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978-0-521-29539-0 - A Critical History of Modern Irish Drama 1891-1980

D. E. S. Maxwell

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A critical history of
modern Irish drama
1891-1980

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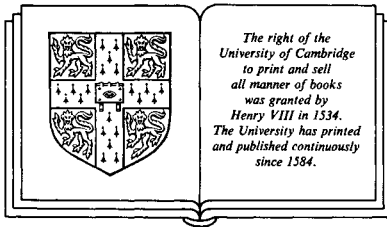
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A critical history of modern Irish drama 1891–1980

D. E. S. MAXWELL

York University, Toronto



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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521295390

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First published 1984
Reprinted 1988
Re-issued in this digitally printed version 2009

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Catalogue Card Number: 84-5801

ISBN 978-0-521-22532-8 Hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-29539-0 Paperback

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Chronology

- 1878 Standish O'Grady's *Bardic History of Ireland*
- 1879 Michael Davitt founded the Land League
- 1880 Charles Stewart Parnell elected leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party
- 1890 Parnell/O'Shea divorce case, Parnell lost control of the Irish Parliamentary Party
- 1891 Death of Parnell; Irish Literary Society initiated in London
- 1892 Irish National Literary Society founded in Dublin; Douglas Hyde's lecture, 'The Necessity for de-Anglicising Ireland'
- 1893 Gaelic League founded; Hyde's *Love Songs of Connacht*
- 1894 William Butler Yeats's *The Land of Heart's Desire* at the Avenue Theatre, London
- 1899 Arthur Griffith founded the *United Irishman*. Irish Literary Theatre's first season, at the Antient Concert Rooms, Brunswick (now Pearse) Street, promoted by Lady Gregory, Edward Martyn, George Moore, and W. B. Yeats: Yeats's *The Countess Cathleen*, Martyn's *The Heather Field*
- 1900 Irish Literary Theatre's second season, at the Gaiety Theatre: Moore's *The Bending of the Bough*, Martyn's *Maeve*
- 1901 Irish Literary Theatre's third season, at the Gaiety Theatre: Moore and Yeats, *Diarmuid and Grania*, Hyde's *Casadh an tSugáin (The Twisting of the Rope)*
- 1902 The essay by John Eglinton (W. K. Magee), 'The de-Davisisation of Irish Literature' printed in the *United Irishman* 31 March. First productions of W. G. Fay's Irish National Dramatic Company, at St Theresa's Hall, Clarendon Street: AE (George Russell), *Deirdre*; Yeats, *Cathleen ni Houlihan*; and in October, at the Antient Concert Rooms: James Cousins's *The Sleep of the King and The Racing Lug*, Fred Ryan's *The Laying of the Foundations*, Yeats's *The Pot of Broth*, and P. T. McGinley's *Lizzy and the Tinker*

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- 1903 Foundation of the Irish National Theatre Society: president Yeats, vice-presidents Maud Gonne, Douglas Hyde, AE; stage-manager W. G. Fay; secretary Frank Fay. First season, at the Molesworth Hall: Yeats's *The Hour Glass* (prose), *The King's Threshold*, Lady Gregory's *Twenty-Five*, John Millington Synge's *In the Shadow of the Glen*, Padraic Colum's *Broken Soil*. In May, at the invitation of the Irish Literary Society, London, the Irish National Theatre Society presented in the Queen's Gate Hall, South Kensington: Yeats's *The Hour Glass*, *The Pot of Broth*, and *Cathleen ni Houlihan*; Lady Gregory's *Twenty-Five*; Ryan's *The Laying of the Foundations*
- 1904 Second season, at the Molesworth Hall, of the Irish National Theatre Society: Yeats's *The Shadowy Waters*, Seamus MacManus's *The Townland of Tamney*, Synge's *Riders to the Sea*. On 11 May the Society accepted the offer of Miss A. E. F. Horniman to give them the use of 'the hall of the Mechanics' Institute in Abbey Street and an adjoining building in Marlborough Street . . . to turn into a small theatre'. On 20 April, Patent in the name of Lady Gregory was granted, and on 27 December the Society presented in the Abbey Theatre Yeats's *On Baile's Strand* and Lady Gregory's *Spreading the News*. Foundation of the Ulster Literary Theatre
- 1905 Sinn Fein founded. Formation of the National Theatre Society Ltd, directors Lady Gregory, Yeats, and Synge; stage-manager W. G. Fay; secretary Frank Fay. Productions included: Synge's *The Well of the Saints*, William Boyle's *The Building Fund*, Colum's *The Land*. G. B. Shaw's *John Bull's Other Island* rejected
- 1906 Theatre of Ireland formed by dissident Abbey members, president Edward Martyn. Abbey productions included: Yeats's *Deirdre*, Boyle's *The Mineral Workers*
- 1907 Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*, George Fitzmaurice's *The Country Dressmaker*, Yeats/Gregory *The Unicorn from the Stars*, Colum's *The Fiddler's House*, *Playboy* riots
- 1908 Resignation of the Fays. Yeats's *The Golden Helmet*, Fitzmaurice's *The Pie-Dish*, Lennox Robinson's *The Clancy Name*. Rutherford Mayne's *The Drone* (Ulster Literary Theatre at the Abbey)
- 1909 Death of Synge. Robinson appointed play-director; his *The Cross Roads*, Shaw's *The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet*
- 1910 Withdrawal of Miss Horniman's subsidy. Synge's *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, Yeats's *The Green Helmet*, Colum's *Thomas Muskerry*, Robinson's *Harvest*, T. C. Murray's *Birthright*

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- 1911 St John Ervine's *Mixed Marriage*. Moore's *Hail and Farewell* published
- 1912 Robnson's *Patriots*, Murray's *Maurice Harte*, Ervine's *The Magnanimous Lover*, Yeats's *The Hour Glass* (verse)
- 1913 Irish Citizen Army and Irish Volunteers founded. Dublin lock-out and strike. Fitzmaurice's *The Magic Glasses*
- 1914 Robnson's resignation as play-director
- 1915 Ervine appointed Abbey manager. Ervine's *John Ferguson*
- 1916 Easter Rising. Ervine's resignation. Robnson's *The Whiteheaded Boy*. Yeats's *At the Hawk's Well* in Lady Cunard's London home
- 1918 George Morshiel (George Shiels) *Under the Moss*, Ulster Literary Theatre, Belfast. Robnson's *The Lost Leader*
- 1919 Anglo-Irish War (to 1921). Robnson re-appointed to the Abbey. Dublin Drama League founded. Yeats's *The Player Queen* by The London Stage Society at King's Hall, Covent Garden. *The Only Jealousy of Emer* published in *Poetry* (Chicago) January
- 1921 Anglo-Irish War: Truce. Yeats's *Calvary* in *Four Plays for Dancers*
- 1922 Anglo-Irish Treaty ratified, Irish Free State established, outbreak of Civil War. Six northern counties retained British connections as Northern Ireland. Shiels's *Paul Twynning*, Murray's *Aftermath*
- 1923 Civil War ends. Robnson appointed to the Abbey Board of Directors. Yeats awarded Nobel Prize. Sean O'Casey's *The Shadow of a Gunman*
- 1924 O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock*, Murray's *Autumn Fire*
- 1925 Abbey granted Government subsidy. Shiels's *Professor Tim*
- 1926 de Valera founded Fianna Fail. Radio Eireann begun. Construction of the Abbey's Peacock Theatre. O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* caused riots at the Abbey. Yeats's version of Sophocles' *King Oedipus*, *The Cat and the Moon*
- 1927 Abbey rejection of Austin Clarke's *The Son of Learning*. Yeats's Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, Shiels's *Cartney and Keeney*
- 1928 Abbey rejection of O'Casey's *The Silver Tassie*. The Edwards/MacLiammóir Gate Theatre began performances at the Peacock
- 1929 Censorship of Publication Act. Abbey rejection of Denis

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- Johnston's *The Old Lady Says 'No!'*; produced by the Gate Theatre at the Peacock. *The Silver Tassie* produced in London. Dublin Drama League dissolved. Yeats's *Fighting the Waves*
- 1930 Gate Theatre opened in its own premises. Yeats's *The Words upon the Window Pane*
- 1931 Johnston's *The Moon in the Yellow River*, Yeats's *The Dreaming of the Bones*
- 1932 de Valera's Fianna Fail party formed government. Murray's *Michaelmas Eve*, Paul Vincent Carroll's *Things That Are Caesar's*
- 1933 Robinson's *Drama at Inish*, O'Casey's *Within the Gates* published, Johnston's *A Bride for the Unicorn* (Gate Theatre)
- 1934 Robinson's *Church Street*, Mayne's *Bridgehead*, Yeats's *Resurrection*, *King of the Great Clock Tower*, Johnston's *Storm Song* (Gate Theatre)
- 1935 Ernest Blythe joined the Abbey Board. Hugh Hunt succeeded Lennox Robinson as play-director. Yeats's *Full Moon in March*, *Poetry* (Chicago), March. O'Casey's *The Silver Tassie*
- 1936 Division of Gate Theatre into Gate Theatre Productions (Edwards/MacLiammóir) and Longford Productions (Lord Longford). Shiels's *The Passing Day*, Johnston's *Blind Man's Buff*
- 1937 New Constitution for the Irish Free State. Hyde elected first President of Ireland. Carroll's *Shadow and Substance*
- 1938 Resignation of Hugh Hunt. F. R. Higgins appointed Abbey managing director. Yeats's *Purgatory*. *The Herne's Egg* published
- 1939 Death of Yeats. *The Death of Cuchulain* in *Last Poems and Two Plays*. Ulster Group Theatre founded. Johnston's *The Golden Cuckoo* (Gate Theatre)
- 1940 Dublin Verse-Speaking Society founded by Austin Clarke and Robert Farren. Shiels's *The Rugged Path*, O'Casey's *The Star Turns Red* (Unity Theatre, London), Johnston's *The Dreaming Dust* (Gaiety Theatre), O'Casey's *Purple Dust* written
- 1941 Death of Higgins, succeeded as Abbey managing director by Blythe
- 1943 O'Casey's *Red Roses for Me*
- 1944 Lyric Theatre Company founded by Austin Clarke. Shiels's *The Old Broom*, (Group Theatre), Belfast

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- 1945 Shiels's *Tenants at Will*. Arts Theatre Studio founded in Belfast by Hubert and Dorothy Wilmot
- 1946 M. J. Molloy's *The Visiting House*. O'Casey's *Oak Leaves and Lavender* published
- 1948 Defeat of Fianna Fail government, Coalition government formed under John Costello. Molloy's *King of Friday's Men*
- 1949 Irish Free State declared independent Republic of Ireland. Death of Hyde and Shiels. O'Casey's *Cock-a-Doodle-Andy* published
- 1950 Seamus Byrne's *Design for a Headstone*
- 1951 Abbey burned down. Lyric Theatre inaugurated in Belfast by Mary and Pearse O'Malley
- 1953 Alan Simpson and Carolyn Swift opened the Pike Theatre. Molloy's *The Wood of the Whispering*, *The Paddy Pedlar*
- 1954 Brendan Behan's *The Quare Fellow* (Pike Theatre)
- 1955 Controversy over Cyril Cusack's Dublin production of O'Casey's *The Bishop's Bonfire*. Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, Pike Theatre and Arts Theatre Club, London
- 1956 Johnston's *Strange Occurrence on Ireland's Eye*
- 1957 First Dublin Theatre Festival. Alan Simpson prosecuted for his production of *The Rose Tattoo*. Hugh Leonard's *A Leap in the Dark*, Beckett's *Endgame* at the Royal Court Theatre, London
- 1958 Dublin Theatre Festival cancelled after ecclesiastical disapproval of the inclusion of work by James Joyce and O'Casey's *The Drums of Father Ned*. Death of Lennox Robinson. Johnston's *The Scythe and the Sunset*. Behan's *The Hostage* at the Theatre Royal, Stratford E., London. Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* at the Royal Court
- 1960 Sam Thompson's *Over the Bridge* independently produced after its censorship by the Group Theatre. Irish television service begun
- 1961 Thomas Murphy's *A Whistle in the Dark* at Stratford E., James Douglas's *North City Traffic Straight Ahead*, at the Dublin Theatre Festival. Opening of Arts Theatre's permanent house in Belfast
- 1962 Brian Friel's *The Enemy Within*, J. B. Keane's *Hut 42*, Beckett's *Happy Days* at the Royal Court
- 1963 Brookborough succeeded as Prime Minister of Northern Ireland by Terence O'Neill

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- 1964 Friel's *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*, Eugene McCabe's *King of the Castle* at the Dublin Theatre Festival
- 1965 Terence O'Neill and his southern counterpart Sean Lemass met, without success, to improve cross-border relationships. Beckett's *Film* at the Venice Film Festival
- 1966 The new Abbey Theatre opened. Friel's *The Loves of Cass Maguire* at the Helen Hayes Theatre, New York
- 1967 Friel's *Lovers* (Gate Theatre)
- 1968 Civil Rights Movement gains strength in Northern Ireland. Murphy's *Famine* (Peacock), Tom Kilroy's *The Death and Resurrection of Mr Roche* (Dublin Theatre Festival). Friel's *Crystal and Fox* (Gaiety Theatre). Probably the first production of the entire cycle of Yeats's *Cuchulain* plays, Lyric Theatre, Belfast
- 1969 British troops drafted to Northern Ireland to control violence. Beckett awarded Nobel Prize. McCabe's *Swift*, Murphy's *A Crucial Week in the Life of a Grocer's Assistant*, Friel's *The Mundy Scheme* (Olympia Theatre)
- 1970 IRA campaign of violence begun in Northern Ireland. Beckett's *Breath* (Oxford Playhouse)
- 1971 Internment introduced in Northern Ireland. Synge's *The Tinker's Wedding* first produced, Murphy's *The Morning After Optimism*, Friel's *The Gentle Island* (Olympia Theatre), John Boyd's *The Flats* at the Lyric Theatre, Belfast
- 1972 Direct rule by Westminster instituted in Northern Ireland. Murphy's *The White House*, Tom MacIntyre's *Eye Winker, Tom Tinker*; W. J. Haire's *Between Two Shadows* (Royal Court; Lyric, Belfast), Beckett's *Not I* (Lincoln Centre, New York)
- 1973 Friel's *Freedom of the City*, Leonard's *Da*, Haire's *Bloom of the Diamond Stone*
- 1974 Power-sharing Executive formed in Northern Ireland, brought down by Ulster Workers' Council strike. Death of Clarke
- 1975 O'Casey's *Purple Dust*, Friel's *Volunteers* and *Living Quarters*, Murphy's *The Sanctuary Lamp*, Stewart Parker's *Spokesong* (Dublin Theatre Festival)
- 1976 Leonard's *Time Was*, Beckett's *That Time*, *Footfalls* (Royal Court), *Ghost Trio*, BBC Television, *Radio II* BBC Radio

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- 1977 Parker's *Catchpenny Twist*, Kilroy's *Talbot's Box* (Dublin Theatre Festival)
- 1978 O'Casey's *Cock-a-Doodle-Andy*
- 1979 Graham Reid's *The Death of Humpty Dumpty* (Peacock), Friel's *Aristocrats*
- 1980 Reid's *The Closed Door*. Field Day Theatre Company founded by Brian Friel and Stephen Rea, Friel's *Translations* (Derry Guildhall)

Note: All plays performed at the Abbey Theatre unless otherwise indicated.

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Acknowledgment

I wish to express my gratitude to the Humanities Research Council of Canada for their generous assistance with travel and other expenses. Grateful acknowledgment is made to authors for all quotations from their work; and for quotations from W. B. Yeats to Michael Yeats, Macmillan, London Ltd, and Macmillan, New York Inc.