

WOMEN AND EMBODIED MYTHMAKING IN IRISH THEATRE

The rich legacy of women's contributions to Irish theatre is traditionally viewed through a male-dominated literary canon and mythmaking, thus arguably silencing their work. In this timely book, Shonagh Hill proposes a feminist genealogy which brings new perspectives to women's mythmaking across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The performances considered include the tableaux vivants performed by the *Inghinidhe na hÉireann* (Daughters of Ireland), plays written by Alice Milligan, Maud Gonne, Lady Augusta Gregory, Eva Gore-Booth, Mary Devenport O'Neill, Mary Elizabeth Burke-Kennedy, Paula Meehan, Edna O'Brien and Marina Carr, as well as plays translated, adapted and performed by Olwen Fouéré. The theatrical work discussed resists the occlusion of women's cultural engagement that results from confinement to idealized myths of femininity. This is realized through embodied mythmaking: a process which exposes how bodies bear the consequences of these myths, while refusing to accept the female body as passive bearer of inscription through the assertion of a creative female corporeality.

SHONAGH HILL teaches at University College Dublin. She was awarded an Irish Research Council Postdoctoral Fellowship 2016–17 (University College Dublin) to develop this book. Hill has published articles on women and Irish theatre in a range of leading journals and internationally reviewed books. Most recently, 'Feeling Out of Place: The "Affective Dissonance" of the Feminist Spectator in *The Boys of Foley Street*' was published in *Performance, Feminism and Affect in Neoliberal Times* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-48533-3 — Women and Embodied Mythmaking in Irish Theatre
Shonagh Hill
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

WOMEN AND EMBODIED MYTHMAKING IN IRISH THEATRE

SHONAGH HILL

University College Dublin



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-108-48533-3 — Women and Embodied Mythmaking in Irish Theatre
 Shonagh Hill
 Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
 New Delhi – 110025, India
 79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108485333
 DOI: 10.1017/9781108756327

© Shonagh Hill 2019

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2019

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

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

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Hill, Shonagh, 1977– author.

TITLE: Women and embodied mythmaking in Irish theatre / Shonagh Hill.

DESCRIPTION: Cambridge : New York : Cambridge University Press, [2019] | Includes bibliographical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2019010370 | ISBN 9781108485333 (alk. paper)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: English drama – Irish authors – History and criticism. | English drama – Women authors – History and criticism. | Women in the theater – Ireland – History – 20th century. | Theater – Political aspects – Ireland – History – 20th century. | Feminism and theater – Ireland – History – 20th century. | Women in literature. | Myth in literature. | Human body in literature.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC PR8795.W65 H55 2019 | DDC 822/.909928709415–dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019010370>

ISBN 978-1-108-48533-3 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-48533-3 — Women and Embodied Mythmaking in Irish Theatre
Shonagh Hill
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

*For Mary and David Hill,
with love.*

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-48533-3 — Women and Embodied Mythmaking in Irish Theatre
Shonagh Hill
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>page viii</i>
Introduction: A Creative Female Corporeality	i
1 Revolutionary Bodies: Mythmaking and Irish Feminisms	26
2 Unhomely Bodies: Transforming Space	65
3 Metamorphic ‘Bodies That Matter’: Process and Resistance	104
4 Staging Female Death: Sacrificial and Dying Bodies	135
5 Haunted Bodies and Violent Pasts	172
6 Olwen Fouéré’s Corpus: The Performer’s Body and Her Body of Work	213
<i>Bibliography</i>	237
<i>Index</i>	253

Acknowledgements

I have been very fortunate in having two wonderful mentors to guide me through the course of this book project. The work started as my PhD research at Queen's University Belfast supervised by Professor Anna McMullan. I developed my thesis into this monograph as a postdoctoral fellow at University College Dublin under the mentorship of Dr Cathy Leeney. Both Anna's and Cathy's scholarship has inspired this work, and I owe a huge debt of thanks to them for their critical rigour and intellectual generosity in helping to develop my work. I would also like to thank my PhD examiners, Dr Paul Murphy and Dr Clare Wallace.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Irish Research Council for awarding me a Postdoctoral Fellowship which enabled me to bring the book to fruition. During my time at UCD I have found many supportive colleagues in the Humanities Institute and the School of English, Drama and Film; in particular I would like to thank Danielle Clarke, Eamonn Jordan, Finola Cronin, Anne Fuchs, Valerie Norton and Ricki Schoen.

My passion in the research has been sustained through my membership of the Feminist Research Working Group of the International Federation for Theatre Research. I thank the members for their support, friendship and intellectual rigour which is inspiring and invigorating. Many friends have provided support along the way but in particular I would like to express my deep thanks to Trish McTighe, Brenda Winter, Richard Palmer and Margaret Robson.

Archival work in the Abbey Theatre Archives at The National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG) was facilitated through the award of a Moore Institute Visiting Fellowship 2017–18. I am very grateful to the Moore Institute for the Humanities and Social Studies at NUIG and I would also like to thank Dr Miriam Haughton for hosting me. There are many people whose archival assistance has been crucial to my research and I extend my thanks to: Eugene Roche in UCD Library Special Collections; Barry Houlihan in the Archives, Hardiman Library, NUIG; Estelle Gittens in

Acknowledgements

ix

Manuscripts and Archives at Trinity College Dublin; Mairead Delaney at the Abbey Theatre; James Harte at the National Library of Ireland; Jen Coppinger and Rough Magic Theatre Company; Rebecca Geddes at PRONI; Dr Mary Clarke, Dublin City Library & Archive.

I would like to thank the following immensely talented artists for their generosity in discussing their work with me: Mary Elizabeth Burke-Kennedy, Paula Meehan, Olwen Fouéré, Kellie Hughes and Alma Kelliher. Permission to quote from private correspondence and conversations with Paula Meehan, Mary Elizabeth Burke-Kennedy and Alma Kelliher has been granted by the aforementioned.

I am grateful for the following permissions: extracts from Draft script, *Trojan Women/Greek Men* OB/526, dated 10 November 2002 and Draft script, *Trojan Women/Greek Men* OB/522, dated June 2002 by Edna O'Brien, reprinted by permission of Peters Fraser & Dunlop (www.petersfraserdunlop.com) on behalf of Edna O'Brien; quotes from MS 5048, Pos 8517, Pos 8518 and MS 21,440 reprinted courtesy of the National Library of Ireland; permission to quote from the Eva Gore-Booth pamphlet, 'Rhythms of Art' (PRONI catalogue reference number D4131/L/4) granted by Deputy Keeper of the Records, the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland; permission to quote from the unpublished script for the 2002 production of *Women in Arms* (ITA/258/01/11) granted by Dublin City Library & Archive; permission to quote from unpublished translation of *Sodome, My Love* granted by Olwen Fouéré. All efforts have been made to secure rights for material used in this book. If any material used here is credited inappropriately please contact me through my publishers.

I would like to thank photographer Colm Hogan for kindly granting me permission to use the image from *riverrun* on the front cover.

Parts of chapters have been previously published and I thank the publishers listed below for permission to reprint the material as follows. Material from Chapter 5 appeared in 'Ghostly Surrogates and Unhomely Memories: Performing the Past in Marina Carr's Portia Coughlan', *Études Irlandaises*, 37:1 (2012), 173–87; Chapter 3 (in a very early form) in 'Articulating the Abject: Metamorphosis in Marina Carr's The Mai', *Platform*, 4:1, Staging Gender(s) (Spring 2009), 44–59; Chapter 6 in 'Olwen Fouéré's Corpus: The Performer's Body and Her Body of Work', in *Radical Contemporary Theatre Practices by Women in Ireland*, ed. Miriam Haughton and Maria Kurdi (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2015); Chapter 4 in 'Female Self-Authorship and Reperformance of the "Good Death", in Marina Carr's *Woman and Scarecrow*', in *Staging Thought: Essays on Irish*

Theatre, Scholarship and Practice, ed. Rhona Trench (Bern: Peter Lang, 2012).

I would like to thank my editor at Cambridge University Press, Kate Brett, as well as Eilidh Burrett, for their guidance and assistance. Thank you also to the readers for their comments and suggestions, and to my meticulous copyeditor Doreen Kruger.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their support: my Mum and Dad, Sarah, Dee (my rock) and my little (but by no means less important) supporters Art and Etáin. Each of them has inspired me in their own way to stick at it. This book is dedicated to my parents for their unending belief in me.