

‘Great Joys Were My Share Always’: Ibsenite echoes in Synge’s *Deirdre of the Sorrows*

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On 23 October 1907, John Millington Synge wrote a letter to his fiancée Molly Algood – in which, perhaps surprisingly, he urged her not to go to the theatre. ‘By the way if you are unwell tomorrow night I HOPE YOU WON’T GO,’ he wrote.¹ ‘It would be very very bad for you rushing down to the Gaiety,’ he continued. ‘PLEASE don’t, REMEMBER what you’ve been THROUGH and don’t have it, or worse over again’. For emphasis, Synge had underlined the words ‘please’, ‘remember’ and ‘through’ six times each, while the phrase ‘I hope you won’t go’ was underlined five times.

Synge’s apparent intention was to preserve Molly’s health, but he was also unenthusiastic about the play itself. The production was Ibsen’s *Hedda Gabler*, one of four works being performed in repertory that week at the Gaiety by Mrs Patrick Campbell. ‘I don’t think I’ll go,’ wrote Synge. ‘I’m sure I won’t like her at all’ – referring, one presumes, to Mrs Campbell rather than to Hedda. The rest of his letter expresses Synge’s views on how Molly might perform the part of Nora in a special staging of his *Shadow of the Glen*, which was being produced especially for a visit by Mrs Campbell to the Abbey Theatre later that week. As this essay explores, this letter was not the first piece of writing that considers Ibsen and *Shadow* in the same context – though Synge (quite understandably) does not develop the link explicitly.

Synge might have had another reason for not wanting to attend the production of Ibsen’s drama. As was indicated by the letter he had sent to Molly on the previous day (22 October), he had just made a breakthrough with his new play, which he had begun during the previous month. ‘I wrote 10 pages of it in great spirits and joy’, he told her. ‘Alas I know that that is only the go-off. There’ll be great anguish still before I get her done if I ever do’ (70). That play was *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, and Synge never did ‘get her done’ – because he died less than eighteen months later, leaving it unfinished (though Yeats, Lady Gregory, and Molly did work together to produce a stageworthy version of the play, which appeared at the Abbey in January 1910, with Molly playing the lead role). As for *Hedda Gabler* – of course, Synge didn’t attend the play but (of course) Molly did, as did Yeats and many others associated with the Abbey and Dublin’s other theatres.

It is almost certainly a coincidence that Synge’s first breakthrough with

Deirdre happened during a week when *Hedda Gabler* was being staged in Dublin. Nevertheless, I want to suggest that there are important resemblances between *Hedda* and *Deirdre*, the most obvious of which is that both conclude with the suicide of the eponymous protagonist, who chooses to end her life rather than submit to the demands of a predatory and manipulative older man. The resemblances between the two stories were noted at the time: referring to Yeats's version of *Deirdre*, Francis Sheehy-Skeffington argued that its conclusion made it similar to *Hedda*: 'like Ibsen's play,' he wrote, 'it is really a fifth act'.²

But perhaps more significant than the similarities between the plays are Synge's attempts to distance himself from Ibsen. It would be wrong to make too much of the opinions expressed about *Hedda* in Synge's letter – but it is notable that, at a time when he was starting to work on *Deirdre*, he was also denying any interest in Ibsen, writing dismissively of a production of *Hedda* that was causing enormous excitement in literary Dublin.

This dismissal is notable mainly because Synge had taken pains to repudiate the influence of Ibsen throughout 1907. He did so most famously in the preface to *The Playboy of the Western World*, dated 21 January 1907:

In the modern literature of the towns... richness is found only in sonnets, or prose poems, or in one or two elaborate books that are far away from the profound and common interests of life. One has, on one side, Mallarmé and Huysmans producing this literature; and on the other Ibsen and Zola dealing with the reality of life in joyless and pallid words. On stage one must have reality, and one must have joy, and that is why the intellectual modern drama has failed, and people have grown sick of the false joy of the physical comedy, that has been given them in place of the rich joy found only in what is superb and wild in reality.³

These remarks are often interpreted as an attack on Ibsen – and, to be fair, the description of intellectual modern drama as a failure does reveal Synge's views on that playwright's lasting value. But, as Christopher Murray points out, Synge's primary criticism of Ibsen is simply that his language is 'joyless and pallid'.⁴ He actually seems to endorse Ibsen's desire to represent the 'reality of life', however – as he expressed most memorably when he wrote to Frank Fay that 'I am *quite ready* to avoid hurting people's feelings needlessly, but I will *not* falsify what I believe to be true for any body'.⁵

Indeed, Synge's preface in some ways re-states an argument made by W.B. Yeats in 1904. 'Ibsen has sincerity and logic beyond any writer of our time and we are all seeking to learn them at his hands', he wrote, 'but is he not a good deal less than the greatest of all times, because he lacks beautiful and vivid language?'⁶

Yeats's point, then, was that it was possible to learn from Ibsen even while disliking the language of his later plays. Synge might have held a broadly similar opinion: Ben Levitas puts it well when he writes that 'Synge's grudging respect for Ibsen's attitude and "efficiency" shows his awareness that to effectively tackle difficult issues required both courage and close attention to formal structure. His criticism of the "joyless" language should be taken in the same light – a specific criticism rather than a general disavowal'.⁷

Three months after he had written the *Preface*, on 28 April, Synge finally published *The Aran Islands*, a book which he had completed some years previously – and a book, also, that fails to mention Ibsen even once. Yet that writer's presence can be detected nevertheless, especially when Synge explains the origins of *The Shadow of the Glen*.

In that early section of the book, Synge restates his claim that the plot of *Shadow* was taken from a story told to him by Pat Dirrane on the Aran Islands. The first part of Dirrane's story is matched closely by Synge's play. A wandering man seeks shelter in a lonely farmhouse, and is brought inside by a young woman whose husband has just died. She asks the visitor to stay with the body while she seeks assistance and, because she gives him alcohol and tobacco, he agrees to do so readily enough. When she leaves, it is revealed that the farmer has faked his own death. 'I've got a bad wife' says the farmer to Pat, 'and I let on to be dead the way I'd catch her at her goings-on'.⁸ In the story, the farmer's wife brings home a young man. When she joins the young man in her bedroom, Dirrane says that:

[t]he dead man got up, and he took one stick, and he gave the other to myself. We went in and we saw them lying together with her head on his arm. The dead man hit him a blow with the stick so that the blood out of him leapt up and hit the gallery. (72)

While there are many reasons for its inclusion, the appearance of this passage in *The Aran Islands* is almost certainly intended to defend Synge against those people who attacked *The Shadow* for being un-Irish. Arthur Griffith, for instance, had declared it 'decadent' 'corrupt', 'cynical', and, worst of all, 'no more Irish than the *Decameron*'⁹, while Arthur Cleary had dismissed it explicitly as 'Irish Ibsenite propaganda'.¹⁰ Synge's defence – which had also been made by Yeats in a 1905 edition of *Sambain* – was that, on the contrary, the story was not just taken from Ireland, but from the Aran Islands, a place seen as preserving the most authentic versions of Irish culture. Synge may have been suggesting, then, that he was doing with *Shadow* precisely what he had done with *Riders to the Sea*: retransmitting one element of the culture of the Aran Islands from a folk setting into an

institutionalised one (that is, the Dublin theatre).

The problem is that, in making that case, Synge was forced to suppress the origins of those parts of the play that were different from the source material – the most obvious of which is that, at the end of Synge’s play, the tramp and the woman of the house leave in each other’s company. Dirrane’s tale implicitly seems to approve of the violent response of the farmer to his wife’s infidelity, but Synge shifts the focus (and the audience’s sympathies) from the farmer to his wife – and uses her forced departure from the family home to criticise the structures of rural Irish society. This alteration of Dirrane’s tale, together with the fact that Synge named his heroine Nora, led many of his first audiences to make the perfectly understandable assumption that *Shadow* was not just inspired by Ibsen but specifically by *A Doll’s House*. And Synge would have been well aware that his play would provoke a debate as fierce as that which greeted Ibsen’s play: he tells us in *The Aran Islands* that Pat’s story leads him into a ‘moral dispute’ with one of his listeners – a dispute that ‘caused immense delight to some young men who had [also] come to listen to the story,’ writes Synge (70). A story of a wife’s actions disrupting the family home will always bring trouble to its teller, it seems, whether that person is Ibsen, Synge, or Dirrane: when Synge listened to Pat’s tale, he was not just taking note of the story but also of the audience’s response to it.

By choosing in 1907 to describe the origins of *Shadow* only in terms of the influence of Pat Dirrane, Synge might have been repudiating Ibsen’s influence for the second time that year. Nevertheless, critics and audiences continued to make the link. In 1913, for example, Cornelius Weygandt’s *Irish Plays and Playwrights* said of *Shadow* ‘that it begins in the manner of Boucicault and ends in the manner of Ibsen, for Nora Burke is in a way a peasant Hedda Gabler.’¹¹ And, indeed, critics have gone on to make the link between *Shadow* and the works of Ibsen many times since then.

Synge had tried to kill off Ibsen in his preface to *The Playboy* in January 1907, and had implicitly dismissed him again in *The Aran Islands* in April. Evidently, by December of that year he felt that, like a deranged father-figure who keeps showing up at inopportune moments, Ibsen needed to be killed a third time. That repudiation was made in his preface to the published edition of *The Tinker’s Wedding*. ‘The drama, like the symphony, does not teach or prove anything,’ he asserted. ‘Analysts with their problems, and teachers with their systems, are soon as old-fashioned as the pharmacopeia of Galen – look at Ibsen and the Germans – but the best plays of Ben Jonson and Moliere can no more go out of fashion than the blackberries on the hedges.’¹² Ibsen was outdated, Synge claimed: he was a once-fashionable ‘analyst’ who had made the mistake of believing that theatre can teach people. So again there seems to be a deliberate attempt to signal his

differences from the Norwegian writer.

Collectively, these passages seem to suggest an anxiety in Synge that his audience will misunderstand his work as having been influenced by Ibsen. This does not mean that Synge was secretly indebted to that writer (though of course his first play *When the Moon Has Set* is overwhelmingly Ibsenite in form, tone and subject matter). Rather, what seems to be the case is that Synge believed that his audiences' awareness of Ibsen was causing them to misinterpret his work. That, in any case, is the point that I wish to propose in this paper.

In doing so, I am trying to chart a middle course between the two general tendencies in scholarship about the relationship between Synge and Ibsen. On the one hand, we have the work of people who say that there was no relationship between the two writers. Weldon Thornton, for instance, suggests that any resemblance between the pair is purely coincidental.¹³ On the other hand, Jan Setterquist argues that the influence of Ibsen pervades Synge's work, discussing the relevance of *A Doll's House* for our understanding of *Shadow of the Glen*, and of *Peer Gynt* for *The Playboy* – an argument that is persuasive and well developed. Setterquist also tends, however, to make too much of what seem like coincidences, arguing for a relationship between *Riders to the Sea* and *Rosmersholm*, between *The Tinker's Wedding* and *The League of Youth*, and between *Deirdre of the Sorrows* and *Love's Comedy*.¹⁴ So my argument is not that Ibsen directly influenced Synge, or that Ibsen had *no* influence on Synge – but that the reception of Synge's plays was affected by his use of techniques and themes that his audiences would strongly have associated with the work of Ibsen, and in particular with his late plays. As his remarks in 1907 show, Synge was aware of the resemblances, even if they were unintentional or coincidental.

Synge was certainly not unusual amongst Irish writers in being linked with Ibsen. As Nicholas Grene has suggested, one of the dominant characteristics of the drama of the Irish Revival was the use of a 'stranger in the house' motif, which he describes as follows: 'A room within a house, a family within a room, stand in for nationality, for ordinary, familiar life; into the room there enters a stranger, and the incursion of that extrinsic, extraordinary figure alters, potentially transforms the scene'.¹⁵ That technique appears in the plays of Synge, Yeats, Gregory and many others, but Grene suggests that it may have been borrowed from or inspired by the later work of Ibsen, whose *The Master Builder*, *The Lady from the Sea* and *Little Eyolf* deploy similar dramatic strategies. The point again, however, is that, even if the borrowing was not deliberate, audiences appear to have been predisposed to see such plays in the context of Ibsen's work anyway.

So it is important, then, not to overstate the similarity of *Deirdre* and *Hedda*. It can be argued that the intensity of both plays is partially a result of its author's personal relationship with particular women – but those relationships, and the

lives of Synge and Ibsen, are generally so different from each other that there is little to be gained from direct comparison. And it is true that both plays end with the suicide of a female protagonist, but so do Ibsen's other late plays *The Wild Duck* and *Rosmersholm*. Indeed, Nora's departure at the end of *Shadow* is a suicide of sorts: Nora knows that she is 'going out to get my death walking the roads', a premonition endorsed by the tramp when he tells her that she'll never be old enough to lose her hair or the light of her eyes.¹⁶ Furthermore, there are many obvious differences between the two plays, in terms of style, language, content, characterisation, setting, and mood. Nevertheless, some areas of overlap can be considered.

For instance, both plays begin with a conversation between two women, who express their anxiety about the relationship between a powerful young woman and a less admirable male figure who is in many ways unsuited to her. In *Hedda*, that conversation is between Miss Tessimson and the servant Berta; in *Deirdre*, it is between Lavarcham and an unnamed old woman, who is also a servant. The author's intention in each case is to predetermine the audience's reception of his heroine. Deirdre, we're told, was 'made to have her pleasure only... and she without a thought but for her beauty and to be straying the hills'.¹⁷ Hedda, somewhat similarly, is referred to as the 'beautiful Hedda Gabler' who is 'terrible grand in her ways'; the two women recall her 'riding down the road along with the General... In [a] long black habit – and with feathers in her hat.'¹⁸ Both plays begin by emphasising the wilfulness, beauty and, above all, the exceptionality of the protagonist, allowing us to be introduced to these women indirectly at first – in both cases from the perspective of two women who occupy a different social role from that of the heroine.

A more interesting similarity is that the development of both characters is dominated by their refusal to submit to the expectations of the men in their lives. Hedda refuses to bear the child of her husband – 'I have no talent for such things,' she says; and her suicide is provoked when Judge Brack offers her a choice between submission to him and public scandal. 'Dearest Hedda,' Brack says. 'Believe me--I shall not abuse my advantage.' 'I am in your power nonetheless' replies Hedda. 'Subject to your will and your demands. A slave, a slave then! ... No, I cannot endure the thought of that!' This prompts Hedda to threaten suicide. 'People say such things,' says Brack. 'But they don't do them'.

Likewise, Deirdre refuses to accept the power that Conchobar claims to hold over her. 'I will not be brought down to Emain as Cuchulain brings his horse to its yoke, or Conall Cearneach puts his shield upon his arm,' she says (199). At the conclusion of the play, Conchobar re-asserts his sense of ownership over Deirdre. 'If I've folly I've sense left not to lose the thing I've bought with sorrow and the deaths of many' he says, moving towards her. Deirdre tells him not to

touch him, and he replies that there are ‘other hands to touch you’ – referring to his fighters who are standing nearby. So Conchobar sees Deirdre as his own possession, as someone who will be controlled by his will or, if necessary, by violence. Like Hedda, Deirdre’s response to his attempt to exercise this power is to threaten suicide: ‘Who’ll fight the grave, Conchobar, and it opened on a great night?’ (265)

It would be wrong to describe either play as ‘realistic’ in the strictest sense of that term. In its characterisation and language, Synge’s play is a far more grounded treatment of the Deirdre story than Yeats’ or AE’s versions – but it is still based in Irish myth. And, like most of Ibsen’s late works, *Hedda* is overladen with a symbolism that constantly threatens to subvert the text’s realistic qualities. Nevertheless, there is evident in both plays a critique of power and its impact on gender – and that critique maps easily onto real debates about women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially as conducted in literature. Like Thomas Hardy and Tolstoy, and like Flaubert, Strindberg and Hawthorne, Synge and Ibsen create female characters whose transgressions threaten society – but they also threaten the conventions of literary form in ways that can only be resolved through the character’s suicide. The fact that such protagonists’ suicide is seen as the only authentic way of bringing closure to those works indicates the need for audiences and readers to think again about social and literary convention. Both plays merit consideration in terms of the broader problem of the presentation of female suicide by male authors at this time.

The major difference between the two works, however, is one signalled by Synge himself. Both plays can be seen as exploring problems that are ‘real’, but Synge’s also includes language that is both beautiful and in some ways joyful. This is particularly evident in the differences between both women’s conception of beauty. Hedda seeks to encourage Lovborg to commit suicide, urging him to ‘do it beautifully’. He asks what she means by this, recalling their shared youthful dream of his having ‘vine-leaves in [his] hair’. ‘No, no’ says Hedda. ‘I have lost my faith in the vine-leaves. But beautifully nevertheless! For once in a way!’ That is, Hedda is no longer able to describe what a ‘beautiful’ death might look like, but demands one nevertheless.

When she first learns of Lovborg’s death, she believes that he’s kept his promise. ‘It gives me a sense of freedom to know that a deed of deliberate courage is still possible in this world,’ she says, calling his suicide ‘a deed of spontaneous beauty’. The truth, however, is that his death was far from beautiful: he shot himself accidentally, not in the breast but in the bowels – and died not in his own lodgings but in the boudoir of the notorious Mademoiselle Diana. So beauty in *Hedda Gabler* is something that is longed-for, something that is remembered – but something that is never actually achieved. Ibsen does not just

omit beauty, as Synge suggested in his preface – he actively denies the possibility of its existence.

It must be noted here that the absence of beauty is an essential element of the presentation of female suicide in nineteenth-century European literature. This point is elucidated by the novelist Milan Kundera, who explains the ‘enigma’ of Anna Karenina’s suicide in terms of ugliness. Writing of Anna’s final day alive, Kundera discusses a scene in which she leaves her carriage and ‘settles into the train’:

[T]here a new element enters the scene: ugliness; from the window of her compartment she sees a ‘misshapen’ woman hurrying by on the platform; ‘mentally she undresses her to chill herself with the woman’s ugliness’. The woman is followed by a little girl ‘laughing affectedly, false and pretentious’. A man appears, ‘filthy and ugly in the military cap’. Finally a couple settles into the seat across from her; ‘she finds them repulsive’; the man is talking ‘some foolishness to his wife’. All rational thought has left her head; her aesthetic perception becomes hypersensitive; a half-hour before she is to quit the world herself she is seeing beauty quit it.¹⁹

Ugliness too pervades the sensibility of Emma Bovary, who is confronted during the novel with the ‘ugly’ Madame Dubuc,²⁰ an ‘ugly little father with a cock’s father in his hat’ (208) and a child who is ‘so ugly!’ (107). Those experiences contrast with her own fleeting beauty. ‘Never had Madame Bovary been so beautiful as she was now’ writes Flaubert: “she had that indefinable beauty which comes from joy, from enthusiasm, from success” (180). The language used to describe that beauty carries with it images of decay, disorder, and moral transgression, however. ‘You would have said some artist skilled in corruption had arrayed about her neck the dropping coils of her hair; they twined in a great mass, neglectfully, betraying the accidents of adultery that so dishevelled her every day’ (182). As with Anna, Emma Bovary’s suicide will be partially motivated by the impossibility of sustaining the beautiful.

In contrast with these heroines, Synge’s Deirdre dies in order to maintain beauty – specifically the beauty of youth. She knows from the beginning that her flight from Ireland with Naisi will bring both of them an early death. ‘I’m in little dread of death,’ she says, ‘and it earned with richness would make the sun red with envy and he going up the heavens and the moon pale and lonesome and she wasting away... Isn’t it a small thing is foretold about the ruin of ourselves, Naisi, when all men have age coming and great ruin in the end?’ (211) The play’s conclusion repeats these sentiments:

I have put away sorrow like a shoe that is worn out and muddy, for it is I have had a life that will be envied by great companies.... It is not a small thing to be rid of grey hairs, and the loosening of the teeth. (*With a sort of triumph.*) It was the choice of lives we had in the clear woods, and in the grave, we're safe, surely. . . . It was sorrows were foretold, but great joys were my share always; yet it is a cold place I must go to be with you, Naisi; and it's cold your arms will be this night that were warm about my neck so often. . . . It's a pitiful thing to be talking out when your ears are shut to me. It's a pitiful thing, Conchobor, you have done this night in Emain; yet a thing will be a joy and triumph to the ends of life and time. (267, 9)

So the major difference between Deirdre and Hedda is that Deirdre actually achieves – both in her use of language and in her actions – the beauty that Hedda longs for.

This discussion leads us back to the preface to *The Playboy*. Synge follows quite closely the patterns established by Ibsen in *Hedda*, introducing his character in a similar fashion, dramatising her relationship with an elder man in much the same way, and so on. Where the two writers depart from each other is in their treatment of beauty. For Ibsen (as for Tolstoy, as for Flaubert), the heroine's death marks the impossibility of achieving or maintaining beauty, not only in society but perhaps also in art. Synge, however, wants to show us that although 'one must have reality [...] one must have joy [...]: the rich joy found only in what is superb and wild in reality' (52).

Perhaps, then, we can see *Deirdre* as Synge's fourth consecutive repudiation of Ibsen in that late stage of his life. But it is a repudiation that also reveals an indebtedness of sorts. Synge used techniques that audiences were likely to regard as Ibsenite – but by emphasising Deirdre's commitment to beauty, he was able to articulate all the more clearly what set him apart from Ibsen. One way of thinking about *Deirdre*, then, is as a dramatic representation of the points that had been made in the preface to *The Playboy*.

My suggestion therefore is that Synge's comments about Ibsen can best be seen as articulating Synge's own approach to writing. Like Ibsen, he is committed to presenting the truth, as he sees it. But if he distances himself from Ibsen, it is not because of Ibsen's politics, but his aesthetics: it is not enough simply to have realism; one must also have beauty – even if it is a beauty tinged with morbidity and despair.

NOTES

- 1 John Millington Synge, *The Collected Letters* Volume II (Oxford University Press, 1984), p.72.
- 2 Quoted by Irina Rupp Malone, *Ibsen and the Irish Revival* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), p.45.
- 3 John Millington Synge *Collected Works IV: Plays 2*. Edited by Ann Saddlemeier. (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1982), pp. 53-4. Subsequent references appear parenthetically in the text.
- 4 Christopher Murray, *Twentieth Century Irish Drama: Mirror Up to Nation* (Syracuse University Press, 2000), p.72.
- 5 John Millington Synge, *The Collected Letters* Volume I. Edited by Ann Saddlemeier (Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 91. Emphases appear in the original text.
- 6 W.B. Yeats, 'The Play, the Player, and the Scene' in *The Collected Works Volume VIII: The Irish Dramatic Movement*, Edited by Mary Fitzgerald and Richard J. Finneran (New York: Scribner, 2003), p.69.
- 7 Ben Levitas, 'J.M. Synge: European Encounters' in *The Cambridge Companion to J.M. Synge*, Edited by P.J. Mathews. (Cambridge University Press, 2009), (77-91), p.80.
- 8 John Millington Synge, *Collected Works Volume II: Prose*. Edited by Alan Price. (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1983), p. 72. Subsequent references appear parenthetically in the text.
- 9 Arthur Griffith, *United Irishman*, 17 October 1903, p.1.
- 10 Arthur Clery, 'The Philosophy of an Irish Theatre', *Leader*, 31 October 1903. p. 155. Quoted in Irina Rupp Malone, *ibid*, p.31.
- 11 Cornelius Weygandt, *Irish Plays and Playwrights* (Dublin, 1913), p.175.
- 12 John Millington Synge, *Plays 2*. *Ibid*. p.3.
- 13 Weldon Thornton, *J.M. Synge and the Western Mind*. (Dufour Editions, 1979), p. 73.
- 14 See Jan Setterquist, *Ibsen and the Beginnings of Anglo-Irish Drama Volume 1*. New York: Gordian Press, 1974.
- 15 Nicholas Grene: *The Politics of Irish Drama: Plays in Context from Bouicault to Friel* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.52.
- 16 John Millington Synge, *Collected Works Volume III: Plays 1*. Edited by Ann Saddlemeier (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1983), p.55.
- 17 John Millington Synge, *Plays 2*. *Ibid*. p. 183. Subsequent references appear parenthetically in the text.
- 18 All quotations from *Hedda Gabler* are taken from the original English version by William Archer and Edmund Gosse (which is the one Synge would have been familiar with). Henrik Ibsen, *Hedda Gabler*. *Trans.* by William Archer and Edmund Gosse. Project Gutenberg. <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/4093> Consulted 14 October 2009. All subsequent references are to this edition of the text, which is not paginated, and thus quotations do not include citations.
- 19 Milan Kundera, *The Curtain* (London: Faber, 2007), p.24.
- 20 Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*. Translated by Geoffrey Wall (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2002), p.11. Subsequent references appear parenthetically in the text.