgraceful enough to remain a spinster, does not have to live, does not have the right to live.[280] (qtd. in Mariani 130)

[278] "Io non respiro / chiusa nelle mie stanze, tra le mie / donne tremanti, quando si combatte / nella città... Donarmi un bello elmetto / voi dovreste, signore mio cognato."
[279] "Ah selvaggio, / selvaggio! E credi tu / che la mia mano tremi? credi tu / di tentare così l'anima mia? / A qualunque mortale gioco io sono / pronta; e non perderò, / poi che tutto è perduto."
[280] "Perché si perpetua ancora da noi il pregiudizio orientale della donna schiava, non schiava materialmente, ma schiava moralmente; della donna che, ragazza, non deve sapere,

Moreover, Paolo confesses to Francesca that he is paralysed by fear, thus she takes him in her arms to protect him (280), which subverts conventional representations of gender roles.[281] When Francesca's husband Gianciotto arrives, Paolo's non-normative masculinity becomes even more visible. Gianciotto embraces violence, unlike Paolo who is ashamed and afraid of it. Gianciotto is proud that he is covered in blood and dust (282), which stands in stark contrast with Paolo's clean and fashionable appearance. When Paolo starts recounting how Francesca was fighting alongside him, Gianciotto immediately connects this quality of Francesca to her father and suggests that her role is to reproduce to which Francesca's reaction is frowning her eyebrows (284): "Guido's daughter, your father imprinted you nicely. / And may God make you / fertile, so that you give me more / than one lion cubs!"[282] (284). Then Gianciotto moves on to criticise Paolo for looking pale and not drinking which further deepens the contrast between Gianciotto's hyper-masculine behaviour and Paolo's tenderness: "Paolo, you haven't drunk yet. / Drink, because you are pale"[283] (284). His treatment of Paolo is condescending, he keeps comparing his strength to Paolo's and highlights his mistakes, touching his shoulder in a patronising way (286).

Another victim of this compulsory virility is Malatestino who is brought back from the battle bleeding in Scene V, Act II. His wounds are taken care of by Francesca: amazed by her tenderness, he falls in love with her, as he has never experienced validation from anyone else. Since Emilia Varini played Malatestino, this scene must have conveyed strong homoerotic undertones. Malatestino is labelled as strange and perverse by everyone and he does not feel validated in the family. Gianciotto does not consider him manly enough, therefore he does not let him kill their major enemy Ugolino. As a result, his behaviour shows a constant effort to act up, to look strong, masculine and violent, hence when he is dying, he already wants to go back

sposa non deve volere, zitella, se ha la disgrazia di rimanere zitella, non deve vivere, non ha il diritto di vivere."

[281] A similar scene appears in Yeats's *The Death of Cuchulain* (1939), where Cuchulain admits to Eithne Inguba that he is afraid, thus Inguba takes him in her arms.

[282] "Figlia di Guido, bene ti stampò / il tuo padre. E il Signore mi ti faccia / fertile, sì che tu mi doni più / d'un leoncello!"

[283] Paolo, e tu non hai / anco bevuto. Bevi, perché sei / pallido."

to the battle to prove to his brother that he is a valuable member of the family.

Francesca senses Malatestino's violent frustration and confesses to Smaragdi that she is afraid of him and asks her protection (297), highlighting that women are destined to the same fate: "You were blindfolded as well. / And blindfolded was from the same fate / my father's iniquity. We were / all powerless and pitiless / and miserable and ignorant, / on the banks of a river, / innocent all of us, / on the banks of a rapid river"[284] (296). Moreover, Francesca tells Smaragdi her recurring dream about male violence on women which resembles Nastagio degli Onesti's story she heard from Bannino. In Francesca's dream, a naked, disheveled, lacerated woman is fleeing from a man and two mastiffs, crying and asking for mercy, as the mastiffs are biting her. Right behind the mastiffs a black knight is chasing her too, threatening her with frightening words (299-300). This scene highlights how oppressed, exposed and intimidated women are in a violent patriarchal society, as this scene features two strong women's concerns about and criticism of male violence. Significantly, this scene is situated before Malatestino's harassment of Francesca and Gianciotto's violence. In fact, the famous kiss scene that happens in Scene V, Act III between Paolo and Francesca while reading is completely marginalised in this play. The focus has been shifted to the strength and vulnerability of Francesca's body which is exposed to male violence.

Malatestino's complex character is full of longing for acceptance and tenderness, yet when the only person who seems to love him rejects him, he opts for violence and decides to take revenge on his own family, telling Gianciotto about the affair between Francesca and their brother. At the beginning of Act V, Malatestino is kneeling before Francesca showing her a dead hawk, expecting kind words from her, yet she reproaches him instead: "You are a cruel boy / to take revenge on a hawk! / Why did you kill it if

[284] "Anche su gli occhi tuoi era la benda. / E bendata era dalla stessa sorte / l'iniquità del mio padre. Eravamo / tutti senza potere e dispietati / e miseri et ignari, / su la riva d'un fiume, / incolpevoli tutti, / su la riva d'un fiume rapinoso."

you / loved it?"[285] (318) and she wonders "Why are you so strange? / Greedy for blood / you are, always vigilant, / enemy to all. In every word of yours / there is an obscure threat"[286] (319). Francesca assumes that this behaviour is the result of being neglected by his family: "Didn't your mother give you milk?"[287] (319). Since Malatestino continues with his possessive and violent confessions of desire for Francesca, she warns him "Don't you feel ashamed?"[288] (319) and exclaims "You are a perverse boy"[289] (320). This scene is about harassment, as Francesca feels entrapped by this violent boy who wants to force his desire on her even though his brother is about to appear. In the meantime, sounds of violence can be heard, as the prisoner Ugolino is being tortured, thus Francesca's body position begins to show vulnerability: she goes near the window, far from Malatestino, sits down and puts her head in her hands (322). Malatestino disappears but only to return soon with the severed head of Ugolino which he proudly presents to Gianciotto and Francesca to demonstrate his virility. Instead of acknowledgement, Gianciotto reproaches him: "Weren't you afraid of disobeying your father?"[290] (326). To make himself useful to Gianciotto and to take revenge on everyone who has doubted his strength, he reveals the affair between Francesca and Paolo, which is the first time he is taken seriously by Gianciotto. Gianciotto lets him make a plan and is willing to follow him whereby they pretend to leave the house to create a trap for the lovers only to suddenly return and ambush them. When Paolo returns, he is disgusted with this evidence of violence (the severed head), and now Malatestino can

Figure 18: Emilia Varini (Malatestino) and Carlo Rosaspina (Gianciotto), 1901. Archivio Eleonora Duse, Istituto per il Teatro e il Melodramma, Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice.

[285] "Sei un fanciullo crudele, che prendi / vendetta d'un falcone! / Perché l'hai morto, mentre pur l'avevi / caro?"
[286] "Perché tanto sei strano? / Avido d'ogni sangue / tu sei, sempre in agguato, / nemico a tutti. In ogni tua parola / è una minaccia oscura."
[287] "Non ti diede latte la tua madre?"
[288] "Non hai tu vergogna?"
[289] "Sei un fanciullo perverso."
[290] "Non hai temuto di disobbedire al padre?"

mock him for his lack of manliness since he knows Gianciotto is on his side: "I didn't know / I had two sisters / so delicate!"[291] (332).

Besides criticising patriarchal violence and the suffocating atmosphere of the normative family, the play replaces the male martyr with a woman. Francesca, like Fedra and Sebastian, sacrifices herself to protect Paolo and to escape oppression in a violent patriarchal world. As Chomel has noted, both in the middle ages and in D'Annunzio's time, such acts of violence were justified in the eyes of normative society, since the love which Gianciotto punished contaminated the main pillars of bourgeois society, namely the family and marriage: "Because the ultimate morale of the tale, from the medieval scenario to that of the bourgeois society of the beginning of the century, is always the same: Gianciotto's revenge is an honorable crime and as such is justified in the eyes of society"[292] (106). Yet given D'Annunzio's focus on how such violence affects women and forces men to act up, the play invites a scrutinising approach to such oppressive institutions.

3.2 *The Daughter of Iorio*

The Daughter of Iorio (1904) is a three-act pastoral tragedy considered as D'Annunzio's masterpiece. The plot bears resemblance to Yeats's *LHD* and *Cathleen ni Houlihan,* as the happiness of the normative family is threatened by a stranger. A woman called Mila disturbs the family's peace and makes the young Aligi realise that he cannot be happy among his family members who are full of expectations towards him: instead, he chooses the stranger Mila as his non-biological family, since Mila represents freedom for him. In the words of Emilio Mariano: "The first unusual event, without archetypal model, is the intrusion of Mila who is refused by all components of the patriarchal society, except Aligi"[293] (qtd. in Antonucci 1: 411). Chomel has observed that this play is about the clash between the force of the community and freedom, even though she does not elaborate this theme

[291] "Non sapeva / io d'aver due sorelle/ sì delicate!"
[292] "Perché la morale ultima della favola, dallo scenario medievale a quello della società borghese dell'inizio secolo, è pur sempre la stessa: la vendetta di Gianciotto è un delitto d'onore come tale giustificato agli occhi della società."
[293] "Il primo avvenimento inconsueto, senza modello archetipico, è l'irruzione di Mila che tutti i componenti della società patriarcale rifiutano, tranne Aligi."

further: “The meaning that emerges from it is that of a potent tragedy in which the traditions of the clan clash with the aspirations of the individual, the implacable law of the family and the yearning for free choice”[294] (109).

The first production of the play on 2 March 1904 in Milan’s Teatro Lirico saw Irma Gramatica as Mila and Ruggero Ruggeri as Aligi. The performance was a huge triumph due to the extraordinary staging unprecedented in Italian theatre (Antonucci 1: 408). Moreover, the death of Mila at the end could be interpreted as a punishment of such women, yet the play invites another interpretation as well which exalts and creates sympathy for Mila through her sacrifice. The critics were disappointed with Irma Gramatica’s acting, but D’Annunzio chose her for the role in 1915 as well. The play was produced in 1922 and 1927 too with Vera Vergani and Maria Melato as Mila, and in 1934 in Luigi Pirandello’s direction who chose another great New Woman Marta Abba for the role (Antonucci 1: 409), and the production took place on D’Annunzio’s estate Il Vittoriale. As Antonucci emphasises, the essence of the play’s characters is eternal, it speaks to the present and to the past as well (411), and this ever-topical message is related to the patriarchal family and the individuals’ wish for freedom and alternative forms of family. Despite the play’s subversive message, it became D’Annunzio’s most successful tragedy, which is due to the ambiguous interpretations it invites. Interestingly, Antonucci mentions the melodic quality of the play as the main reason for the audience’s enthusiasm: the power of rhythm and poetry meet in this play (108). “[H]ere everything is singing,”[295] (qtd. in Chomel 108) as D’Annunzio stated.

Interestingly, the representative of the patriarchal family and community morals is the mother figure Candia who supports and encourages the violence of her husband Lazaro: she “acts in the name of the father”[296] (Chomel 117). Chomel stresses that the antagonism between the Mother and the Other (the stranger) is a topos of Dannunzian dramaturgy that comes

[294] “Il significato che ne emerge è quello di una potente tragedia in cui si affrontano le tradizioni del clan e le aspirazioni dell’individuo, la legge implacabile della stirpe e l’anelito alla libera scelta.”
[295] “qui tutto è canto”
[296] “agisce in-nome-del-padre”

back in *Fedra*, *The Ship* and *La Pisanelle* as well (117). In "La Duse parla del femminismo," Duse has referred to the figure of the mother as the only type of woman in Italian society that has some power over men: "there is one type of woman among the Latin peoples, who is object of the greatest veneration, the mother: but only because her function ennobles her, and because it naturally satisfies our pride to know that there is one person who lives exclusively for us and of us"[297] (qtd. in Mariani 130). The play opens in the family house where the three sisters (Splendore, Favetta and Ornella) are making preparations for their sister-in-law's Vienda's marriage, who, however, does not speak at all in the play, as Aligi's mother Candia speaks for her. When Aligi appears, he conveys anxiety, hence his mother starts worrying about him and stresses the importance of the family and religion. Similar to Ahmed's discussion of the "happy" family's reaction to the queer child ("Happy Objects" 42), here Candia initially expresses being unhappy about Aligi's unhappiness which is then turned into an unhappiness about his refusal to marry, as for normativity, a childless and family-less future implies an inevitable unhappiness ("Happy Objects" 42). Aligi talks about his visions of Christ who consoled him and reassured him not to be afraid, indicating that Aligi feels ill-at-ease with the idea of his approaching marriage (416). He seems to perceive the presence of someone at the door and keeps repeating that he has to return to the mountains, signaling his wish to escape from the family house: "And to the mountain I have to return, / even if you cry, even if I cry, mother"[298] (417).

Aligi knows he thus becomes the reason for the family's unhappiness, yet he prioritises his own will and feelings over his duties towards the family. His mother panics and urges him to get over this melancholia: "Stand up, son. How strangely you talk!"[299] (416) and reminds him that he is making her unhappy: "Aligi, Aligi, why do you want me to cry?"[300] (417). She also claims that the family has to be happy, there is no place for melancholia:

[297] "vi è un tipo di donna, presso i popoli latini, che è oggetto della più grande venerazione, la madre; ma perché la si ritiene nobilitata dalla sua funzione, e perché soddisfa naturalmente il nostro orgoglio sapere che esiste una persona la quale viva escusivamente per noi e di noi."
[298] "E alla montagna debbo ritornare, / anche se piangi, anche se piango, madre."
[299] "Àlzati, figlio. Come strano parli!"
[300] "Aligi, Aligi, perché vuoi ch'io pianga?"

"The sad thing will not enter here"[301] (418). Aligi describes the new life that awaits him as the end of a long dream. He claims he has been sleeping for seven hundred years and comes from far away. This remark signals his difference and his realisation that thus far he has been living a life which he does not feel comfortable with. In fact, what makes Aligi's unhappy is his environment which does not let him fulfill his desires: "the unhappy queer is made unhappy by the world that reads queer as unhappy" (Ahmed, "Happy Objects" 43).

Only Aligi's sister Ornella sympathises with Aligi's pain. She is also the one accepting the stranger Mila and letting her in the house despite her mother's prohibitions. Mila appears in Scene V, Act I persecuted by a group of violent men (the harvesters led by the husband Lazaro) who want to get hold of her body, beat her and rape her. Mila assumes that the values of Christianity will help her and this religious family will save her from the violent men:

> They want to take me,
> creature of Christ, me
> the unfortunate who did not do any wrong.
> I was passing by.
> Alone on the road.
> Then the shouts and the insults.[302] (423)

Candia, however, contradicts the Christian values she keeps referring to "in order to defend the atavistic laws of the community"[303] (Chomel 117). The stage direction stresses both Mila's precarity and Aligi's difference from the rest of his family. Mila is standing alone at the heath and later she is kneeling with her head on her knees in a crouched position, while all the other women are on the other side of the room, and Aligi is standing aside from the group of women, as if paralysed. Only Ornella helps the stranger and closes the door to protect her and "only Ornella takes a step towards the

[301] "La cosa trista qui non entrerà."
[302] "Mi vogliono prendere, me / creatura di Cristo, me / sventurata che male non feci. / Passavo. Ero sola per via. / Allora le grida, gli insulti"
[303] "per difendere le leggi ataviche della comunità"

Stranger"[304] (423) which creates an immediate bond between the two women. Ornella feels sympathy for this woman whose body is exposed to such violence and persecution:

> Breathless you are, creature.
> You are covered with dust, and trembling.
> Don't cry anymore, you are saved.
> You are thirsty and drinking your tears.
> Would you like a sip of water or wine?
> Would you like to refresh your face?[305] (424)

While Ornella prioritises the needs of the body and stands close to Mila, the others are only interested in pinning her down and interrogating her about her origin. Sounds of violence make Mila tremble again, as a group of men is trying to intrude into the house to get her. Aligi seems to be in a trance and almost opens the door but Ornella prevents him and tries to send them away, while Mila is crouching in the shade. The men shout insults at Mila, comparing her to a contagious disease which brings shame on the family (427). Associating Mila with illness further deepens her proximity to the queer historical experiences, as in twentieth-century medical discourses homosexuality was referred to, among many other terms, as a contagious or mental illness strongly linked to shame (Eribon, *Insult* 80). Despite these accusations coming from the members of their community, Ornella and Aligi go closer to the trembling Mila and believe her rather than trusting the men of the community. Candia thus accuses Mila of bringing unhappiness to the family and wants to get rid of her: "The parental visit / you have ruined, and a sad omen / you have put in everyone's heart"[306] (430).

More importantly, this scene portrays Aligi's hesitation between two worlds. His mother orders him to open the door and give her to the men, but Aligi does not want to obey and keeps staring at Mila. Because of his refusal

[304] "Soltanto Ornella farà un passo verso la sconosciuta."
[305] "Affannata sei, creatura. / Sei piena di polvere, e tremi. / Non piangere più, ché sei salva. / Di sete ardi e bevi il tup pianto! / Vuoi un sorso d'acqua e di vino? / Ti vuoi rinfrescare la faccia?"
[306] "La visita del parentado / tu l'hai rotta, e un tristo presagio / hai messo nel cuore di tutti"

to act, one of the women in his family questions his manliness: "What kind of man are you? Has strength escaped your bones …?"[307] (432). Since Aligi disobeys, Candia is ready to open the door herself: "Aligi, I'm talking to you, do you hear me? / Ah, you really have slept / seven hundred years, seven hundred years; / and you don't recognise us!"[308] (432). Aligi finally raises his voice which shows his annoyance with the entire family:

> What do you want from me, mother?
> ……
> Women, what do you want from me?
> That I grab her by the hair?
> That I drag her on the floor?
> That I throw her to the hungry dogs?
> Alright, yes, I will do so. I will do this.[309] (432-3)

When Aligi approaches Mila, she warns him that he is committing a crime against the people of his kind, indicating that Mila and Aligi belong to the same people, both being oppressed (433). When he is about to hit her, he suddenly stops and asks for her forgiveness, as he sees a mute crying Angel behind Mila's back: "Mila di Codra, my sister in Christ, / forgive me for the insult"[310] (435), and promises to burn the hand that wanted to hurt her.

This approach to violence is non-normative and shows similarities with Paolo's character who also confesses to Francesca that he is ashamed of the violence he committed. Chomel has noted that this vision of the mute crying Angel is what turned Aligi against his family again (112). This vision is like a symbol of vulnerable, oppressed people who are denied voice in the family and in society, hence Aligi realises he has to help these people as he is also one of them. As Chomel has phrased it: "Aligi becomes the representative of a law of charity and mercy in open opposition to the

[307] "Che uomo sei tu?T'è fuggita / dalle tue ossa la forza…?"
[308] "Aligi, a te parlo, m'intendi? / Ah, dormito tu hai veramente / settecent'anni, settecent'anni; / e non hai conoscenza di noi!"
[309] "Madre, che volete ch'io faccia? // Femmine, che volete da me? / ch'io l'afferri per i capegli? / ch'io la trascini su l'aia? / ch'io la getti ai cani affamati? / Bene, sì, lo farò. Farò questo."
[310] "Mila di Codra, mia sorella in Cristo, / donami perdonanza dell'offesa."

ancestral laws based on the solidarity of the clan, on distrust and on the rejection of the stranger"[311] (112). Thus Aligi invents new laws to offer an alternative to the laws of the family which poses as Christian and benevolent, yet only until its members obey their rules. Duse has formulated a criticism of the family and religion too: "There is thus very few beauty, intimacy and friendliness in our houses: few religion too, in the highest and broadest sense of the word. Religion in our country, the meditation upon eternal things, is intended as Catholics do, religion of ceremony, exaltation, glory: to pray, it is necessary to go to the church, to our magnificent churches"[312] (qtd. in Mariani 131).

Aligi speaks up for Mila using religious terminology, with which he calms down the harvesters and places the cross on the threshold forbidding them to enter. When his father Lazaro appears bleeding, Aligi is ready to disobey him: "Father, wait. The cross is on the threshold. / You cannot enter without kneeling. / If the blood is wrongful, you cannot enter"[313] (437). Since it turns out he wounded himself while chasing Mila to be able to rape her, Aligi does not let him in, and leaves the family behind with Mila. Chomel reduces Aligi's feeling of difference and resistance to a lack of responsibility and to a romantic protest: "Defending Mila, Aligi affirms the sacredness of the individual against the collectivism of the clan, but his rebellion is rather a romantic protest which ignores the real duties and responsibilities which the free choice entails"[314] (118). However, marginalising conventional, normative duties and responsibilities for the excitement of the unknown is not simply an irresponsible, romantic protest. Through Aligi's attempt to free himself from the traditional family, the play at least portrays strategies to deal with the invisible violence of normalcy, even if the play's protagonist doesn't manage to achieve full freedom. More

[311] "Aligi si fa portatore di una legge di carità e di pietà in aperta opposizione alle leggi ancestrali basate sulla solidarietà del clan, sulla differenza e sul rifiuto dello straniero."
[312] "Dunque poca bellezza, poca inimità, poca amicizia nelle nostre case: poca religione anche, nel senso più alto e più lato della parola. La religione da noi, la meditazione delle cose eterne, è intesa come la intendono i cattolici, religione di cerimonia, di esaltazione, di gloria: per pregare è necessario recarsi in chiesa, nelle costre magnifiche chiese."
[313] "Padre, aspetta. La croce è su la soglia. / Non puoi passare senza inginocchiarti. / Se il sangue è ingiusto, tu non puoi passare."
[314] "Difendendo Mila, Aligi afferma la sacralità dell'individuo contro il collettivismo del clan ma la sua, più che una ribellione, è una protesta romantica che ignora gli impegni e le responsabilità reali che la libera scelta comporta."

importantly, Aligi's behaviour is marked by refusal, which recalls Herbert Marcuse's idea of the Great Refusal which "has been linked to the queer tradition of the refusal of reproduction and of the future-oriented temporality of the family" (Love, *Feeling Backward* 67).

Escaping to the mountains with Mila changes Aligi who becomes more communicative and less anxious in his new world. Even though their relationship is framed as romantic, Mila's role reaches beyond prohibited love: it symbolises freedom and a new kind of family which does not want to oppress him. Mila notes that he will not be the reason of unhappiness for his family anymore: "and you won't be reason for anger / and you won't be reason for crying / to the mother, the bride and the sisters"[315] (441). Aligi talks about his past and how he felt he had to obey his mother, which reads like the story of a trauma (443). Aligi is ready to go to Rome to beg the Church to give consent to this prohibited bond, yet Mila warns him that those people who choose their own path will be treated as outcasts:

> Before you take
> the new road, consider the law.
> The one who perverts the way, will be exhausted.
> Watch the commandment of your father.
> Follow the teaching of your mother."[316] (447)

While holding each other's hands, Mila notes that they are alone, implying their exclusion from society: "we are alone, brother, we are alone"[317] (448).

Mila's love for Aligi is not possessive, as she is ready to let him go if it seems better for Aligi. When Ornella visits her in disguise (Scene V, Act II) and tells her about the family's unhappiness since Aligi left, Mila is willing to give him back not only because of Aligi, but because of her love for Ornella, as Ornella was the one who let Mila in the house. Even in Act III, when all the family is collectively against Mila and Aligi, "Ornella does not

[315] "e non sarà mai più cagione d'ira / e non sarà mai più cagion di pianto / alla madre, alla sposa, alle sorelle"
[316] "Prima che tu prenda / la via nova, considera la legge. / Chi perverte la via, sarà fiaccato. / Guarda il comandamento di tuo padre. / Segui l'insegnamento di tua madre."
[317] "siamo soli, fratello, siamo soli."

participate in the collective excitement"[318] (Chomel 119). Instead, she exhibits a silent solidarity (119) and kisses Mila's feet before she dies, thus the play both begins and ends with intimacy and solidarity between Mila and Ornella. Their bond is just as relevant as the Mila-Aligi relationship, and it echoes feminist and lesbian bonds of solidarity as against a violent patriarchal world.

Scene VI, Act II further elaborates how patriarchal violence works and encourages resistance against it. Lazaro reappears and intrudes into Mila's home feeling "empowered by the *patria potestas*"[319] (Chomel 109). He is not interested in taking back his son, he comes to take Mila with force to rape her. He shows a sadistic enjoyment of the fear he induces in her, as he describes what he is going to do to her before doing it and he keeps laughing (459). When Aligi comes back to stop his father, Lazaro claims the son is not even entitled to ask anything from the father and threatens him: "For the sake of your life, obey"[320] (460). Aligi denies obedience and prohibits him to touch Mila's body, standing between them, yet Lazaro's companions defeat them. Lazaro evokes the law to justify his violence: "Woman, now you have seen that I am the master. / I'm making the law"[321] (463). When he is about to rape her, Ornella and Aligi reappear and Aligi beats his father to death, which seems to him the only way to end patriarchal violence.

Despite Aligi's patricide, his character is criticised by Chomel due to his behaviour in Act III, when the family laments the death of the patriarch and shames Aligi for the consequences of his disobedience, ready to kill him for killing his father. Aligi is criticised because he eventually returns to the family and turns his back on Mila, thus "Aligi represents only an aspiration towards freedom which remains unrealised"[322] (119). What pulls Aligi back to the family is that he cannot live with the consequences of making his entire family unhappy with his parting. As Ahmed observes, "[a]lthough we can live without the promise of happiness, and can do so 'happily,' we live

[318] "Ornella non partecipa all'eccitazione collettiva"
[319] "forte della *patria potestas*"
[320] "Per la vita tua, obbedisci."
[321] "Femmina, or hai tu veduto / che il padrone son io. Do la legge."
[322] "Aligi rappresenta soltanto un'aspirazione verso la libertà che non si realizza."

with the consequences of being a cause of unhappiness for others" ("Happy Objects" 44). In this sense, Aligi's behaviour—his constant will to escape, melancholia and his hesitation between protesting against the family and trying to live up to their expectations—makes him a particularly queer character. What is more, even though Aligi is reassimilated into traditional family, he still breaks its line by killing his father and ruining his marriage.

It is nonetheless problematic that D'Annunzio gives so much visibility to the grief of the family and Lazaro in Act III, which must have contributed to the positive reception of the play at the time. Mila blames herself for everything to save Aligi from the punishment of society and the family: "… Power was great in me. / What made him parricide / was my cry in his soul of which was slave"[323] (481). Yet it cannot be denied that Mila's decision to sacrifice herself challenges the male-centred sacrificial paradigm, especially because a woman saves a man here. Moreover, Ornella's affectionate and intimate kiss on her feet before Mila's death gives Mila the final triumph: "Mila, Mila, Christ's sister, I kiss your parting feet! The Paradise is yours!"[324] (484), which recalls Sebastian's triumph in *Le Martyre*. Even though Aligi is taken back by the traditional family and Mila dies, the play undoubtedly reveals that there are certain individuals who do not feel comfortable in normative institutions and draws attention to the violence and hypocrisy of the patriarchal family and society. The order is reestablished, but the only one who is not happy about it is Ornella:

> Ornella's voice refuses this order and confronts it; the thus recoded myth proposes another scale of values which transcends the traditional message. … The irrefutable message of the tragedy is the denunciation of the blind brutality of the patriarchal system and the exaltation of woman as a site of liberty, diversity, choice, as a subject capable of spiritual ascent.[325] (Chomel 120-1)

[323] "... Potenza era in me grande. / Parricida lo fece il mio grido / nell'anima sua ch'era schiava."
[324] "Mila, Mila, sorella in Gesù, / io ti bacio i tuoi piedi che vanno! Il Paradiso è per te!
[325] "Ma la voce di Ornella rifiuta questo ordine e lo contesta; il mito così ricodificato propone un'altra scala di valori che trascende il messaggio tradizionale. ... Il messaggio

Ornella is therefore the only character who seemingly remains part of the family, but betrays it in the most crucial moments, undermining it from inside. Ornella's gesture of exalting Mila contrasted with the family's treatment of her as an abject other is the kind of combination that makes Mila a queer character according to Love's definition: "Queerness is structured by this central turn; it is both abject and exalted, a 'mixture of delicious and freak'" (*Feeling Backward* 2-3).

Similar to Yeats's *LHD*, D'Annunzio's *Francesca da Rimini* and *The Daughter of Iorio* highlight that the same formula (marriage and family life) cannot make everyone happy. There are some individuals who experience an existential *malaise* as a result of normative societal expectations and thus seek escape from them. Francesca and Aligi might not have been able to achieve the freedom they longed for, but the scripts portray strategies of resisting and critiquing the normative structures the main characters—and so many queer historical subjects—find themselves entrapped in.

4. Conclusion

In my discussion of these five plays by D'Annunzio, I have demonstrated how the scripts can deflect the pillars of normativity and patriarchy through representations of stigmatised desires, queer structures of feeling and social outcasts' clash with power figures. Like Yeats's drama, D'Annunzio's plays would deserve to be mentioned among the works of queer modernism. In fact, like modernism itself, D'Annunzio's plays propose new social possibilities for marginalised subjects, calling attention to the pain they have to endure from oppressive political and social institutions that aspire to erase difference and ambiguity in every field of life. D'Annunzio assigns heroic importance to the stigmatised and the oppressed,[326] giving them voice and visibility to be able to reverse historical power distributions even if only temporarily. Despite the conspicuous affinities between Yeats's and D'Annunzio's drama in terms of representations of gender and sexuality, Yeats had difficulty following D'Annunzio's plays. In 1902, he wanted

inconfutabile della tragedia è la denuncia della cieca brutalità del sistema patriarcale e l'esaltazione della donna come luogo di libertà, di scelta, come soggetto capace di un'ascesa spirituale."

[326] Love has pointed this out as one of the main queer facets of Walter Pater's works (*Feeling Backward* 61).

Joyce to review Arthur Symons translation of D'Annunzio's *Francesca da Rimini* and he revealed to the *San Francisco Examiner*:

> His 'Francesca da Rimini' I can follow easily enough, for that is a flight of fancy. But as drama — Well, in the first act there is an admirable scene with the jester — which has nothing to do with the play. And later there are an astrologer and a peddler — and, as I remember, nothing to do with the play. But at present ... I do not like to say that I do not like D'Annunzio's plays.... I do see most lovely passages in his work, but it will take me perhaps a long time to understand him as an artist that has influenced the whole of Europe. (CL *InteLex*, footnote 3 to Yeats's letter to James Joyce, 9 December 1902)

Even though Yeats did not notice it, the jester scene had a lot to do with the main theme of the play, as a group of confident women spoke up for themselves and refused misogynistic remarks. It equally introduced the oppressive character of Ostasio who acts as a gatekeeper of the traditional family in the play. Yeats's remark demonstrates that sometimes authors themselves fail to notice the affinities between their own works, this is why I did not attempt to build this thesis on authorial intentions and remarks.

I believe there is still much to be done regarding the queer potentials and contexts of D'Annunzio's drama and theatre. Given their relevance and currency, it would be essential to rewrite his plays for the contemporary stage, as their length and often archaic French and Italian language might appear as an alienating factor for contemporary audiences, burying the relevant queer messages that these plays could offer for contemporary queer subjects as well. It would also be essential to translate all of D'Annunzio's plays into English, as it would open up his works to a wider, European scholarly discussion about D'Annunzio's drama. In this thesis, I did not have the chance to offer detailed ideas for queer stagings of D'Annunzio's drama or to include reviews of contemporary performances. Nonetheless, I hope that my readings induce further discussions about D'Annunzio's

theatre and help acknowledge his contribution to queer modernism and queer drama.

Figure 19: Director and actor Sandro Lombardi as Isabella in *Sogno d'un mattino di primavera*, 2007. Source: lombarditiezzi.it. Web. 29 Jan. 2021.

Even though D'Annunzio's plays are rarely staged today, the production of his early play *The Dream of a Spring Morning* (*Sogno d'un mattino di primavera*, 1897) in 2007, originally dedicated to Eleonora Duse, was outstanding in its portrayal of the main character's difference and gender ambiguity, and thus seems appropriate as a concluding note to this chapter. The show was directed by Sandro Lombardi and Federico Tiezzi in Florence[327], and the main character Isabella was played by a man Sandro Lombardi. The cross-dressing element, Isabella's singing parts, and the white face paint all created the impression of a drag show within the play. Costume designer Giovanna Buzzi applied white body-paint and a white half-mask to highlight Isabella's difference from the world that surrounds her and labels her as mad—the body-paint and the half-mask also recalls DancePlayers' production of Yeats's *The Dreaming of the Bones* and indicates the anti-mimetic potential of D'Annunzio's drama.[328] Similar to DancePlayers' re-imagining of Yeats's play for contemporary audiences, the Lombardi-Tiezzi company's show dramatised the contrast between realist drama represented by the characters who pathologise Isabella and a more stylised, body-focused theatre embodied by Isabella. Considering D'Annunzio's life-long efforts to distance himself from the limitations of realist bourgeois drama and create a new kind of theatre through total and

[327] The full show is available on YouTube in Italian: Sandro Lombardi. "Sogno di un mattino di primavera 1.m4v." *YouTube*, 26 Sept. 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-BOxDFKoU8&t=132s.

[328] Lombardi's stage presence equally resonates with the image of Michael MacLiammoir as Aleel in Yeats's *The Countess Cathleen* presented in the previous chapters.

physical theatre techniques, I believe future productions of his plays could follow this direction and use similar techniques to underscore his main characters' difference. Such bolder experimentations with form and style would make D'Annunzio's plays much more accessible and topical for contemporary audiences.

CONCLUSION

1. Project Overview

This queer research has attempted to open up a new field which takes from Irish studies, Italian studies, queer theory, modernist, postcolonial, comparative as well as performance studies, combining and furthering various methodologies to open up new avenues of understanding Yeats's and D'Annunzio's drama today. It has equally sought to shed new light on Yeats's and D'Annunzio's drama which, despite the authors' canonical status, still too often remains overshadowed by their poetry. Thus paradoxically, their plays end up being queered from the canon itself. This thesis has demonstrated that their plays deserve attention today, as they convey unorthodox and deliberately ambiguous messages about power, gender, sexuality and difference, which makes their drama seminal to the queer modernist canon too.

In Chapter 1, I analysed the queerness of the playwrights' literary, cultural and historical contexts to illustrate that the homoeroticism and sexual unorthodoxy that pervade their drama reflect a deeply rooted queer cultural history. In Chapter 2, I uncovered the various queer structures of feeling that appear in five plays by Yeats, including the will to escape from traditional family roles, unexplained anxiety, lesbian intimacies, criticism of patriarchy, male same-sex desires, sadomasochistic power games and reverse power. I explored how these elements resonate with some of the main tenets of contemporary queer theory and reflect Yeats's close relationship with historical queer subjects and feminist icons such as Florence Farr. In Chapter 3, I discussed similar themes in five plays by D'Annunzio with the help of queer theory to stress the commonality between the two playwrights and queer/feminist artists', especially Duse's, influence on D'Annunzio's drama, since this thesis is the first to provide a queer, comparative and dramaturgical reading of Yeats's and D'Annunzio's plays.

Throughout the thesis, I deliberately used the word "queer" instead of "gay," as I do not wish to suggest that the characters or the plays are gay or

lesbian. Fintan Walsh has also stressed in *Queer Notions* that it can be "reductive to attribute sexuality to a text or performance" (4). Using the word "queer," however, offers a fluidity of meaning which is central to the selected plays and denotes "an array of thematic, aesthetic and political positions that work in different ways to critique heteronormativity, with an eye to the future, and the possibilities it engenders" (F. Walsh 4). The thesis has equally illustrated that for normative power, sexuality itself is just as threatening as homosexuality: "the truth is that any text invested in the support of any form of sexual liberty might resonate as blasphemous" (3), as Walsh noted with regard to Ireland's Defamation Act of 2010. The plays I re-examined in this thesis are queer for the same reason as the plays chosen by Walsh for the anthology of queer plays in 2010: "in so far as they explore tensions surrounding sexual difference in the broadest sense, in a manner that illuminates and interrogates issues that affect a wide range of people, including those who neither identify as Irish or queer" (3-4). This queerness in the plays works "to destabilize history, widely accepted truths and grand narratives" (7).

Through this queer and comparative approach to Yeats's and D'Annunzio's drama, this research makes a significant contribution to queer modernist studies, Yeats, D'Annunzio as well as theatre studies. This project is distinctive in that it demonstrates how we can use gender and queer theory to make seemingly obscure texts more accessible and relatable for contemporary audiences. Queer theory has also helped identify a queer alterity in the works of two playwrights who have often been accused of reiterating normative paradigms of gender and sexuality. Queer theorists' works on melancholia, closetedness, the family, failure, and sadomasochism have been equally helpful in tracing the less evident queer feelings in the scripts. Through these representations, Yeats's and D'Annunzio's plays reflected the contradictory gender and sexual politics of their time, actively engaging in contemporary debates about women's emancipation and sexual and gender difference. Queer theory has helped demonstrate that queerness is not restricted to explicit representations of *homoeros* and that there is a

fluid boundary between the homosocial and the homoerotic in literature and in society.

Furthermore, this thesis stimulates readers to continuously rethink what queerness means in terms of content, form and context. It equally invites readers to consider the potential of the ambiguity of meaning in drama and the ways it can offer new ways of addressing difference. The themes covered in the thesis equally encourage readers to explore "how violence and inequality are produced on systemic levels" (F. Walsh, *Queer Notions* 14). More importantly, from the beginning of the project I was aware that Didier Eribon's book *Insult and the Making of the Gay Self* would have a lot in common with my analysis of both Yeats's and D'Annunzio's drama in that their plays visualise the physical and psychic effects of insult that the normative world continuously imposes on marginalised subjectivities, mostly on queer people. All of Yeats's and D'Annunzio's protagonists in the selected plays are non-normative and receive insults from patriarchal and religious authorities for their difference. The plays thus create what Mirzoeff has called "countervisuality" for subjectivities who have been stigmatised and contained by normative power.

The leading mode of theatrical practice in early twentieth-century Ireland and Italy was predominantly naturalist, literary and obsessed with questions of nationhood. Yet this thesis has demonstrated that Yeats's and D'Annunzio drama, who were most closely associated with this kind of nation-building theatre, gradually moved towards a new kind of anti-naturalistic, physical theatre. This new theatre questioned fixed ideas of nationhood through the lens of non-normative sexuality, addressing subversive issues like many of their contemporaries who became known as queer modernists such as Virginia Woolf, Marguerite Radclyffe Hall, Djuna Barnes, Romaine Brooks, Nathalie Barney or Gertrude Stein. Like the insightful papers presented at the "Queer Modernism(s) III" conference I attended in Oxford in 2018, this thesis has suggested "alternative perspectives that offer views of traditionally established modernist texts and authors through a queer prism," (Gürbüz) foregrounding two canonical

modernists, whose drama and queerness have so far remained on the periphery of scholarly analysis.

In an article published in *The Irish Times* on 10 June 2015, Fintan O'Toole lamented that Yeats the dramatist still gets overshadowed by Yeats the poet. O'Toole discusses several alienating factors that create a distance between Yeats's plays and audiences, such as Yeats's initial high ambitions for the theatre to reinvent Irish national culture, his refuge in elitist and aristocratic Noh theatre, his overwhelming symbolism, his focus on the heroic world of Irish mythology and a sense of grandiosity in his drama ("No WB Yeats, no Samuel Beckett?"). What is more, the irony and self-mockery—which are so central to his drama—are often ignored. Even his theatrical innovations—moving between anti-naturalism and naturalism, masks and faces, ancient myths and modern moments—and his introduction of total theatre elements in Irish drama often "work against his reputations" ("No WB Yeats, no Samuel Beckett?"), as people might get the impression that Yeats's plays have nothing to do with real life, socio-political issues and people's experiences.

Chris Moran's review entitled "Why Yeats was a great poet but an awful playwright" published in *The Guardian* in 2009—when all twenty-six of Yeats's plays were performed in New York—can attest to this hostile reception of Yeats's drama. The piece completely dismisses Yeats the dramatist and even though the article is quite reductive, it can demonstrate what many people might feel about Yeats's theatre because of all the above mentioned alienating factors. Moran used to be a drama student and featured in a performance of *A Full Moon in March* which he calls a traumatic experience and a "painstaking variation on the Salome story" (Moran) in which he as an actor felt like a chess piece manoeuvred on board. The adjectives he uses for Yeats's plays include "awful," "indigestible," "opaque," "heavy-handed," "inert" and "slavishly aping the ritual of Noh theatre" (Moran). Moran also accuses Yeats's plays of lacking vitality, spontaneity and criticises Yeats's "self-conscious, humourless aesthetic" (Moran).

O'Toole, on the other hand, urges us to forget about all the alienating factors associated with Yeats's plays and ask the question: "Can they hold the stage and touch something in an audience that approaches them with an open mind?" ("No WB Yeats, no Samuel Beckett?"). This thesis has provided one possible answer to this question by demonstrating that Yeats's and his Italian contemporary D'Annunzio's drama (whose plays are rarely performed because of similar issues) could indeed convey crucial messages about social exclusion, difference and power distributions for contemporary audiences were they staged more often. O'Toole has equally stressed the topical and unorthodox content of Yeats's drama: "the rough red wine of sex and violence" ("No WB Yeats, no Samuel Beckett?") which Yeats distils "into a fine but heady spirit, a short, incredibly potent theatrical essence that goes straight to both the head and the guts" ("No WB Yeats, no Samuel Beckett?"). O'Toole continues that "[s]omeone needs to have enough faith in Yeats's artistry to decide that, in spite of himself, he might have made plays good enough not for aristocrats or pickpockets but for real live audiences" ("No WB Yeats, no Samuel Beckett?"). This thesis has proved that Yeats's drama can, among others, speak to socially marginalised groups, including the queer community.

Stephanie Burt is yet another scholar who has argued for the relevance of Yeats's works to our time's socio-political anxieties, when authoritarian regimes are strengthening in Hungary, Belarus, Myanmar, Turkey, Poland, Brazil, India and in many other countries whose people have been experiencing the "fear of a generation-long authoritarian take-over which will hurt immigrants, people of color and the poor" ("Reading Yeats in the Age of Trump"). Burt wrote the article when Donald Trump came to power and explored how Yeats's lines might offer hope and consolation for better times ahead. Burt encourages us to reread Yeats in these seemingly hopeless authoritarian times, as Yeats captures the feeling of having lost an unfair fight, the clash between honour-bred people and truth twisters and the frustrations of the day ("Reading Yeats in the Age of Trump"). Yeats's works can teach us

> the art of introspective dissent, but also the art of anger at the destruction of institutions, the art of a patriot whose country was not what he thought it was or could be, the art of an idealist let down, an art (not least) that speaks to America from outside America [and to other countries where authoritarianism rules or threatens to take over control]: the thoughtful, angry, frustrated, and painfully memorable art of W. B. Yeats. ("Reading Yeats in the Age of Trump")

Similar to Burt's and O'Toole's article, this thesis has explored the ways in which Yeats can speak to us today, but focusing on his drama and its relevance to the queer community in particular, thus attempting to fill a gap in studies on Yeats's theatre. In *Irish Drama and Theatre Since 1950*, Lonergan mentions Kilroy, Friel and MacLiammoir as the first dramatists who sought to create space for the representation of gay identities (163). However, as we have seen, the list could equally start with Yeats whose drama abounds in queer feelings which are not restricted to explicit homoerotic content. I have explored the dramaturgical tension between the queer and the normative, as each play by Yeats and D'Annunzio covered in this thesis features authoritarian characters who want to oppress and contain individuals who differ from them. But the plays also portray dissident characters who claim the right to existence and perform a spectacular counter-power to resist homogenising discourses. This pattern resonates very closely with our time when authoritarian regimes dominate India, Poland, Brazil, Myanmar, Turkey, Belarus, Hungary and neo-fascist groups are becoming more and more threatening all around the world. The Black Lives Matter movement, the project to destroy or remove the statues of colonisers, the demonstrations against ban on abortion in Poland in November 2020 during COVID-19, and the long and relentless fight by brave drama students for the autonomy of the University of Theatre and Film Arts in Hungary,[329] all epitomise how dissident forces clash with the

[329] See George Szirtes. "Hungary's students are making a last stand against Viktor Orbán's power grab." *The Guardian*, 15 September 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/sep/15/hungary-students-viktor-orban-university-theatre-budapest. Accessed 20 Nov. 2020.

normative power which wants to oppress them in our present. This is exactly what we see in Yeats's and D'Annunzio's drama which encourages resistance to authorities and gives voice to those whose lives normative power wants to silence due to political interests.

I have not found any articles on the relevance of D'Annunzio's drama today, except for one article by Angela Nucera written in 2014 to mark the 150th anniversary of D'Annunzio's birth. Like Yeats, D'Annunzio is acknowledged first and foremost as a poet, which overshadows the topical messages that his drama can convey. Moreover, D'Annunzio's drama has often been described with the same dismissive adjectives that tend to be applied to Yeats the dramatist. For instance, M. F. Nion from *L'Echo de Paris* described *Le Martyre* in the following way in 1911: "I haven't seen anything so lamentably and pretentiously boring as these five acts which are dragging themselves through the incomprehensible in the midst of howling chanting"[330] (qtd. in ""Une Grande Premiere Au Theatre Du Chatelet" 5). Obscurity and pretentiousness (elitism) appear as the alienating factors between D'Annunzio's plays and some of his audiences, not to mention that just like Yeats, he also had high ambitions for theatre to renew an entire nation. Nucera, however, underscores D'Annunzio's internationalism, modernism, his celebration of pleasure and carnality and his multifaceted personality as the main reasons why his works can speak to us today (169-70). The article mentions that since 2010, there is an annual *D'Annunzio International Arts Festival* to promote D'Annunzio's works to contemporary audiences, yet from Nucera's description it is clear that staging D'Annunzio's plays is not part of this festival—the only productions performed during these festivals are short pieces dramatising D'Annunzio's life.

My hope is that this thesis may stimulate people to reread and restage D'Annunzio's plays through queer and feminist lens, reassessing the alienating fascist, nationalist and elitist associations of his drama and making it more accessible to contemporary audiences. Both the characters

[330] "Je ne sais rien de si lamentablement et prétentieusement ennuyeux que ces cinq actes qui se traînent à travers l'incompréhensible au milieu des psalmodies hurlantes."

and the artists involved in the productions of D'Annunzio's plays may give hope and encouragement to our time's freedom fighters—be it the Black Lives Matter movement, the drama students defending their university with their bodies in Budapest or the women on the streets of Poland protesting against the ban on abortion. The historical context of *Le Martyre* and *Fedra* can serve as examples of the power of such resistance, since the former one was banned by French Catholics, while the latter one was banned by the Vatican, yet D'Annunzio and Rubinstein went on with the productions despite religious authorities' attempt to erase the shows.

The New York Herald frequently wrote about D'Annunzio's and Rubinstein's political defiance. One article, for instance, reports that despite the Pope's ban, Rubinstein performed *Le Martyre* in aid of the funds of the Inter-Allied memorial for the soldiers fallen at the Somme, which cannot not but bring to mind Frank McGuinness' *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme*, the first Irish play which featured a kiss between two men. *The New York Herald* reports on 18 June 1922 that after Act II, Mme. Segond-Weber read a message from Rudyard Kipling to the audience: "the true relations between our countries rest, not on the words of men who come and go, but upon the facts of our past and the necessities of our future" ("'Saint Sébastien' Played at Opéra" 1). This excerpt suggests that D'Annunzio's plays can remind us of the mistakes of the past to be able to avoid them in the future, to evade power's traps. Another article from 10 April 1926 celebrates Rubinstein for playing *Fedra* despite the Vatican's ban in Rome and her attempts to remove the veto. Moreover, when people heard D'Annunzio would attend the show too, they ignored the ban and began purchasing tickets ("Ida Rubenstein to Play despite Ban" 7). The Vatican's veto of *Le Martyre* attests to another idea that this thesis has demonstrated: that theatre (and the arts) can indeed pose a threat to religious and political authorities with their reversal of gender roles, focus on sexuality and the body and their subversion of theatrical and social conventions. As McGuinness has phrased it in his foreword to *Queer Notions*: "Theatre is a perfect, subversive place for resisting the herd

instinct" (vii). *The New York Herald* recounted the panic reaction of the Church to D'Annunzio's genderqueer Sebastian on 7 March 1926:

> Three churches in Milan last night offered services in reparation for alleged blasphemous performance. Cardinal Archbishop Tosi preached in one church, warning the congregation against the play. Following the service, those who attended walked solemnly through the streets to the entrance of the Scala, where prayers were offered as evidence of protest. (Pope Blacklists D'Annunzio for 'Sebastian' Play" 1)

It is thus worth rereading Yeats's and D'Annunzio's plays from the past, as they dramatise what Foucault called "the most intense point of a life" ("Lives of Infamous Men," 161): when an oppressed, stigmatised individual whose life was made invisible by power and who grew up in a world of insult, comes up against power itself to confront it with power's own oppressive strategies in order to reject a long history of oppression and victimhood. Yeats's and D'Annunzio's protagonists display how to evade power's traps and allow us into the backstage of authoritarianism and patriarchy, unveiling its manipulative strategies. Rereading these plays today is a way of "spring[ing] the traps that have closed on the present" (Harris, *Irish Drama* 4).

It is also noteworthy that both playwrights were mourned by their close lesbian friends after their death: Lady Dorothy Wellesley and her partner Hilda Matheson were with Yeats beside his deathbed in Hôtel Idéal Séjour in Cap Martin on the French Riviera (Foster, *Arch-Poet* 650-652), and the news of Yeats's death was telephoned through to Yeats's family by Vita Sackville-West instructed by Wellesley (652). D'Annunzio's last days and death were recounted by Radclyffe Hall's partner Una Troubridge in a series of unpublished essays (Ormrod 844) which demonstrate that they spent more time with D'Annunzio in his last months and "Radclyffe Hall wept bitterly on hearing his death and sent, significantly, a large laurel wreath to his funeral" (845).

2. Limitations and Future Research

There are some areas that this thesis has paid less attention to due to limitations of word count and the vast material I had to cover as a result of the project's comparative, multilingual and cross-disciplinary nature. It also means, however, that this research can develop in various directions. My analysis has been predominantly text-based, as it would have been impossible to conduct a thorough close-reading of the play-texts and provide an equally detailed performance analysis of some or all of the plays' production histories.

D'Annunzio's plays were performed very often in his time, since he and Rubinstein took all aspects of the productions in their own hands, but after D'Annunzio's death, the significance of his drama began to fade away and he is very rarely staged today. Hence I decided to rely on Giovanni Antonucci's notes on the first performances of the plays covered in the D'Annunzio chapter and offered details and visual materials on some of these performances in each section, mentioning briefly only one contemporary performance in the conclusion. My approach was similar in my chapter on Yeats, as I equally made brief references to the more remarkable productions of Yeats's time and some performances after Yeats's death, which resonated in some way with my argument. A future project could focus on performance materials only, unearthing all the available materials from the archives, which I did not have time to achieve as part of this PhD. It would be enlightening, for instance, to gather more material on the Druid Theatre's production of Yeats's version of *Oedipus King* which opted for a cross-dressing Oedipus, or Raymond Yeates' *Calvary* and *The Resurrection* which implied the gender ambiguity of the characters through costumes, as I briefly mentioned in Chapter 2. In D'Annunzio's case, the 2007 production of Lombardi-Tiezzi could be a starting point to find other attempts to rethink D'Annunzio for the contemporary stage, but all this would require a separate, performance-focused project. Even though I conducted research in the D'Annunzio archive in Gardone Riviera, I only had access to reviews and photographs most of which are included in this thesis—however, the annotated scripts and most production materials are scattered through various archives.

Another limitation I had to face was the number of queer theorists and studies I included and relied on in the thesis. It is obvious that the themes covered in the plays could call for the inclusion of many other works by Ahmed, Muñoz, Halberstam, Freeman, Bersani, Butler, Love, Foucault, Eribon and Mirzoeff—even though Eribon is primarily a sociologist, while Mirzoeff is a visual culture scholar. However, I decided to focus on specific themes (such as the happy family, the will to escape, unexplained anxiety and melancholia, broken intimacies, sadomasochism, reverse power) which invited particular works specifically by these queer theorists and scholars. I found that relying on their works helps me demonstrate the otherwise less tangible queer historical structures of feeling in Yeats's and D'Annunzio's plays. I realise that the ideas I borrow from queer studies might seem basic for experts in queer theory. However, given that this is the first attempt to approach Yeats's and D'Annunzio's drama through queer theory, I found it wiser to start with the basics and reserve more complex investigations for future research.

My hope is that this queer research on Yeats and D'Annunzio might stimulate scholarship to conduct further broader investigations into the relationship between early twentieth-century Irish and Italian theatre and queer studies. Such a project could include more dramatists from Yeats's and D'Annunzio's time—such as Lina Poletti, Luigi Pirandello, Sibilla Aleramo, Kate O'Brien, Edward Martyn, John Todhunter, Eva Gore-Booth and Florence Farr—to make a broader argument for the significance of modern Irish and Italian drama for queer studies. This research might also stimulate new research exploring only queer women dramatists (both Irish and Italian) who only appear as a context in this thesis, even though they were also playwrights and powerful New Women, such as Lina Poletti, Sibilla Aleramo, Florence Farr, Eva Gore-Booth and Kate O'Brien. In this thesis I could, unfortunately, only focus on heterosexual male playwrights, which, as I proceeded with the research, felt more and more incomplete without these important queer women dramatists who were Yeats's and D'Annunzio's close friends. This thesis might also invite further explorations of the pervasive impact of feminist and queer New Women

actors on the works of canonical, male, straight playwrights—a research initiated in Irish studies by Susan Harris and in Italian studies by Lucia Re. Scholarship needs to underline more often that a play can be queer because of the contexts it grows out of and the artists involved, and that straight male playwrights can write queer plays thanks to their alertness to the vicissitudes of those queer historical subjects they are surrounded with throughout their careers.

Given that both early twentieth-century Irish and Italian theatre were predominantly concerned with questions of nationhood and (post)colonialism, this thesis could have become a research specifically in postcolonial studies, relying on postcolonial theorists. But given that my aim with this project was to prove that Yeats's and D'Annunzio's drama can speak to the experiences of the queer community, I had to limit my theoretical framework to queer theory, otherwise it would not have been possible to keep the analysis coherent and streamlined. What is more, the theme of postcolonialism has been addressed in Yeats studies by several scholars (mostly David Lloyd, Edward Said, Jahan Ramazani, and Alexandra Poulain among others). It would be worth developing this theme further in D'Annunzio's drama, since it has been analysed almost exclusively through colonial, imperialist lens, overshadowing the anti-colonial elements that I have tried to pinpoint in my chapter on D'Annunzio.

While writing this thesis, I have encountered other challenges too, which were directly related to my methodology. The first problem was the issue of authorial intention. At the beginning, I felt the pressure to corroborate the queer traces found in the plays with authorial remarks. However, Love's methodology in *Feeling Backward* reassured me that it was possible to queer texts without relying on authorial intentions. I have struggled with the large amount of cultural, biographical and historical contexts to include in the thesis, as my primary aim was to shift the focus from the contexts to the scripts, as it is the text that has to reveal possibilities for a queer reading. Yet as I examined the queer and feminist contexts of Yeats and D'Annunzio, I realised that these contexts would considerably strengthen and enrich my dramaturgical readings. Thus contexts became just as

important to this thesis as the critical readings, but I had to make sure that these backgrounds did not overshadow the dramaturgical analyses.

It was equally challenging to distribute contextual information evenly in the thesis in order to avoid repetitions. Hence I decided to focus only on queer readings of Yeats's and D'Annunzio's works in the Literature Review, while addressing the queerness of the context in Chapter 1, and briefly referring back to some of these contexts in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. However, there were some contextual details that I decided to keep for Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, as they worked better incorporated in the analysis, such as Yeats's reflections on Edward Martyn and Oscar Wilde, or D'Annunzio's remarkable collaboration with Rubinstein on *Le Martyre*. I divided the Rubinstein topic in two parts: I focused on her innovative art of dance and its physicality in the last section of Chapter 1 to argue for D'Annunzio's move towards physical theatre, while in the last section of the D'Annunzio chapter I included details about their collaboration on *Le Martyre*.

Since D'Annunzio wrote his plays in French and Italian, and there is no available English translation of his collected plays, translation was yet another issue to address. Throughout the thesis, I provided my own translations of Italian primary and secondary sources, sometimes quoting them directly, other times paraphrasing them. This called for the inclusion of some of the original Italian and French texts in the thesis, which was challenging due to the limitations of word count.

Despite all these missing elements and discernible flaws in this queer research on Yeats and D'Annunzio, the hope is that this thesis may stimulate further investigations not only into these two playwrights, but into the lives and works of all those extraordinary women artists whose friendship and collaboration with Yeats and D'Annunzio created spaces that today allow for a queer reading. I hope that this research helps bring Yeats and D'Annunzio closer to a wider queer community as well, who thus far might have thought that Yeats and D'Annunzio had nothing to tell them about how it felt to inhabit norms differently.

Moreover, writing the dramaturgical analyses in Hungary during the pandemic helped me deal with many of the controversial and upsetting political issues that arose in 2020-21. For instance, in November 2020, the Hungarian Government announced that using the unlimited power they had gained at the beginning of the pandemic,[331] they would eliminate Hungary's Equal Treatment Authority. It is also very telling that the first step the Hungarian Government took after receiving unlimited power to tackle COVID-19 was changing the constitution so that on official documents people could only indicate their biological gender, thus making trans people's lives immensely more difficult.[332] Abusing their unlimited power, the government yet again changed the constitution to clarify that in a family a mother could only be a woman and a father could only be a man, thus further undermining the rights of the LGBTQ+ community in Hungary.[333] In June 2021, at the beginning of Pride Month, the Hungarian Government passed a law (the so-called Pedophilia Act) which not only bans LGBTQ+ content in schools and TV shows for under-18s, but also suggests that pedophilia and homosexuality are the same thing.[334] These attacks on the queer community partly originate in the publication of a children's book in September 2020, which included fairy tales about same-sex love, disabled and poor people as well.[335] As a result, one of Hungary's neo-fascist politicians publicly destroyed the book and promised that she would burn and shred other books that might be a threat for Hungarian children.[336] The

[331] See Lili Bayer. "Hungary's Viktor Orbán wins vote to rule by decree." *POLITICO*, 30 March 2020, https://www.politico.eu/article/hungary-viktor-orban-rule-by-decree. Accessed 25 Nov. 2020.
[332] See Shaun Walker. "Hungary votes to end legal recognition of trans people." *The Guardian*, 19 May 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/19/hungary-votes-to-end-legal-recognition-of-trans-people. Accessed 20 Nov. 2020.
[333] See Nick Thorpe. "Hungary Government Proposes Same-Sex Adoption Ban." *BBC*, 11 November 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54902048. Accessed 20 Nov. 2020.
[334] See Rita Beres-Deak, "What is the Hungarian Pedophilia Act and What Is Behind It?" *Lefteast*, 16 June 2021, https://lefteast.org/what-is-the-hungarian-pedophilia-act. Accessed 27 June 2021.
[335] For more information, see this interview with the book's copy editor Enikő Győri and Anna Borgos. "Anna Borgos: It was important for children of different minorities to read heroes they can identify with." *Hungarian Literature Online*, 16 October 2020, https://hlo.hu/interview/anna-borgos-heroes-with-whom-they-can-identify.html. Accessed 19 Nov. 2020.
[336] See Ábrahám Vass. "Mi Hazánk Politician Rips 'Homosexual Propaganda Children's Book' Apart, Reminds Publishers of Nazi Book Burnings." *Hungary Today*, 29. Sept. 2020,

Hungarian PM, instead of criticising this kind of violence, approved of the action, described Hungarians tolerant towards homosexuality and warned queer people: "Leave our children alone."[337] The publishers' mission to create a children's book featuring heroes with whom minority groups can also identify resonates with what we could see in D'Annunzio's and Yeats's drama. Their protagonists are often disabled, poor, marginalised because of their desire or oppressed because of their gender, yet they refuse to feel ashamed of their difference and claim visibility for themselves.

I believe it is important that I have finished this thesis in such an authoritarian, homophobic and xenophobic political environment. Experiencing daily hostility towards queer people and topics like the ones I have covered in this thesis has further confirmed the relevance of this research. This study has also demonstrated that the queer perspective, the ambiguity of meaning and the contradictions that permeate the scripts can work to combat fascist and totalitarian ideologies and narratives. Through the clash between the queer and the normative, the texts offer strategies of resistance to and encouragement in the face of totalising and oppressive political narratives, including the violence of (hetero)normativity and the manipulative strategies of authoritarian regimes. Moreover, while writing this thesis, I was reminded every day that in Hungary, this queer research would have no value at all. I could not talk about this project publicly at LGBTQ+ events without fearing hostility and attacks from the members of the neo-fascist groups who have been boycotting queer events over the last years, encouraged by the government's homophobic remarks.[338] This is why I feel so grateful to Ireland and my research community at NUI Galway, as my colleagues and friends all encouraged me to continue working on this queer research. I have written this thesis hoping that one day I will be able to tell the truth about my research interests without feelings of shame when I

---

https://hungarytoday.hu/mi-hazank-duro-homosexual-propaganda-childrens-book-nazi-burning. Accessed 20 Nov. 2020.

[337] Hebe Campbell. "'Leave our children alone' Hungarian PM tells publisher of LGBT book." *Euronews*, 5 October 2020, https://www.euronews.com/2020/10/05/leave-our-children-alone-hungarian-pm-tells-publisher-of-lgbt-book. Accessed 19 Nov. 2020.

[338] See Tim Hume. "Hungarian Fascists Attacked a Jewish Community Center. It's Not the First Time." *VICE*, 24 October 2019, https://www.vice.com/en/article/mbm45x/hungarian-fascists-attacked-a-jewish-ommunity-center-its-not-the-first-time. Accessed 25 Nov. 2020.

am in Hungary, as currently everything related to feminism and gender studies is demonised by the mainstream political discourse. Yet it is also true that this thesis has grown out of this oppressive and homophobic background whose insults have made me experience feelings that I later found in the plays of Yeats and D'Annunzio and which I have called "queer historical structures of feeling" (24) borrowing Love's phrase. The hope is that through this research, other people from marginalised communities will equally find something in these plays that speaks more directly to their own lives: lines or scenes that can offer consolation, encouragement or any reflection of their sorrow, despair, defiance, joy and their resilient fight for visibility and recognition.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Coogan, Michael D., editor. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha*. 4th ed., Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010.

D'Annunzio, Gabriele. *Tutto il teatro: Sogno d'un mattino di primavera / Sogno d'un tramonto d'autunno / La città morta / La Gioconda / La Gloria / Francesca da Rimini / Parisina / La figlia di Iorio*, edited by Giovanni Antonucci, vol. 1, Rome: Grandi Tascabili Economici Newton, 1995.

---. *Tutto il teatro: La fiaccola sotto il moggio / Più che l'amore / La nave / Fedra*, edited by Giovanni Antonucci, vol. 2, Rome: Grandi Tascabili Economici Newton, 1995.

---. *Tutto il teatro: Le martyre de Saint Sébastien (Il martirio di San Sebastiano) / La Pisanelle (La Pisanella) / Le Chèvrefeuille / Il ferro*, edited by Giovanni Antonucci, vol. 3, Rome: Grandi Tascabili Economici Newton, 1995.

Farr, Florence. *Modern Woman: Her Intentions*. Hermetic Academy Library, 1910. https://www.hermetics.net/media-library/mysticism/florence-farr-modern-woman-her-intentions/

Martyn, Edward. *The Heather Field*. Irish Drama Series, vol. 1, Chicago: De Paul University, 1966.

Ovid. *The Metamorphoses of Ovid*. Translated by Mary M. Innes. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1955.

Wilde, Oscar. *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, edited by Merlin Holland and Rupert Hart-Davis. London: Fourth Estate, 2000.

---. *De Profundis and Other Prison Writings*, edited by Colm Tóibín. London: Penguin Books, 2013.

Yeats, William Butler. *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*. InteLex Electronic Edition, edited by John Kelly. Oxford UP, 2002.

---. *The Works of W. B. Yeats*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1994.

---. *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W. B. Yeats*, edited by Russell K. Alspach and Catherine C. Alspach. London: Macmillan, 1966.

---. *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats*, edited by Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach. New York: Macmillan, 1957.

---. *W. B. Yeats, Memoirs: Autobiography - First Draft Journal*, edited by Denis Donoghue. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1972.

---. *A Vision: The Revised 1937 Edition*, edited by Margaret Mills Harper and Catherine Paul. *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*, vol. 14, New York: Scribner, 2015.

---. *The Collected Works in Verse and Prose of William Butler Yeats*, vol. 7, Stratford-on-Avon: The Shakespeare Head Press, 1908.

---. *Four Plays for Dancers*. New York: Macmillan, 1921.

---. *Later Articles and Reviews: Uncollected Articles, Reviews, and Radio Broadcasts written after 1900*, edited by Colton Johnson. New York: Scribner, 2000.

---. *Essays and Introductions*. London and New York: Macmillan, 1961.

---. *Prefaces and Introductions: Uncollected Prefaces and Introductions by Yeats to Works by Other Authors and to Anthologies edited by Yeats*, edited by William H. O'Donnell. London: Macmillan, 1988.

Secondary Sources: Gender and Sexuality Studies, Queer Theory and Performance Studies

Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. New York and London: Routledge, 2004.

---. "Happy Objects." In *The Affect Theory Reader*, edited by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seighworth. Durham and London: Duke UP, 2010, pp. 29-52.

---. *The Promise of Happiness*. Durham and London: Duke UP, 2010.

---. *Willful Subjects*. Durham and London: Duke UP, 2014.

Allain, Paul and Jen Harvie. *The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Performance*. 2nd ed., London and New York: Routledge, 2014.

Amin, Kadji. *Disturbing Attachments: Genet, Modern Pederasty, and Queer History*. Durham and London: Duke UP, 2017.

Baudrillard, Jean. *Seduction*. Translated by Brian Singer. Montréal: New World Perspectives, 2001.

---. *Forget Foucault*. Translated by Nicola Dufresne. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007.

Benvenuto, Sergio. *What are Perversions? Sexuality, Ethics, Psychoanalysis*. London: Karnac, 2016.

Bersani Leo. *Homos*. Cambridge (MA) and London: Harvard UP, 1996.

Brandstetter, Gabriele. *Poetics of Dance: Body, Image, and Space in Historical Avant-gardes*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2015.

Browne, Kath and Catherine J. Nash. *Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research*. London and New York: Routledge, 2010.

Butler, Judith. "Critically Queer." In *The Routledge Reader in Gender and Performance*, edited by Lizbeth Goodman and Jane De Gay. New York and London: Routledge, 2000, pp. 167-172.

---. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997.

---. *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?*. London and New York: Verso, 2009.

Campbell, Alyson and Stephen Farrier, editors. *Queer Dramaturgies: International Perspectives on Where Performance Leads Queer*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Carter, Julian B. "Chasing Feathers: Jérôme Bel, *Swan Lake*, and the Alternative Futures of Re-Enacted Dance." In *Queer Dance: Meanings and Makings*. Oxford: Oxford UP, pp. 109-125.

Cima, Gay Gibson. *Performing Women: Female Characters, Male Playwrights, and the Modern Stage*. Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1993.

Cowan, T. L. "'a one-shot affair": Cabaret as Improvised Curation." *Canadian Theatre Review*, vol. 143, pp. 47-54.

Croft, Clare, editor. "Introduction." In *Queer Dance: Meanings and Makings*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2017, pp. 1-37.

Davis, Tracy. "The Context Problem." *Theatre Survey*. vol. 45, no. 2, 2004, pp. 203-9.

Dolan, Jill. *Presence and Desire: Essays on Gender, Sexuality, Performance*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1993.

Eng, David L. *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy*. Durham and London: Duke UP, 2010.

Eribon, Didier. *Insult and the Making of the Gay Self*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2004.

---. *Returning to Reims*. Penguin Books, 2009.

Foucault, Michel. "Lives of Infamous Men." In *Power*, edited by James D. Faubion. *Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*. Translated by Robert Hurley et al., vol. 3, Series editor Paul Rabinow. New York: The New Press, 2000, pp. 157-75.

---. *The History of Sexuality. Volume One: An Introduction*. Translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

---. "Friendship as a Way of Life." Translated by John Johnston. In *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, edited by Paul Rabinow. Translated Robert Hurley et al., *Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, vol. 1, Series editor Paul Rabinow. New York: The New Press, 1997, pp. 135-40.

---. "Sex, Power, and the Politics of Identity." In *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, edited by Paul Rabinow. Translated by Robert Hurley et al., *Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, vol. 1, Series editor Paul Rabinow. New York: The New Press, 1997, pp. 163-73.

Freeman, Elizabeth. "Turn the Beat Around: Sadomasochism, Temporality, History." In *The Routledge Queer Studies Reader*, edited by Donal

E. Hall and Annamarie Jagose with Andrea Bebell and Susan Potter. London and New York: Routledge, 2012, pp. 236-262.

Goffman, Erving. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. New York, Touchstone, 1963.

Haggerty, George E. *Gay Histories and Cultures*. New York and London: Garland Publishing, 2000.

Halberstam, Jack. *Wild Things: The Disorder of Desire*. Durham and London: Duke UP, 2020.

---. *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham and London: Duke UP, 2011.

---. *Female Masculinity*. Durham and London: Duke UP, 1998.

Halperin, David M. *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality: And Other Essays on Greek Love*. New York and London: Routledge, 1990.

---. *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography*. New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995.

Hanna, Judith Lynne. "Patterns of Dominance: Men, Women, and Homosexuality in Dance." *The Drama Review: TDR*, vol. 31, no.1, 1987, pp. 27-47.

Havea, Jione. "Lazarus Troubles." In *Bible Trouble: Queer Reading at the Boundaries of Biblical Scholarship*, edited by Teresa J. Hornsby and Ken Stone. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011.

Isaka, Maki. *Onnagata: a labyrinth of gendering in kabuki theatre*. Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 2016.

Jacobsen, Rockney. "Arousal and the Ends of Desire." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 53, no. 3, 1993, pp. 617-632.

Kahan, Benjamin. "Queer Modernism." In *A Handbook of Modernism Studies*, edited by Jean-Michel Rabaté. West-Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, pp. 347-63.

Lorde, Audre. "The Power of the Erotic." In *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House*. Penguin Modern, vol. 23, London: Penguin Books, 2018, pp. 6-16.

Love, Heather K. *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*. Cambridge and London: Harvard UP, 2007.

---. “Queers____This.” In *After Sex? On Writing Since Queer Theory*, edited by Janet Halley and Andrew Parker. Durham and London: Duke UP, 2011, pp. 180-192.

Marcuse, Herbert. *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*. London: Routledge, 1956.

Marinucci, Mimi. *Feminism is Queer: The Intimate Connection between Queer and Feminist Theory*. 2nd ed., London: Zed Books Ltd., 2010.

Mieli, Mario. *Elementi di critica omosessuale*, edited by Gianni Rossi Barilli and Paola Mieli. Milan: Feltrinelli, 2018.

Mirzoeff, Nicholas. *The Right to Look*: *A Counterhistory of Visuality*. Durham and London: Duke UP, 2011.

---. “The Right to Look.” *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2011, pp. 473-496.

Mosse, George L. *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe*. New York: H. Fertig, 1985.

Muñoz, José Esteban. *Cruising Utopia: The There and Then of Queer Utopia*. New York: New York UP, 2009.

Newmahr, Staci. *Playing on the Edge: Sadomasochism, Risk, and Intimacy*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 2011.

Newman, John. “Eating and Drinking as Sources of Metaphor in English.” *Cuadernos de Filología Inglesa*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1997, pp. 213-31.

Powell, Brian. “Cross-Dressing on the Japanese Stage.” In *Changing Sex and Bending Gender*, edited by Alison Shaw and Shirley Ardener. Berghahn Books, 2005, pp. 138-49.

Schechner, Richard. *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. 3rd ed., London and New York: Routledge, 2013.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia UP, 1985.

---. *Epistemology of the Closet*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991.

Turner, Victor. *The Anthropology of Performance*. New York: PAJ Publications, 1988.

Vogel, Shane. *The Scene of Harlem Cabaret: Race, Sexuality, Performance*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Secondary Sources: Ireland

Allison, Jonathan. "The Attack on Yeats." *South Atlantic Review*, vol. 55, no. 4, 1990, pp. 61-73.

Arkins, Brian. *Builders of My Soul: Greek and Roman Themes in Yeats*. Savage, Maryland: Barnes and Noble Books, 1990.

Backus, Margot Gayle. "Sexual Figures and Historical Repression in 'The Dead'." In *James Joyce and the Fabrication of an Irish Identity*, edited by Michael Patrick Gillespie. *European Joyce Studies*, vol. 11, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001, pp. 111-31.

Balázs, Zsuzsanna. "Precarious Bodies and Physical Theater: A Review of DancePlayers' *The Dreaming of the Bones* by W. B. Yeats." *Wheels and Butterflies*, special issue of *International Yeats Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1, edited by Alexandra Poulain and Margaret Mills Harper, Clemson UP, 2021, pp. 89-99. https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/iys/vol5/iss1/10/

---. "Yeats's Queer Dramaturgies: Oscar Wilde, Narcissus, and Melancholy Masculinities in *Calvary*." *International Yeats Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1, Clemson UP, 2020, pp. 15-44. https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/iys/vol4/iss1/3/

---. "An Uncanny Myth of Ireland: The Spectralisation of Cuchulain's Body in W. B. Yeats's Plays." *Embodying/Disembodying Ireland*, special issue of *Études irlandaises*, vol. 42, no. 1, edited by Fiona McCann and Alexandra Poulain, 2017, pp. 61-75. https://doi.org/10.4000/etudesirlandaises.5102

---."'What secret torture?'": Normativity, *Homoeros*, and the Will to Escape in W. B. Yeats's *The Land of Heart's Desire* and Edward Martyn's *The Heather Field*." *Minorities in / and Ireland*, special issue of *Studi irlandesi: A Journal of Irish Studies*, vol. 10, no. 10, Firenze UP, 2020, pp. 23-41. https://doi.org/10.13128/SIJIS-2239-3978-11750

---. The Dramaturgy of Embeddings: Übermarionettes in W. B. Yeats's and Luigi Pirandello's Meta-Theatres." *Australasian Journal for Irish Studies,* vol. 17, 2017, pp. 23-46.

Beaumont, Caitriona. "Women, citizenship, and Catholicism in the Irish free state, 1922/1948." *Women's History Review,* vol. 6, no. 4, 1997, pp. 563-585.

Bourke, Angela. *The Burning of Bridget Cleary: A True Story*. London: Pimlico, 1999.

Brown, Terence. "W. B. Yeats and Rituals of Performance." In *Modern Irish Theatre,* edited by Nicholas Grene and Chris Morash. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2016, pp. 72-87.

Cairns, David and Shaun Richards. *Writing Ireland: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Culture*. Manchester, U.K.: Manchester UP, 1998.

Carville, Conor. *Samuel Beckett and the Visual Arts*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2018.

Cave, Richard Allen. "Wilde's Comedies." In *A Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama, 1880-2005,* edited by Mary Luckhurst. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, pp. 213-224.

---. *Yeats's Late Plays: High Grave Dignity and Strangeness*. London: Oxford UP, 1984.

Conrad, Kathryn A. *Locked in the Family Cell: Gender, Sexuality and Political Agency in Irish National Discourse*. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004.

Cotter, David. *James Joyce & the Perverse Ideal*. New York and London: Routledge, 2003.

Cregan, David. "Coming Out: Frank McGuinness's Dramaturgy and Queer Resistance*." Irish University Review*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2010, pp. 46-58.

---, editor. "Introduction." In *Deviant Acts: Essays on Queer Performance*. Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2009, pp. 1-6.

Cullingford, Elizabeth Butler. *Ireland's Others: Ethnicity and Gender in Irish Literature and Popular Culture*. Cork: Cork UP, 2001.

---. *Gender and History in Yeats's Love Poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993.

---. *Yeats, Ireland and Fascism*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1981.

Deane, Seamus. *Celtic Revivals*. London: Faber, 1985.

---. *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing since 1790*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.

Donoghue, Emma. "Noises from Woodsheds: Tales of Irish Lesbians, 1886-1989." In *Lesbian and Gay Visions of Ireland: Towards the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Íde O'Carroll and Eoin Collins. London: Cassell, 1995.

Ebury, Katherine. "Science, the Occult, and Irish Drama: Ghosts in Yeats and Beckett." In *Science, Technology, and Irish Modernism*, edited by Kathryn Conrad et al. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse UP, 2019, pp. 229-247.

Edwards, Jason. "'The Generation of the Green Carnation': sexual degeneration, the representation of male homosexuality, and the limits of Yeats's sympathy." In *Modernist Sexualities*, edited by Hugh Stevens and Caroline Howlett. Manchester and New York: Manchester UP, 2000, pp. 41-56.

Ellmann, Richard. *Oscar Wilde*. New York, Vintage Books, 1988.

Flannery, James W. "Action and Reaction at the Dublin Theatre Festival." *Educational Theatre Journal*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1967, pp. 72-80.

Fleischer, Mary. *Embodied Texts: Symbolist Playwright-Dancer Collaborations*. Amsterdam-New York, NY: Rodopi, 2007.

Foster, R. F. *W. B. Yeats: A Life I: The Apprentice Mage, 1865-1914*. Oxford, New York: Oxford UP, 1997.

---. *W. B. Yeats: A Life II: The Arch-Poet 1915-1939*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005.

---. *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland, 1890-1923*. London: Allen Lane, 2014.

Frazier, Adrian. "Queering the Irish Renaissance: The Masculinities of Moore, Martyn, and Yeats." In *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Ireland*, edited by Anthony Bradley and Maryann Gialanella Valiulis. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997.

Grene, Nicholas. *The Politics of Irish Drama: Plays in Context from Boucicault to Friel*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004.

---. "London Irish: Wilde, Shaw and Yeats." In *Irish Literature in Transition, 1880-1940*, edited by Marjorie Howes. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2020, pp. 246-262.

Grimes, Lorraine. "'They go to England to preserve their Secret': The emigration and assistance of the Irish unmarried mother in Britain 1926-1952." *Retrospectives*, vol. 5, no. 5, 2016, pp. 51-65.

Harper, Margaret Mills. *Wisdom of Two. The Spiritual and Literary Collaboration of George and W. B. Yeats*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006.

Harris, Susan Cannon. *Gender and Modern Irish Drama*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 2002.

---. *Irish Drama and the Other Revolutions: Playwrights, Sexual Politics, and the International Left, 1892-1964*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2017.

Haswell, Janis. "Yeats's *Vision* and the Feminine." In *W. B. Yeats's A Vision: Explanations and Contexts*, edited by Neil Mann, Matthew Gibson and Claire Nelly. Clemson: Clemson UP, 2012, pp. 291-307.

Herr, Cheryl. *Joyce's Anatomy of Culture*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1986.

Higgins, Geraldine. *Heroic Revivals from Carlyle to Yeats*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Howard, Tony. *Women as Hamlet: Performance and Interpretation in Theatre, Film, and Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007.

Howes, Marjorie. *Yeats's Nations: Gender, Class, and Irishness*. Cambridge, NY: Cambridge UP, 1996.

---. "The Mediation of the Feminine: Bisexuality, Homoerotic Desire, and Self-Expression in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 80, no. 1, 1988, pp. 104-19.

Jones, Susan. *Literature, Modernism, and Dance*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013.

Judge, Rajbir Singh. “Dusky Countenances: Ambivalent Bodies and Desires in the Theosophical Society.” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2008, pp. 264-293.

Kealy, Úna. “Resisting Power and Direction: *The King of Spain’s Daughter* by Teresa Deevy as a Feminist Call to Action.” *Estudios irlandeses*, Iss. 15, March 2020, pp. 178-192.

Kearney, Richard. “Myth and Terror.” *Crane Bag*, vol. 2.1, no. 2, 1978, pp. 125-39.

Kiberd, Declan. “Irish Literature and Irish History.” In *The Oxford History of Ireland*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989, pp. 230-81.

---. *Irish Classics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Laity, Cassandra. “W. B. Yeats and Florence Farr: The Influence of the ‘New Woman’ Actress on Yeats’s Changing Images of Women.” *Modern Drama*, vol. 28, no. 4, 1985, pp. 620-637.

Lanters, José. “Queer Creatures, Queer Place: Otherness and Normativity in Irish Drama from Synge to Friel.” In *The Irish Theatre in Transition: From the Late Nineteenth to the Early Twenty-First Century*, edited by Donald Morse, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, pp. 54-67.

Lapointe, Michael Patrick. “Edward Martyn’s Theatrical Hieratic Homoeroticism.” In *Deviant Acts: Essays on Queer Performance*, edited by David Cregan. Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2009, pp. 73-97.

Levitas, Ben. “The Dancer and the Heart’s Desire: W. B. Yeats and the Theatre of Modernity.” *The Yeats Journal of Korea*, vol. 56, 2018, pp. 111-128.

---. “Modernist Experiments in Irish Theatre.” In *The Cambridge Companion to Irish Modernism,* edited by Joe Cleary. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014.

Lloyd, David. *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-colonial Moment*. Durham: Duke UP, 1993.

---. *Ireland After History*. Cork: Cork UP, 1999.

Lonergan, Patrick. *Irish Drama and Theatre Since 1950*. London, Methuen Drama, 2019.

Longuenesse, Pierre. “Playing with Voices and with Doubles in Two of Yeats’s Plays: *The Words upon the Window-Pane* and *A Full Moon in March*.” *Yeats’s Mask: Yeats Annual No. 19*, edited by Margaret Mills Harper and Warwick Gould. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2013, pp. 103-120.

Luddy, Maria and Mary O’Dowd. *Marriage in Ireland, 1660-1925*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2020.

Lyons, F. S. L. “George Moore and Edward Martyn.” *Hermathena*, no. 98, 1964, pp. 9-32.

Macintosh, Fiona. “An Oedipus for Our Times? Yeats’s Version of Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus*.” In *Performance, Iconography, Reception: Studies in Honour of Oliver Taplin*, edited by Martin Revermann and Peter Wilson. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008.

MacLiammoir, Michael and Eavan Boland. *W. B. Yeats and his World*. New York: Viking Press, 1972.

McAteer, Michael. “‘Stranger in the House’: Alienation and History in *The Land of Heart’s Desire* and *Cathleen ni Houlihan*.” In *Irish Theatre in England: Irish Theatrical Diaspora*, Series 2, edited by Ben Levitas and Richard Cave. Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2007, pp. 35-52.

---. *Excess and Modern Irish Writing: Spirit and Surplus*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

McDonagh, Patrick, editor. *Minorities in/and Ireland*, special issue of *Studi irlandesi. A Journal of Irish Studies*, vol. 10, no. 10, Firenze: Firenze UP, 2020.

McIvor, Charlotte. “‘Albert Nobbs’, *Ladies and Gentlemen*, and Quare Irish Female Erotohistories.” *Irish University Review*, vol. 43, no. 1, 2013, pp. 86-101.

McKibben, Sarah. “Queering Early Modern Ireland.” *Queering the Issue*, special issue of *Irish University Review*, vol. 43, no. 1, 2013, pp. 169-183.

McVeigh, Paul, editor. *Queer Love: An Anthology of Irish Fiction*. Cork: Southword Editions, 2020.

Meyers, Terry L. *The Sexual Tensions of William Sharp: A Study of the Birth of Fiona Macleod, Incorporating Two Lost Works, 'Ariadne in Naxos and 'Beatrice.'* Peter Lang, 1996.

Moane, Geraldine. "Living Visions." In *Lesbian and Gay Visions of Ireland: Towards the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Íde O'Carroll and Eoin Collins. London: Cassell, 1995.

---. *Gender and Colonialism: A Psychological Analysis of Oppression and Liberation*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999.

Mullen, Patrick R. *The Poor Bugger's Tool: Irish Modernism, Queer Labor, and Postcolonial History*. Oxford, NY: Oxford UP, 2012.

Muller, Elizabeth. "Defining Beauty: The Paterian Yeats." *International Yeats Studies,* vol. 2, no. 1, 2017, pp. 24-45.

Murray, Christopher. "Three Plays by Austin Clarke and the *Commedia* Tradition." *Studi Irlandesi. A Journal of Irish Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2011, pp. 175-188.

Norris, David. "Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill 1993. Second Stage Speech, Tuesday 29 June 1993." In *Lesbian and Gay Visions of Ireland: Towards the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Íde O'Carroll and Eoin Collins. London: Cassell, 1995, pp. 13-25.

O'Brien, Conor Cruise. "Passion and Cunning: An Essay on the Politics of W. B. Yeats." In *Yeats's Political Identities*, edited by Jonathan Allison. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996, pp. 29-56.

O'Brien, Cormac. "Gay Masculinities in Performance: Towards a Queer Dramaturgy." *Irish Theatre International*, edited by Miriam Haughton and Mária Kurdi, vol. 3, no. 1, 2014, pp. 75-94.

O'Carroll, Íde and Eoin Collins, editors. "Introduction." In *Lesbian and Gay Visions of Ireland: Towards the Twenty-First Century*. London: Cassell, 1995, pp. 1-13.

O'Toole, Tina. "New Irish Women and New Women's Writing." In *Irish Literature in Transition, 1880-1940,* edited by Marjorie Howes. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2020, pp. 152-170.

Paterson, Adrian. "'Of war and war's alarms': W. B. Yeats from *On the Boiler* (1939)." *Modernist Non-fictional Narratives of War and*

Peace (1914-1950), special issue of *E-rea*, edited by Adrian Paterson and Christine Reynier, vol. 17, no. 2, 2020. https://doi.org/10.4000/erea.9656

Pilkington, Lionel. *Theatre and the State in Twentieth-Century Ireland: Cultivating the People*. New York: Routledge, 2001.

Pilný, Ondřej, Ruud van den Beuken and Ian R. Walsh, editors. *Cultural Convergence. The Dublin Gate Theatre, 1928-1960*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2021.

Poulain, Alexandra. *Irish Drama, Modernity and the Passion Play*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

---. "Failed collaboration and queer love in Yeats's *The Cat and the Moon* and Beckett's *Rough for Theatre I*." *Artistic Collaborations*, special issue of *Ilha do Desterro*, edited by Alinne Fernades, Maria Rita Drummond Viana and Miriam Haughton, vol. 71, no. 2, 2018, pp. 233-244.

---. "'Grant me an old man's frenzy': Age and Rage on the Stage." *International Yeats Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2016, pp. 13-29.

---. "'My Heart Unravelled': Tom Murphy's plays of homecoming." *Études Anglaises*, vol. 56, no. 2, 2003, pp. 185-193.

Preston, Carrie J. "Michio Ito's Shadow: Searching for the Transnational in Solo Dance." In *On Stage Alone: Soloists and the Modern Dance Canon*, edited by Claudia Gitelman and Barbara Palfy. Gainesville, FL: University Press Florida, 2012, pp. 7-31.

Ramazani, Jahan. *The Hybrid Muse: Postcolonial Poetry in English*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001.

Rose, Kieran. *Diverse Communities: The Evolution of Lesbian and Gay Politics in Ireland*. Cork: Cork UP, 1993.

Said, Edward W. "Yeats and Decolonization." In *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.

Schwall, Hedwig. "Allegories of Writing: Figurations of Narcissus and Echo in W. B. Yeats's Work." In *Writing Modern Ireland*, edited by Catherine E. Paul. Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2015.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Finding Feminist Readings: Dante-Yeats." *Social Text*, no. 3, 1980, pp. 73-87.

Thomas, Calvin, editor. *Straight with a Twist: Queer Theory and the Subject of Heterosexuality*. Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

Tiernan, Sonja. "Tabloid Sensationalism or Revolutionary Feminism? The first-wave feminist movement in an Irish women's periodical." *Irish Communications Review*, vol. 12, 2010, pp. 74-87.

Trotter, Mary. "Queering the Irish Actress: The Gate Theatre Production of *Children in Uniform* (1934)." In *A Stage of Emancipation: Change and Progress at the Dublin Gate Theatre*, edited by Marguérite Corporaal and Ruud van den Beuken. Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2021.

Valente, Joseph and Margot Gayle Backus. *The Child Sex Scandal and Modern Irish Literature: Writing the Unspeakable*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2020. https://publish.iupress.indiana.edu/projects/the-child-sex-scandal-and-modern-irish-literature

Valente, Joseph. *The Myth of Manliness in Irish National Culture: 1880-1922*. Urbana, Chicago and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2011.

---, editor. *Quare Joyce*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998.

---. "The Myth of Sovereignty: Gender in the Literature of Irish Nationalism." *ELH*, vol. 61, no. 1, 1994, pp. 189-210.

---. "Ageing Yeats: From Fascism to Disability." In *Irish Literature in Transition: 1880-1940*, edited by Marjorie Howes. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2020.

Walsh, Fintan. *Queer Notions: New Plays and Performances from Ireland*. Cork: Cork UP, 2010.

---. "Touching, Feeling, Cross-dressing: On the Affectivity of Queer Performance. Or, What Makes Panti Fabulous." In *Deviant Acts: Essays on Queer Performance*, edited by David Cregan. Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2009, pp. 55-73.

Walsh, Ian R. *Experimental Irish Theatre: After W. B. Yeats*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

---. “The Dublin Dame: From Biddy Mulligan to Mrs. Brown.” In *For the Sake of Sanity: Doing Things with Humour in Irish Performance*, edited by Eric Weitz. Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2014, pp. 63-75.

---. “Commedia dell’arte and the Gate Theatre.” *Staging Europe at the Gate Theatre*, special issue of *RISE*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2021, pp. 8-26. https://doi.org/10.32803/rise.v4i1.2649

Walshe, Eibhear. “Queering Oscar: Versions of Wilde on the Irish Stage and Screen.” In *Deviant Acts: Essays on Queer Performance*, edited by David Cregan. Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2009, pp. 7-25.

---, editor. “Introduction: Sex, Nation, and Dissent.” In *Sex, Nation, and Dissent in Irish Writing*. Cork: Cork UP, 1997, pp. 1-15.

---. “Oscar’s Mirror.” In *Lesbian and Gay Visions of Ireland: Towards the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Íde O’Carroll and Eoin Collins. London: Cassell, 1995, pp. 149-57.

---. “Sexing the Shamrock.” *Critical Survey*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1996, pp. 159-67.

---. “Invisible Irelands: Kate O’Brien’s Lesbian and Gay Social Formations in London and Ireland in the Twentieth Century.” *Queer Scope Articles*, pp. 39-48.

---. *Elizabeth Bowen*. Irish Academic Press, 2009.

Worth, Katherine. “*Calvary* and *The Resurrection* at the Peacock Theatre, Dublin, September 1986.” *Yeats Annual*, no. 6, edited by Warwick Gould. London: Macmillan, 1988, pp. 278-282.

---. *The Irish Drama of Europe from Yeats to Beckett*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013 [1972].

---. “Meeting Places of Life, Poetry and Theatre: ‘The Circus Animals’ Desertion.” In *Studies on W. B Yeats*, edited by Jacqueline Genet. Caen: Presses universitaires de Caen, 1990, pp. 239-55. https://books.openedition.org/puc/394.

Secondary Sources: Italy

Balázs, Zsuzsanna. “Il teatro dell’*io antitetico*: Lo sdoppiamento dell’*io* nel teatro di Luigi Pirandello e in quello di William Butler Yeats.”

Verbum: Analecta Neolatina, edited by György Domokos, vol. 16, no 1-2, Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, pp. 116-129.

---."Ambiguous Supermen: Performance of Power in Some of Luigi Pirandello's and W. B. Yeats's Late Plays." *Pirandello Studies*, edited by Shirley Vinall, vol. 38, 2018, pp. 29-51.

Bassanese, Fiora A. "Sibilla Aleramo: Writing a Personal Myth." In *Mothers of Invention: Women, Italian Fascism, and Culture*, edited by Robin Pickering-lazzi. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1995, pp. 137-165.

Batson, Charles R. *Dance, Desire, and Anxiety in Early Twentieth-Century French Theatre: Playing Identities*. New York: Routledge, 2016.

Beccalossi, Chiara. "The 'Italian Vice': Male Homosexuality and British Tourism in Southern Italy." In *Italian Sexualities Uncovered, 1789-1914*, edited by Valeria Babini, Chiara Beccalossi and Lucy Riall. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

---. *Female Sexual Inversion: Same-Sex Desires in Italian and British Sexology, c. 1870-1920*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Belzer, Allison Scardino. "Italian Fascism and the *Donna Fascista*." In *Women and the Great War*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010.

Bizzotto, Elisa. "'Children of Pleasure': Oscar Wilde and Italian Decadence." In *The Reception of Oscar Wilde in Europe*, edited by Stefano Evangelista. New York: Continuum, 2010, pp. 124-141.

Bonsaver, Guido. *Censorship and Literature in Fascist Italy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007.

Brinkley, Edward S. "Homosexuality as (Anti)Illness: Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Gabriele D'Annunzio's *Il Piacere*." *New Illnesses—Old Problems, Old Illnesses—New Problems,* special issue of *Studies in 20th Century Literature*, vol. 22, no. 1, 1998, pp. 61-82.

Carlston, Erin G. *Thinking Fascism: Sapphic Modernism and Fascist Modernity*. Stanford, California: Stanford UP, 1998.

Carlyle, Thomas. *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*. London: Chapman and Hall, 1840.

Cenni, Alessandra. *Gli occhi eroici: Sibilla Aleramo, Eleonora Duse, Cordula Poletti: una storia d'amore nell'Italia della Belle Époque*. Mursia, 2011.

---. "Ritratto di un'Amazzone italiana: Cordula Poletti." In *Fuori della norma, Storie lesbiche nell'Italia della prima metá del Novecento*, edited by Nerina Milletti and Luisa Passerini. Rosenberg & Sellier, 2007.

Cestaro, Gary P, editor. "Introduction: Queer Italia: Same-Sex Desire in Italian Literature and Film." In *Queer Italia: Same-Sex Desire in Italian Literature and Film*. New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp. 1-18.

Champagne, John. *Italian Masculinity as Queer Melodrama: Caravaggio, Puccini, Contemporary Cinema*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

---. *Aesthetic Modernism and Masculinity in Fascist Italy*. London and New York: Routledge, 2013.

Choate, Mark. "D'Annunzio's Political Dramas and his Idea-State of Fiume." *Forum Italicum: A Journal of Italian Studies*, vol. 31, no. 2, 1997, pp. 367-388.

Chomel, Luisetta Elia. *D'Annunzio: Un teatro al femminile*. Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1997.

Cobrin, Pamela. "She's old enough to be a beautiful young boy: Sarah Bernhardt, breeches roles and the poetics of aging." *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2012, pp. 47-66. https://doi.org/10.1080/0740770X.2012.685836

Cranston, Sylvia and Carey Williams. *HPB: The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Helena Blavatsky, Founder of the Modern Theosophical Movement*. Santa Barbara, CA: Path Publishing House, 1993.

Cuttoli, Raphael. "Le Martyre de Saint-Sébastien: Création et reprises." *Revue Musicale*, vol. 31, no. 234, 1957, pp. 9–28.

Danna, Daniela. "Beauty and the Beast: Lesbians in Literature and Sexual Science from the Nineteenth to the Twentieth Centuries." In *Queer Italia: Same-Sex Desire in Italian Literature and Film*, edited by

Gary P. Cestaro. New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp. 117-132.

Dondero, Maria Giulia. "Iconografia dannunziana: Il corpo «esposto» in fotografia." In *D'Annunzio come personaggio dell'immaginario italiano ed europeo (1938-2008)*, edited by Luciano Curreri. Brussels: Peter Lang, 2008.

Duncan, Derek. "Secret Wounds: The Bodies of Fascism in Giorgio Bassani's *Dietro la porta*." In *Queer Italia: Same-Sex Desire in Italian Literature and Film*, edited by Gary P. Cestaro. New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp. 187-206.

Giuliani, Gaia. *Race, Nation and Gender in Modern Italy*: *Intersectional Representations in Visual Culture*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

Goulaki-Voutira, Alexandra. "Pyrrhic Dance and Female Pyrrhic Dancers." *RIdIM/RCMI Newsletter*, vol. 21, no. 1, 1996, pp. 3-12.

Granatella, Laura. *Arrestate l'autore! D'Annunzio in scena: cronache, testimonianze, illustrazioni, documenti inediti e rari del primo grande spettacolo del '900*. Bulzoni, 1993, 2 vols.

Guerri, Giordano Bruno. *La mia vita carnale*: *Amori e passioni di Gabriele D'Annunzio*. Milan: Mondadori, 2014.

---. *Disobbedisco: Cinquecento giorni di rivoluzione. Fiume 1919-1920*. Milan: Mondadori, 2019.

Günsberg, Maggie. *Gender and the Italian Stage: From the Renaissance to the Present Day*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997.

Hartford, Jason James. *Sexuality, Iconography, and Fiction in French: Queering the Martyr*. Oxford, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

Hughes-Hallet, Lucy. *The Pike: Gabriele D'Annunzio: Poet, Seducer, and Preacher of War*. London: Fourth Estate, 2013.

Kerr, Rosalind. "Tra(ns)vesting Gender and Genre in Flaminio Scala's *Il (finto) marito*." In *Queer Italia: Same-Sex Desire in Italian Literature and Film*, edited by Gary P. Cestaro. New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp. 105-116.

Ledeen, Michael Arthur. *D'Annunzio: The First Duce*. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2009.

Ludwig, Emil. *Talks with Mussolini*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1933.

Mariani, Anna Laura. "Sibilla Aleramo. Significato di tre incontri col teatro: il presonaggio di Nora, Giacinta Pezzana, Eleonora Duse." *Teatro e Storia: orientamenti per una rifondazione degli studi teatrali,* vol. 2, no. 1, 1987, pp. 67-133. http://www.teatroestoria.it/indici.php?id_volume=57

Mazza, Attilio. *D'Annunzio e l'occulto: con un saggio astrologico di Sirio*. Roma: Edizioni Mediterranee, 1995.

McClure, Laura. *Courtesans at Table. Gender and Greek Literary in Athenaeus*. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.

Minnucci, Franca, editor. *Sarah Bernhardt e Gabriele D'Annunzio: La poesia del teatro (Carteggio inedito 1896-1919).* Altino Chieti: Ianieri Editore, 2005.

Miracco, Renato. *Oscar Wilde: Il sogno italiano (1875-1900)*. Colonnese, 2020.

Nucera, Angela. "Oltre ogni confine: il mondo ricorda D'Annunzio." *Humanities*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2014, pp. 169-186. https://cab.unime.it/journals/index.php/hum/article/view/1452/1165

Ormrod, Richard. "D'Annunzio and Radclyffe Hall." *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 84, no. 4, 1989, pp. 842-845.

Ponzanesi, Sandra. "Queering European Sexualities Through Italy's Fascist Past: Colonialism, Homosexuality, and Masculinities." In *What's Queer About Europe? Productive Encounters and Re-Enchanting Paradigms,* edited by M. Rosello and S. Dasgupta. New York: Fordham, 2014, pp. 81-90.

Re, Lucia. "D'Annunzio, Duse, Wilde, Bernhardt: il rapporto autore/attrice fra decadentismo e modernità." *MLN*, vol. 117, no. 1, 2002, pp. 115-152.

---."Eleonora Duse and Women: Performing Desire, Power and Knowledge." *The Diva in Modern Italian Culture*, special issue of *Italian Studies*, vol. 70, no. 3, 2015, pp. 347-363.

Ross, Charlotte. "'La carezza incompiuta': Queer Aesthetics, Desire, and Censorship in Ticchioni's *Il suicidio di un esteta*." *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 111, no. 2, 2016, pp. 390-412.

---. "Italian Medical and Literary Discourses around Female Same-Sex Desire, 1877-1906." In *Italian Sexualities Uncovered, 1789-1914*, edited by Valeria Babini, Chiara Beccalossi and Lucy Riall. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, pp. 228-250.

Sinisi, Silvana. *L'interprete totale. Ida Rubinštejn tra teatro e danza*. UTET Università, 2011.

Spackman, Barbara. *Fascist Virilities: Rhetoric, Ideology, and Social Fantasy in Italy*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

Trifirò, Katia. "La seduzione dell'eccesso. Sperimentalismi teatrali di Gabriele D'Annunzio." *Humanities*, vol. 3, no. 5, 2014, pp. 82-89.

Welch, Rhiannon Noel. *Vital Subjects: Race and Biopolitics in Italy, 1860-1920*. Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2016.

Witt, Mary Anne-Frese. *The Search for Modern Tragedy: Aesthetic Fascism in Italy and France*. Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 2001.

Woodhouse, John. *Gabriele D'Annunzio: Defiant Archangel*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.

---. "D'Annunzio's Theatre." In *A History of Italian Theatre*, edited by Joseph Farrell and Paolo Puppa. Cambridge (NY): Cambridge UP, 2006, pp. 323-338.

Woolf, Vicki. *Dancing in the Vortex*: *The Story of Ida Rubinstein*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Zitani, Ellen. "Sibilla Aleramo, Lina Poletti and Giovanni Cena: Understanding Connections between Lesbian Desire, Feminism and Free Love in Early-Twentieth-Century Italy." *Graduate Journal of Social Science*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2009, pp. 115-140.

Theses

Lapointe, Michael Patrick. *Between Irishmen: Queering Irish Literary and Cultural Nationalisms*. 2006. The University of British Columbia, PhD dissertation.

Lee, Deng-Huei. *The Evolution of Yeats's Dance Imagery: The Body, Gender, and Nationalism.* 2003. The University of North Texas, PhD dissertation.

McCormack, Christopher. *Flashes of modernity: stage design at the Abbey Theatre, 1902-1966*. 2018. National University of Ireland Galway, PhD dissertation.

Park, Mikyung. *The politics of melancholia in twentieth-century Irish drama by women: Augusta Gregory, Teresa Deevy, Christina Reid and Marina Carr*. 2017. National University of Ireland Galway, PhD dissertation.

Ruane, Aileen. *Entre performativité et altérité : Les traductions québécoises du théâtre irlandais.* 2019. Université Laval, PhD dissertation.

Conference Papers

Bibbò, Antonio. "'How many of these Irish writers are there?': Irish Drama in Liberal and Fascist Italy." Modernist Studies Ireland Works in Progress Seminar, 22 November 2019, NUI Galway. Guest Lecture.

Campbell, Matthew. "The Yeats family comedy." 'Yeats and Eros/Yeats and Paris' Annual Conference of the International Yeats Society, 12-14 December 2019, University of the Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris, France. Conference presentation.

Harper, Margaret Mills. "Yeats's Modernist Dancers." Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 21 February 2019. Guest Lecture.

Kumar, Pawan. "Yeats, the Golden Dawn, and Tantra Philosophy." Yeats and India Conference, 21-22 February 2019, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Conference Presentation.

Poulain, Alexandra. "Blue Balls and the Ethics of Spectatorship: Verlaine, Yeats, Beckett." 'Yeats and Eros/Yeats and Paris' Annual Conference of the International Yeats Society, 12-14 Decemer 2019, University of the Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris, France. Conference presentation.

Rhodes, Daniel. "'The Fragment of the Milky Way': Ectoplasm, Radium, and the Poetics of Materialization." 'Yeats and Eros/Yeats and Paris' Annual Conference of the International Yeats Society, 12-14

Decemer 2019, University of the Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris, France. Conference presentation.

Online Resources

Al-Kadhi, Amrou. "Hidden in plain sight: How gay artists expressed forbidden desire in code." *CNN*, 5 April 2017, https://edition.cnn.com/style/article/queer-art-tate-britain/index.html. Accessed 10 Jan. 2021.

Bayer, Lili. "Hungary's Viktor Orbán wins vote to rule by decree." *POLITICO*, 30 March 2020, https://www.politico.eu/article/hungary-viktor-orban-rule-by-decree. Accessed 25 Nov. 2020.

Beres-Deak, Rita. "What is the Hungarian Pedophilia Act and What Is Behind It?" *Lefteast*, 16 June 2021, https://lefteast.org/what-is-the-hungarian-pedophilia-act. Accessed 27 June 2021.

Bibbò, Antonio. "'Ma quanti sono questi irlandesi?': La letteratura irlandese in Italia a inizio Novecento e i suoi mediatori." *Tradurre: pratiche teorie strumenti*, no. 14, 2018, https://rivistatradurre.it/ma-quanti-sono-questi-irlandesi. Accessed 15 Jan. 2021.

Burt, Stephanie. "Reading Yeats in the Age of Trump." *Boston Review: A Political and Literary Forum*, 29 November 2016, http://bostonreview.net/literature-culture-poetry/stephen-burt-reading-yeats-age-trump. Accessed 20 Nov. 2020.

Campbell, Hebe. "'Leave our children alone' Hungarian PM tells publisher of LGBT book." *Euronews*, 5 October 2020, www.euronews.com/2020/10/05/leave-our-children-alone-hungarian-pm-tells-publisher-of-lgbt-book. Accessed 19 Nov. 2020.

d'Alton, Ian. "'Devoted ladies': the lives of Elizabeth Bowen and Molly Keane." *The Irish Times*, 16 Jan. 2017, www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/devoted-ladies-the-lives-of-elizabeth-bowen-and-molly-keane-1.2936236. Accessed 25 Jan. 2021.

"Decadence." *Tate*. www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/d/decadence/. Accessed 22 April 2021.

Denisoff, Dennis. "The Feminist Occult in Florence Farr's *Dancing Faun*." *Staging Decadence*, 14 November 2020, www.stagingdecadence.com/blog/feminist-occult. Accessed 1 December 2020.

George, Cassidy. "Queer Butoh: Finding Belonging in the Dance of Darkness." *The New York Times*, 21 June 2020, www.nytimes.com/2020/06/21/arts/dance/queer-butoh-virus.html. Accessed 12 Jan. 2021.

Girardi, Antonio. "Theosophy in Italy." *Theosophy Forward*, 13 November 2012, www.theosophyforward.com/index.php/theosophical-encyclopedia/675-theosophy-in-italy.html. Accessed 19 Nov. 2020.

Government of Ireland, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. *Executive summary of the Final Report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes*, 12 January 2021. www.gov.ie/en/publication/22c0e-executive-summary-of-the-final-report-of-the-commission-of-investigation-into-mother-and-baby-homes.

Győri, Enikő and Anna Borgos. "Anna Borgos: It was important for children of different minorities to read heroes they can identify with." *Hungarian Literature Online*, 16 October 2020, https://hlo.hu/interview/anna-borgos-heroes-with-whom-they-can-identify.html. Accessed 19 Nov. 2020.

Gürbüz, Temmuz Süreyya. "Reflections of Queer Modernism(s) III: Queer Networks Conference." *TORCH,* 24 March 2020, www.torch.ox.ac.uk/article/reflections-on-queer-modernisms-iii-queer-networks-conference. Accessed 20 Nov. 2020.

Haitzinger, Nicole and Julia Ostwald. "Ida Rubinstein as Saint Sébastien: Performative Queerness in Modernity." *Corpus,* 25 November 2018, www.corpusweb.net/ida-rubinstein-as-saint-s-bastien.html. Accessed 21 Nov. 2020.

Harris, Susan Cannon. "Watch Yourself: Performance, Sexual Difference, and National Identity in the Irish Plays of Frank McGuinness." *Genders,* Iss. 28, 1998. www.colorado.edu/gendersarchive1998-2013/1998/10/01/watch-yourself-performance-sexual-difference-and-national-identity-irish-plays-frank. Accessed 22 April 2021.

Hume, Tim. "Hungarian Fascists Attacked a Jewish Community Center. It's Not the First Time." *VICE,* 24 October 2019, www.vice.com/en/article/mbm45x/hungarian-fascists-attacked-a-jewish-ommunity-center-its-not-the-first-time. Accessed 25 Nov. 2020.

"Ida Rubenstein to Play despite Ban." *New York Herald* [European Edition], 10 April 1926, p. 7. International Herald Tribune Historical Archive 1887-2013. Accessed 2 June 2018.

Kinahan, Claudia. "Irish Bodies: The Rise of Dance Theatre." *TN2 Magazine,* 6 April 2017, www.tn2magazine.ie/irish-bodies-the-rise-of-dance-theatre. Accessed 1 October 2020.

Moran, Chris. "Why Yeats was a great poet but an awful playwright." *The Guardian,* 24 April 2009, www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2009/apr/24/wb-yeats-poet-playwright. Accessed 20 Nov. 2020.

O'Toole, Fintan. "No WB Yeats, no Samuel Beckett? Fintan O'Toole on why we mustn't forget the poet's plays." *The Irish Times,* 15 June 2015, www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/no-wb-yeats-no-samuel-beckett-fintan-o-toole-on-why-we-mustn-t-forget-the-poet-s-plays-1.2241559. Accessed 20 Nov. 2020.

Phelan, Mark. "An Irishman's Diary on Gabriele D'Annunzio – the 'John the Baptist of Fascism' and would-be IRA quartermaster." *The Irish Times,* 7 March 2018, www.irishtimes.com/opinion/an-irishman-s-diary-on-gabriele-d-annunzio-the-john-the-baptist-of-fascism-and-would-be-ira-quartermaster-1.3417161. Accessed 10 Jan. 2021.

"Pope Blacklists D'Annunzio for 'Sebastian' Play." *New York Herald* [European Edition], 7 March 1926, p. 1. International Herald Tribune Historical Archive 1887-2013. Accessed 2 June 2018.

"'Saint Sébastien' Played at Opéra." *New York Herald* [European Edition], 18 June 1922, p. 1. International Herald Tribune Historical Archive 1887-2013. Accessed 2 June 2018.

Sarà, Daniela. "Emma Gramatica: Interpretazioni/Stile." *Archivio Multimediale: Attori italiani*, 5 December 2011, http://memoria-attori.amati.fupress.net/S100?idattore=63&idmenu=5. Accessed 10 October 2020.

---. "Irma Gramatica: Interpretazioni/Stile." *Archivio Multimediale: Attori italiani*, 12 December 2011, http://memoria-attori.amati.fupress.net/S100?pager.offset=15&idattore=2050&idmenu=5. Accessed 10 October 2020.

Szirtes, George. "Hungary's students are making a last stand against Viktor Orbán's power grab." *The Guardian*, 15 September 2020, www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/sep/15/hungary-students-viktor-orban-university-theatre-budapest. Accessed 20 Nov. 2020.

Thorpe, Nick. "Hungary Government Proposes Same-Sex Adoption Ban." *BBC*, 11 November 2020, www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54902048. Accessed 20 Nov. 2020.

"Une Grande Premiere Au Theatre Du Chatelet." *New York Herald* [European Edition], 23 May 1911, p. 5. International Herald Tribune Historical Archive 1887-2013. Accessed 2 June 2018.

Vass, Ábrahám. "Mi Hazánk Politician Rips 'Homosexual Propaganda Children's Book' Apart, Reminds Publishers of Nazi Book Burnings." *Hungary Today*, 29. Sept. 2020, https://hungarytoday.hu/mi-hazank-duro-homosexual-propaganda-childrens-book-nazi-burning. Accessed 20 Nov. 2020.

Walker, Shaun. "Hungary votes to end legal recognition of trans people." *The Guardian*, 19 May 2020, www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/19/hungary-votes-to-end-legal-recognition-of-trans-people. Accessed 20 Nov. 2020.

Zitani, Ellen. "The Five Senses of Lesbian Desire in the Letters from Sibilla Aleramo to Lina Poletti." 2010, pp. 1-10.

https://docplayer.net/35448763-The-five-senses-of-lesbian-desire-in-the-letters-from-sibilla-aleramo-to-lina-poletti.html.

Audio-Visual Material

Lombardi, Sandro. "Sogno di un mattino di primavera 1.m4v." *YouTube*, 26 Sept. 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-BOxDFKoU8&t=132s.

Mariani, Anna Laura. "Emma Gramatica." *Rai Radio 3*, 8 Nov. 2018, www.raiplayradio.it/audio/2018/10/WIKIRADIO---Emma-Gramatica-20bb5a51-c571-4677-9b13-7a3ca8354ff3.html.

Sommi, Luca. "Intervista a Giordano Bruno Guerri." *YouTube*, 21 July 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOmsB-XxWvU.