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SMASHING THE MIRROR

A Study of the productions of Seven Plays

Written by Tom MacIntyre and Directed by Patrick Mason

Staged at the Abbey Theatre Dublin between 1976 and 1988

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Degree Year Thesis 1990

## CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE - Two Trends in Theatre	3
CHAPTER TWO - The Irish Theatrical Tradition	19
CHAPTER THREE - The Dream - Fragmentation and Integration	32
CHAPTER FOUR - The Design Element - An Example	88
CHAPTER FIVE - Divided Responses	101
CONCLUSION	109
APPENDIX A - Production Credit Lists	
APPENDIX B - Stage Plans	
APPENDIX C - Production Stills	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	



### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank first of all the playwright, Tom MacIntyre, the director, Patrick Mason, the actor Tom Hickey, and the designer, Bronwen Casson, for graciously allowing me to interview them about their work.

I would like to thank also those at the Abbey Theatre who have been very helpful in supplying me with copies of the original rehearsal scripts of the plays, as well as other documentary material, and in giving me access to view the videotapes made of the later productions. Particular thanks are due to Kathleen Barrington, the Abbey's Education Officer, as well as to Miriam Doyle in the Press Office and to David Nolan.

I want to thank also the photographers, Fergus Bourke and Amelia Stein, who provided me with the production stills used to illustrate the thesis.

Special thanks to Mary Corish, who produced the typescript, and to Margaret Keane, who drew the plans featured in Appendix B.

Finally, I wish to thank my tutor, Dr Frances Ruane, for her guidance and support.



## INTRODUCTION

This essay is a study of the Abbey Theatre productions of seven plays by the Irish playwright, Tom MacIntyre. All seven were directed by Patrick Mason and were staged at the Abbey's smaller auditorium, the Peacock Theatre, between 1976 and 1988. Jack be Nimble (1976) and Find the Lady (1977) were followed, after a lapse of six years, by The Great Hunger (1983), The Bearded Lady (1984), Rise up lovely Sweeney (1985), a revised version of The Great Hunger (1986) which toured to several countries abroad, Dance for your Daddy (1987) and Snow White (1988). The essay attempts to evaluate the plays' significance by placing them in a historical context, both Irish and international.

Theatre is not a pure medium. This theatre particularly is a volatile compound of the verbal, the visual and the aural, of abstract ideas and concrete matter, present on the stage. The visual, in its turn, is compounded of gestures and movements, of fleeting images, of tableaux and of momentary groupings, as well as of the more solid elements like sets, costumes and props. All theatre is collaborative, and again, this theatre more so than most Irish theatre; the designer is only one member of the team. As the great Russian stage designer, Leon Bakst, said at the beginning of the century, set design is not an autonomous art; it is less akin to landscape painting than to 'figure painting without the figure'. (II.3, p.36) It was partly this challenge of assessing a not wholly visual medium which led me to choose MacIntyre's plays as a subject for my thesis. I cannot attempt

to do justice to the work by dealing only with its visual aspects, or even more narrowly, only with its solid 'designed' elements. This essay, then, so far as is possible, treats the work entire.

At the beginning of Chapter One I set out a distinction between two broad tendencies in art, the objective and the subjective. I go on to show how these two tendencies have manifested themselves - sometimes in violent opposition - in modern theatre. Chapter Two shows how, after an initial losing battle fought by W.B. Yeats, Ireland's modern theatre has come to favour one tendency at the expense of the other. Chapters Three and Four go on to discuss MacIntyre's work. Chapter Three is the heart of the thesis. It treats the work as a whole, showing how it rebels against the orthodoxies established in Irish Theatre since Yeats' time by choosing as its model not the objective real world, but a subjective dream world, and considers the implications of this choice on both content and form. Chapter Four takes on the plays, The Great Hunger, and assesses the contribution made by design to the overall production. Finally, Chapter Five looks at how the work was received and how it fits into the pattern of Irish Theatre in the 1980s.

The appendices which follow contain documentary and visual information concerning each of the productions, credit lists, stage plans, and production stills. Please note that the production stills are arranged according to the order in which they occur in the action of each play, and not according to the order in which they are referred to in my text.



## CHAPTER ONE

### Two Trends in Theatre

- 1.1 Two Theoretical Extremes in Art
- 1.2 Renaissance and Romanticism
- 1.3 Nineteenth Century Countercurrents
- 1.4 Naturalism and Symbolism
- 1.5 The Rebirth of the Theatre
- 1.6 Naturalist Theatre
- 1.7 Symbolist Theatre
- 1.8 Modernism's Double Image
- 1.9 Developments in Twentieth Century Theatre
- 1.10 History and Myth



## CHAPTER ONE

### Two Trends in Theatre

- 1.1 We can in theory distinguish two impulses in man which inspire him to create art; on the one hand an impulse to record and explore the real world around him - the objective outward-looking analysing impulse - and on the other hand an impulse to build alternative worlds of his own imagination - the subjective inward-looking synthesising impulse. We might expect the first to generate a rational art founded on reality and the second a magical art springing from fantasy.

Of course in practice these two approaches can seldom be so easily distinguished. Most artists are inspired both by what surrounds them and by what they discover within themselves. Nevertheless, in certain ages and certain places, there seems to be a tendency among artists to favour one approach more than the other.

- 1.2 The European Renaissance, a time of scientific, social and philosophical inquiry, and voyages of exploration and discovery across the globe, is usually seen as an expansive outward-looking age celebrating the powers of objectivity and reason. The supreme example of this objectivism is perhaps Galileo's assertion that, despite subjective impressions, the sun does not revolve round the earth but rather the earth round the sun. The same rational spirit pervades the art of the Renaissance, especially the visual and plastic arts with their concern for geometry, ideal forms and perfect proportions, and

the strict adherence to the laws of perspective.

This rationalist trend culminated in the eighteenth century with the Age of Enlightenment. The romantic spirit, which first asserted itself at the end of that century, tipped the scale in the opposite direction. Edward Lucie-Smith, in his discussion of the Romantic Movement, quotes Isaiah Berlin's description of it as 'a shift in consciousness' which 'cracked the backbone of European thought' and goes on to say:

Essentially the broken backbone was reason, or, rather, it was the long-standing belief in the power of human reason to govern all actions and solve all problems. (II.16, p.23)

- 1.3 The nineteenth century that followed was, in material terms, an era of ever-greater progress and expansion. This material wealth, however, masked an underlying spiritual crisis - arising partly from science's challenge to some of the central tenets of religious belief. This crisis was reflected in nineteenth century culture as a tug-of-war between opposing forces; a dominant forward-looking positivism which placed its faith in science, and, in counterpoint, a questioning of this orthodoxy which looked elsewhere for its truths - backward to the medieval past, sideward to the exotic orient, downward to the subterranean occult, and inward to the mysterious depths of man's own soul.

The conflict surfaced in different guises at different times; for instance in the rivalry in French painting between the followers of Delacroix and those of Ingres or in the architectural 'Battle of the Styles' waged in Britain centring around the design for the Houses of Parliament. At the end of the century, on the eve of the birth of



Modernism, the two trends were more starkly differentiated than ever before, embodied in two movements which emerged first in French literature before spreading to other arts and other countries - two movements which seemed wholly opposed to one another - Naturalism and Symbolism.

- 1.4 Naturalism was a term coined by the novelist Emile Zola in the 1870s (II.4, p.192) in order to emphasize art's affinity with the natural sciences. He declared that if literature was to adapt to the needs of the nineteenth century it would have to apply itself to the interpretation of society, of the everyday world in which people lived. Moreover, its analysis and description of this world would have to employ the experimental methods used by science - the same detached observation and attention to detail. (II.5, p.8)

Symbolism, a movement led by poets, pre-eminently Stephane Mallarme, appeared in the 1880s in reaction to the novel-led movement, Naturalism, and its emphasis on prosaic reality. Less interested in the topical issues of the day than in eternal truths, many of the Symbolists studied the Western occult traditions of the Hermetica and Cabala as well as the religions of the East. They disputed the Naturalist claim that art's role was to interpret and mirror society and embraced instead the notion of art for art's sake. They wanted to rescue art from what they saw as its suffocating immersion in the grubby minutiae of daily life. They saw Naturalism's obsession with the precise reproduction of external details as a block to penetrating the internal mysteries of the human soul - mysteries which could only be evoked, hinted at, suggested, not clinically dissected.



1.5 It was in this period of the 1880s and 1890s, against the cultural background of the international debate between the ideas of Naturalism and those of Symbolism, that the theatre was reborn. For, unlike, say, painting or music or the novel, the theatre as an artform had suffered a marked decline in prestige throughout the nineteenth century. Bradby and Williams, in their book, Director's Theatre, ascribe the cause of this decline to theatre's inability to redefine its role in a changing society:

Between the end of the eighteenth and the end of the nineteenth century, changes took place that transformed the established European theatre from a restricted medium catering for the need of the court to a mass medium appealing to a variety of social groups. (II.5, p.2)

The result was that while theatre retained a certain vigour as a vehicle for popular spectacle and entertainment, as a medium for the practice of serious art and literature, or a forum for the airing of ideas, it seemed to be dead.

But from the late 1880s onwards, first the Naturalists, and later in response the Symbolists, turned to the theatre as a potentially powerful channel for their art. Outstanding new dramatists, beginning with the great Norwegian, Henrik Ibsen, created a body of drama which has remained the cornerstone of the modern repertoire. New 'independent' theatres were founded all across Europe - many funded on a subscription basis, and so playing to a self-selected audience of devotees. These were theatres dedicated to the presentation of challenging new drama and the complete overhaul of theatrical practice.

1.6 The first of these 'independent' theatres - and the model for many of

the others - was Le Theatre Libre, founded in Paris in 1887 by Andre Antoine with the active backing of Zola. Antoine was resolved to produce the Naturalist drama of playwrights like Ibsen. These plays were written in contemporary language and set in the contemporary world among the ordinary middle, or less frequently, working classes. Unlike the popular melodramas and farces which used a similar setting, however, they set out to enquire seriously into the personal problems of these people and the social issues their lives threw up. Antoine's productions of these plays sought above all to achieve verisimilitude. Great pains were taken to ensure accuracy and detail in the design of costumes and setting. This was all-important because, as Denis Bablet, in his evaluation of Naturalist stage design, points out, one of the basic principals of Naturalism was that man is shaped by the circumstances of his environment. (II.3, p.18) Likewise the actors abandoned the declamatory flourishes of the traditional style and acted instead in a natural everyday manner, as though in real life.

Konstantin Stanislavsky brought this a stage further when he opened the Moscow Art Theatre and developed his 'system' or 'method' of acting whereby actors were taught to identify psychologically with the characters they were playing; the actor should not seek to mimic external actions and gestures, but rather should express real emotions and feelings, recreated within himself. The goal of all this was that the members of the audience in their turn should identify with the characters on stage and so gain an insight into their own lives and those of others. They should feel themselves the privileged observers of a real-life drama, viewed through the transparent 'fourth wall' of the proscenium arch. (II.3, p.18)



1.7 Three years after the opening of Le Theatre Libre, in 1890, the young Symbolist poet, Paul Fort, opened Le Theatre d'Art. The venture was short-lived but was succeeded in 1893 by the less aggressively symbolist, more eclectic and also more successful Theatre de l'Oeuvre founded by Aurelien Lugne-Poe. The Symbolist drama now being written by men like the Belgian, Maurice Maeterlinck, was the antithesis of Naturalism and, similarly, the production methods Lugne-Poe used to present those plays were quite different from those of Antoine. Symbolist drama was set not in the contemporary drawing-room but in a timeless mythical realm. The audience were not meant to be observing the goings-on in an everyday world but were to be transported to another world of the imagination. All aspects of the production were to fuel this transportation.

In this aim, the Symbolists were inspired by the example of Richard Wagner. He saw opera as the complete work of art - der Gesamtkunstwerk - embracing all the other arts - 'music, poetry, mime, architecture and landscape painting' - in one great theatrical synthesis. (II.3, p.15) For Wagner had been not just a composer but a complete man of the theatre, founding the Festspielhaus at Bayreuth in 1876 to produce his operas. James Flannery sees these majestic works, based on pagan myths, as expressions of Wagner's rejection of rationalism as a foundation for art. (II.9, p.102)

The leading role which music played in Wagner's Gesamtkunstwerk was, in Symbolist drama, assumed by language, by poetry. The other arts supported, but did not distract from, the transporting power of words. The direction emphasized rhythm, static groupings and slow ritualistic movements. The acting was restrained, the energy expressed in the chanted words. The settings were simple and stylised - either



decorative in the Art Nouveau manner or spare and evocative like those of the great expatriate English director/designer Edward Gordon Craig, who used atmospheric lighting to animate great monumental spaces. In everything, realism was abjured.

In fact, in their enthusiasm for the primacy of the word, Flannery says that some Symbolists were less than committed to theatre; the receptive individual reading alone in this armchair was for them the ideal audience. (II.9, p.112) At the other extreme were those like the Russian, Georgy Chulkov, whose *Torches* group advocated theatre as a means of collective spiritual healing for all mankind. (II.6, p.32) In either case, the experience can be seen as quasi-religious.

- 1.8 Thus far, in order to isolate the essential features of Naturalism and Symbolism, I have emphasized the differences between them, treating them as two mutually exclusive doctrines each with its own adherents. This may have been the true picture at the time the two movements originated in the 1870s and 1880s, but already by the mid-1890s, in France at least, the distinctions had begun to blur. Though some writers and artists continued to identify themselves clearly with one or other side of the debate, many drew elements from both philosophies. Ibsen himself, held up as an icon by the Naturalists, had, as Richard Gilman says, been much misunderstood. (II.10, p.49-50) Some of those who championed his realism and treatment of social issues failed to appreciate the profound use of symbol and the lyrical prose of his later plays, and what Gilman calls their 'subtext' of 'hidden meanings'. (II.10, p.68-70). Then too, Lugne-Poe's *Theatre de l'Oeuvre*, the showcase for Maeterlinck's Symbolist plays, also produced many realistic dramas, while in Russia, Stanislavsky's *Moscow Art*

Theatre, initially a bastion of Naturalism, subsequently experimented with Symbolist techniques.

So it was that in 1893 the young German poet and dramatist, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, could celebrate both trends simultaneously and find in their conjunction the essence of modernism:

Today two things seem to be modern - the analysis of life  
and the flight from life ..... reflection or fantasy,  
mirror image or dream image. (II.4, p.71)

Hofmannsthal was half-right. In fact a whole tradition of modern twentieth century drama reflects only the mirror images of straight-forward realism. Its transparent codes place no barrier between the audience and the story or the message: a structure based on a chronological plot; characters which are recognisable and consistent, and therefore 'believable'; apparently everyday dialogue; settings which attempt to reproduce the world we think we know. This transparency makes realistic drama very accessible and therefore particularly suitable as a vehicle for mass entertainment. This explains its prevalence in much ordinary commercial theatre, and even more so in the commercial cinema and in television drama.

However, parallel to this was the development of an avant-garde theatre, an alternative theatre which borrowed from both Naturalist and Symbolist traditions. As in all other branches of culture, the debate was pushed ever forward, new territory was explored, new figures emerged, scornful of the old divisions and eager to set a new agenda.

Many of these avant-garde movements were anti-realist and in this respect they were developments of Symbolism - though Symbolism in its pure form proved too delicate a growth to survive much beyond the turn of the century. This development from Symbolism was signalled in 1895,



when Alfred Jarry's play, Ubu Roi, was premiered at Lugne-Poe's Theatre de l'Oeuvre. This play employed many of the formal features of Symbolism - stylised costumes and settings, masks the use of a chorus - but its disjointed plot, ridiculous characters, absurd and often crude dialogue, and nonsensical props (including a palm tree and a chamber pot) poked monstrous fun in equal measure at both Symbolism's lofty poetry and Naturalism's sober prose.

- 1.9 I must now briefly outline some major trends in twentieth century avant-garde theatre which have relevance to the Tom MacIntyre plays produced at the Peacock.

Technical advances had begun to be made in the staging of theatre in the second half of the nineteenth century and the technology available has grown more sophisticated ever since - everything from lighting and sound equipment to revolving stages and hydraulically movable scenery. This meant that the new theatre which appeared towards the end of that century became even more of a collaborative artform than it had been before.

Traditionally, those in control of theatre had been either writers or actors. Now however, those working in the specialised backstage disciplines began to have more of a say. These included the designers of sets, costumes and lighting, but, more importantly, the producer - or director, as (s)he came to be known.

Bradby and Williams chart the rise of the director from the actor-managers of the nineteenth century to the powerful shapers and interpreters of drama which they can be today. (II.5, p.1-22) It is notable that many of those who reinvented the theatre in Europe around the turn of the century were what would nowadays be called directors;



Antoine and Lugne-Poe in France, the Englishman, Edward Gordon Craig, the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, Otto Brahm and Max Reinhardt in Germany, Stanislavsky and Vsevolod Meyerhold in Russia. Meyerhold in fact call the director the drama's 'second creator', a crucial link in the chain which transmits the work from the author ('first creator'), through the actor ('third creator'), to the audience. The spectator, indeed, by interpreting and re-imaging the work for himself, becomes a 'fourth creator'. (II.5, p.14)

The designer, too, has come a long way from the 'master painter' of the nineteenth century, as described by Denis Bablet; he used to paint ornate flat backdrops, rich in trompe d'oeil detail, and was paid for them by the square yard. (II.3, p.11-12). Both Naturalism and Symbolism led to important reforms in design. Naturalism, because its prime aim was authenticity, insisted on the creation of complete three-dimensional environments, and the use of real materials, and so demanded greater ingenuity and technical expertise of its designers. Symbolism, in aiming for a lyrical abstraction, called on designers with imagination and conceptual flair. In fact because Symbolism was a movement where poets and dramatists were closely allied with visual artists, it cleared the way for painters to become involved in the theatre. The very first Symbolist theatre, Paul Fort's Theatre d'Art, used the services of artists like Bonnard, Vuillard, Toulouse-Lautrec and Edvard Munch. (II.3, 24) Lugne-Poe continued his liaison, as did Meyerhold in Russia, who was heavily influenced by Symbolist ideas. Indeed, the Russian Symbolist 'World of Art' movement, which flourished in the first decade of the new century, was central to the development of design in the theatre. Of particular importance is the impresario Sergei Diaghilev, who asked artists like Leon Bakst, Matisse and

Picasso to design for his Ballets Russes.

This increasing accent on the visual side of theatre was part of a wider rebellion against the old hidebound conventions of the literary theatre. The rebellion found added fire during times of political revolution or unrest: in Germany and the Soviet Union in the 1920s; in America and France in the 1960s and early 1970s. Those who sought to re-animate what they saw as a dead theatre were usually inspired by three sources: theatrical forms from the past which had fallen into disuse; the traditions of other cultures, especially from the far East; and vital forms of folk drama and popular entertainment. And so, into the musty theatres were brought elements of circus, music-hall, the old *commedia dell'arte*, Japanese kabuki, puppet theatre, cinema and even boxing. Meanwhile theatre itself was taken out of the musty theatres and into the community; into factories and warehouses, into cafes, or onto the street. Released from behind the proscenium arch, the actors could enjoy a closer relationship with their audience.

Indeed, for some, this relationship came to be seen as the essence of theatre. The Polish director and teacher, Jerzy Grotowski, defined theatre as 'what takes place between spectator and actor'. (II.12, p.32). He reacted against the increased technologisation of theatre and the accumulation of specialised disciplines, as exemplified in so-called 'total theatre'. Instead, in his experimental Theatre Laboratory during the 1960s and 1970s, he developed a 'poor theatre' which

challenges the [Wagnerian] notion of theatre as a synthesis of disparate creative disciplines - literature, sculpture, painting, architecture, lighting, acting.

(II.12, p.19)



Grotowski's 'poor theatre' relied on the formation of what he called the 'holy actor'. Again, this holy actor's technique is based on paring-down of his craft to its vital marrow, in contrast to the conventional 'courtesan actor', whose technique is an ossified 'accumulation of skills' (II.9, p.35)

Many other revolutionary groups have resisted the increased specialisation in the theatre, and its attendant hierarchical structure. They have been ideologically committed to democratic participation by all members in all aspects of performance. These groups favoured what Theodore Shank, in his study of American alternative theatre, calls the 'autonomous method of creation':

Instead of the two-process method of the conventional theatre - a playwright writing a script in isolation and other artists shaping it - the autonomous method involves a single process, wherein the same artists develop the work from initial conception to finished performance. (II.21, p.3)

The text of such performances - often very visual - is not given, but emerges through a process of improvisation among the actors, with or without the guidance of a director. This extreme form of collaborative theatre, then, finds no need at all for the writer, and marks the opposite pole to the conventional literary theatre.

- 1.10 The avant-garde may always react first against the tired conventions it finds in the established theatre; but inevitably, divisions open up within itself. Michael Patterson makes an interesting distinction between two types of theatre which he calls 'historical' and 'mythic'. This distinction seems to echo, in a new form, the old division between

Naturalism and Symbolism. (II.18, p.168-9)

As the paradigm of 'historical theatre', Patterson cites Brechtian drama. The great German dramatist, director and theoretician, Bertolt Brecht, was a lifelong communist. He fled Hitler's Germany for America; when he returned after the war he chose to live the rest of his life in communist East Germany where he set up his famous Berliner Ensemble. Brecht's theatre is political. It has elements of agit-prop theatre (agitation-propoganda) but is immeasurably richer and more subtle. It is concerned with society, and with man as a social animal, shaped by, and the shaper of, his environment. Patterson includes among its qualities 'rationality', 'clarity' and 'conscious analysis'. (II.18, p.169) In all this it derives from the Naturalist tradition.

However, Brecht rejected completely Naturalism's codes of realism. He felt that by implicating the spectator in its illusionary 'real' world, by seeking to make him identify with its 'real' characters, the Naturalist theatre insidiously disabled him from judging this world impartially. Brecht wanted the performance to be a demonstration, the lessons of which could be applied in the streets outside. And so, in Brechtian theatre, the members of the audience are always aware that they are spectators at a performance and not privileged observers of the characters' private lives. The plot is not chronological, but broken up into short episodes. The actors slip in and out of character - they are clearly playing roles. The desired effect is the famous 'Verfremdungseffekt' - the distancing or 'alienation' of the spectators from the action so that they can analyse it impartially, with their intellects rather than their emotions.

In contrast to Brecht, Patterson offers as the archetype of 'mythic theatre' Antonin Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty*. Artaud was a



leading member of the French Surrealist movement in the 1920s. He was also a dramatist and director, but his chief legacy is his fierce uncompromising visionary theories of the theatre. He sought to imbue theatre with the power of dreams, and of ancient myth. He looked to the ritualised theatres of the East - particularly the Balinese theatre - as receptacles of this power. Patterson mentions 'subconscious intuition' and 'mystification' as qualities of this theatre. (II.18, p.169)

All of this seems to owe much to the ideals of the Symbolists, but again, as with Brecht's debt to Naturalism, Artaud spurns as much as he accepts. 'We do not mean to bore audiences to death with transcendental cosmic preoccupations', he says. (II.2, p.72) The dreams he has are nightmares. For Artaud, theatre is like the plague. (II.2, p.15) Theatre must grip actor and audience alike with the force of the plague; it must consume and purge them. What he wants to distil from the dream are

its taste for crime, its erotic obsessions, its savageness, its fantasies, its utopian sense of life and objects, even its cannibalism. (II.2, p.71)

So, unlike Brecht, Artaud wants the audience to be completely involved with the drama - not to sit in detached judgement. The involvement is not to be on the level of the intellect but of the instincts. Patterson sees the essential ideological difference between Brecht and Artaud in terms of the alternative view of man which they propound, the 'historical' and the 'mythic' view:

Brecht's theatre proposes a historical view of man as alterable, whereas the Theatre of Cruelty depends on a mythical view of man as an unchanging constant. (II.18, p.169)

Both Brecht and Artaud have had a profound effect on twentieth century theatre, and again, there have been those who have created very powerful drama by borrowing from both traditions; but it seems that the tension between the rational and irrational within theatre is one which will not disappear.



## CHAPTER TWO

### The Irish Theatrical Tradition

- 2.1 The Abbey as a European Theatre
- 2.2 W.B. Yeats' Double Life
- 2.3 Yeats and Symbolism
- 2.4 Yeats' Struggle - Forerunners to the Abbey 1898-1904
- 2.5 The Early Abbey 1904-1914 - Yeats' Defeat
- 2.6 The Irish Tradition - an Irish Theatre
- 2.7 The Irish Tradition - a writers' Theatre
- 2.8 The Irish Tradition - a realist Theatre

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Irish Theatrical Tradition

2.1 At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, when European culture was undergoing great transformations, Ireland too was experiencing a remarkable cultural rebirth - not least in the theatre. Indeed one of the most notable of the 'independent' theatres born around Europe during the period was Ireland's Abbey Theatre. The early history of the Abbey is complex and fraught with controversy of all kinds, most notoriously arising out of the contentious issue of the role an aspiring National Theatre should be expected to play in furthering the nationalist struggle for independence. But there can also be traced the lines of an argument which echoes the contemporary international Naturalist/Symbolist debate. At the centre of this debate was the poet and dramatist and co-founder of the Abbey, W.B. Yeats. In my discussion of the Abbey's early history I am indebted especially to James Flannery's book W.B. Yeats and the idea of a theatre: The early Abbey Theatre in theory and practice, which gives a fascinating account of the whole period, and clearly extricates the main issues at stake during the shaping of what were to become traditions, not only for the Abbey, but for Irish theatre in general.

2.2 At the beginning of the book, Flannery raises a point related to Hofmannsthal's remark about the dual nature of the modern - a state at



once prone to 'the analysis of life and the flight from life'. (II.4, p.71) Flannery locates the power of great theatre as emanating from a 'dialectic of opposites' and he identifies in Yeats' life and art just such a struggle:

a lifelong conflict ..... compounded of contrary impulses pulling him at once towards a life of introspection and towards a life of action and engagement. (II.9, p.1-2)

And so we have, on the one hand, Yeats the poet, Yeats the visionary, who, like many of the Symbolists, was interested in Eastern religions and in the Western occult tradition; he took part in seances at Madame Blavatsky's salon in London and in magic rituals enacted by The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in Dublin, of which he was a member from 1890 to 1922. On the other hand, there is Yeats the active man of the theatre, Yeats the national public figure, engaged throughout his life in the debate surrounding the social and political future of his country. This Yeats served as an Irish senator in the new Irish Free State and would seem to have more in common with the Naturalists.

2.3 Thematically and formally, however, Yeats' art is undoubtedly influenced more by Symbolism than by Naturalism. Flannery says that he 'openly acknowledged his debt to the theory and practice of Wagner' (II.9, p.105) in his choice of Irish mythology and peasant folklore as the deep rich soil from which a national culture, and more specifically, a national theatre, might spring. He visited Paris several times in the 1890s and attended several performances at Le Theatre de l'Oeuvre, where he was 'fascinated by the methods evolved by Lugne-Poe to produce Maeterlinck'. (II.9, p.125) He shared the

Symbolist conviction that theatre's power rests on the spoken word; the other arts should not, he said, 'draw attention away from the sound of the voice'. (II.9, p.125) The main task of the actor then was the delivery of the verse, based on a sophisticated insight into the distinctive 'speech-tunes' unique to each author. (II.9, p.197) Also recognisably Symbolist are the stylised decorative scenery he envisaged for his own plays and the static dramaturgy, with its emphasis on ritual and incantation. For Yeats, Flannery says, what was created on the stage was to be:

a symbol of human perfection rather than a reflection  
of life as it existed in the stalls and the pit of the  
theatre. (II.9, p.242).

2.4 This preference for symbol over reality, for dream image over mirror image was to bring Yeats into conflict with many of those who collaborated with him in founding the Abbey. Flannery charts Yeats' struggle over more than twenty years (beginning with an unsuccessful amateur production of his first play, The Countess Cathleen, in 1882) to have his work produced, acted, and designed to his satisfaction and accepted by Irish audiences.

In 1898 he joined with Lady Augusta Gregory, George Moore and Edward Martyn in founding the Irish Literary Theatre, the forerunner of the Abbey. Edward Martyn, the theatre's principal benefactor, was, according to Flannery, committed to 'a fervent nationalism' and 'a rigidly moralistic form of Catholicism' (II.9, p.157), and both he and George Moore - very different in other respects - were united in their views on drama in being 'ardent disciples of Ibsen' (II.9, p.155). Moore had been one of the first novelists in English to fully embrace



Naturalism and he stated the aim of his art to be that of 'conveying an interesting and truthful reflection of life'. (II.9, p.161-2) During the short lifespan of the Irish Literary Theatre, it was generally the realistic plays of Martyn and Moore which were applauded by the public while Yeats' work was misunderstood and derided. The theatre's final production, in 1901, was a disastrous attempt at artistic collaboration between Yeats and Moore on the play *Diarmuid and Grainne*.

The Irish Literary Theatre had had no permanent company of actors; instead they were assembled and brought over from England for each production. A few months before the Literary Theatre finally folded, however, a permanent company of Irish actors had been formed - dedicated to the production of new Irish drama - by the brothers, Frank and William Fay. William, the actor-manager, was well-versed in all the practical arts of the stage, while Frank, a scholar and critic of the theatre as well as an actor, had acquired a thorough knowledge of the history of drama since the Greeks.

In 1902 Yeats and Lady Gregory became involved in the Fays' venture and it was restructured as the Irish National Theatre Society. Following a critically acclaimed visit to London by this now wholly native Irish company in May 1903, Yeats secured the backing of a rich English patroness, Annie Horniman. This enabled the society to lease permanent premises and finally open its doors, as the Abbey Theatre, in December 1904, under the co-directorship of Yeats, Lady Gregory and the Irish dramatist, J.M. Synge.

- 2.5 In the ensuing years, however, the old arguments - personal, political, artistic - continued. Circumstances seemed to combine to favour the production of realistic drama and frustrate Yeats in his attempts to

have his mythological verse-plays successfully rendered. Limited funds precluded extravagant expenditure on fantastical sets and costumes - as against real props and clothes which could be acquired cheaply. The 'sincere unaffected ..... low-keyed' style of acting practised and taught by the Fays (II.9, p.215) was well suited to Naturalism but not easily adaptable to meet the demands of heroic verse-speaking and stylised gesture required by Yeats. The audience, in turn, was unsophisticated and more receptive to straight-forward realism than to the formal rigours of Yeats' drama.

Yeats was attacked, both within the Company and from outside it, for being elitist and obscure, for not addressing his talents to the nationalist question, for celebrating paganism and propagating heresy. Meanwhile the Abbey mounted successful productions of plays by Synge, Lady Gregory and others - often set in contemporary smalltown or peasant Ireland - plays which, though not by any means all Naturalist in the strict sense (indeed Synge's work is often symbolist in its use of vivid imagery and lyrical language) were nevertheless broadly realistic in their presentation. Yeats, for his part, though disdainful of certain playwrights' work, was enthusiastic in his support of the best of this realistic drama. In 1907, he proved the fiercest defender of Synge during the controversy that raged over the supposed immorality of The Playboy of the Western World.

Synge and Lady Gregory, on the other hand, afforded Yeats little encouragement, when, in an effort to broaden the training of the company, he brought in a professional drama teacher, Bruce Payne, from England. Payne met with a hostile reception from the company and left after six months. Flannery is very harsh in his judgement:

One cannot help concluding that, as much as any other



single cause, the intransigence, theatrical ignorance, and downright selfishness of Lady Gregory and Synge thwarted Yeats' ambition for the early Abbey Theatre. By blocking Yeats' efforts to widen the theatrical scope of the Abbey, they effectively limited the repertoire to Irish peasant plays. (II.p, p.225)

With the departure of Payne, the Abbey's patroness, Annie Horniman - a devotee of the ideals of Wagner who had only lent her support to the theatre because of Yeats' involvement, finally despaired of the direction the company was taking, and announced the withdrawal of her funding. The Fay Brothers departed in the wake of this and of the Playboy controversy, and box-office returns declined, discouraging further experiment.

Nevertheless Yeats made one further attempt. He had been impressed with the work of the English designer/director Edward Gordon Craig as early as 1901, and influenced by his ideas, in the staging, designing and lighting of his own plays. Craig was now experimenting with using a versatile system of movable screens as settings for his productions - such as his famous 1910 version of Hamlet at Stavislasky's Moscow Art Theatre. In 1910, Craig gave Yeats a set of these screens, and the following year Yeats engaged another Englishman, Nugent Monck, to creatively explore their possibilities. An Abbey Second Company and School of the Theatre were set up, co-led by Yeats and Monck. Over the next two years they carried out a wide variety of theatrical experiments ..... with a group of young actors dedicated to acquiring a complete education in the theatre. (II.9, p.236)

In 1913, however, Monck was forced out of the Company - as had been

Bruce Payne in 1907 - by a combination of lack of funds and Lady Gregory's hostility. As Christopher Fitzsimon puts it 'the realists had all but taken over the Irish drama'. (II.8, p.160)

Yeats was disillusioned. Though he remained a director of the Company, he retired, for some years, into the background. He wrote no more plays for the Abbey until 1929. He turned instead to the simple stark style of Japanese Noh drama as a model for his Four plays for dancers - short chamber-pieces to be performed in private drawing-rooms. In 1919, looking back on twenty years involvement with the Abbey, he summed them up as years of 'discouragement and defeat'. (II.9, p.355).

2.6 Reborn on the crest of an invigorating wave of change which swept through the European theatre at the end of the nineteenth century, the Irish Theatre, and the Abbey in particular, has remained curiously insulated from many of the currents which have swept through since. Most of the major trends in twentieth century theatre, which I outlined at the end of Chapter One, had have relatively little impact in Ireland. At the end of his book, The Irish Theatre, written at the beginning of the 1980s, Christopher Fitzsimon comments:

The existentialist theatre, the Theatre of the Absurd, the Theatre of Cruelty, as well as the agit-prop theatre, have only brushed Ireland lightly with their wings. (II.8, p.199)

As I have just shown above, this tendency to resist outside influences had already become apparent by the end of the first decade of the Abbey's existence, contributing to the disillusionment expressed by Yeats in 1919. Following Ireland's achievement of her political



independence, Yeats and Lady Gregory sought, and, in 1924, procured, an annual grant for what they said had become 'by tradition and accomplishment ..... the National Theatre of Ireland'. (II.9, p.106-7) This at last gave the Abbey some financial security, and added to its prestige as it became the first state-subsidised theatre in the English speaking world. But it also had the effect of further narrowing its horizons. Like independent Ireland herself, Ireland's new National Theatre consolidated its position by turning inward, becoming parochial and cherishing its traditions based on a peasant Gaelic Catholic culture. This was particularly so between the 1930s and the 1960s when the 'peasant play' and the 'kitchen comedy' became staples of the Abbey repertoire.

Yeats himself signalled this encroaching bias against experiment in his treatment of Sean O'Casey. O'Casey's early trilogy of realist masterpieces, set in working-class Dublin, provided the Abbey with some of its greatest successes of the 1920s, and when, in 1926, The Plough and the Stars met with the same hostility as Synge's Playboy twenty years before, Yeats defended it as vehemently. But two years later, when O'Casey wrote The Silver Tassie, a play influenced by German Expressionism, Yeats rejected it and refused to have it staged at the Abbey.

It is easy though to overstate the isolation of the Irish theatre from international trends. There was always some contact, and there were several periods when the founding of new theatre companies, or the impact of some dynamic personality, led to an opening-up. The Gate Theatre, founded in 1928 under the auspices of the Abbey, by Michael MacLiammoir and Hilton Edwards was - especially in its early years - committed to presenting contemporary foreign drama and exploring

contemporary modes of production and design. The appearance of the Pike and Globe theatres in the early 1950s, and of the Focus and Project theatres in the late 1960s, provided similar channels, as did the annual Dublin Theatre Festival, inaugurated in 1957. All the same, it remains fair to say that Ireland has only slowly and very incompletely assimilated much of what has happened in twentieth century theatre beyond its own shores.

- 2.7 This is shown by the fact that the Irish theatre is still very much a literary theatre, a writer's theatre. Since the seventeenth century, Irish writers have enriched the English-speaking theatre. Indeed the whole comic tradition of English drama is unimaginable without them; Congreve, Farquhar, Goldsmith, Sheridan, Boucicault, Wilde, Shaw. It is worth remarking also that, unlike in Europe, where producers, or directors, spearheaded many of the changes in theatre around the turn of the century, those involved in building a native Irish theatre were, apart from the Fay brothers, all writers. Indeed Christopher Fitzsimon points out the significance of the name chosen in 1898 for the Abbey's predecessor - The Irish Literary Theatre (II.8, p.135).

Yeats indeed, as I have said, was convinced - like many of the Symbolists - that spoken language constituted the essence of drama; music and the visual arts - gesture, costume, scenery, lighting - were to be seen as 'the applied arts of literature', required to play only a supporting role. (II.9, p.108) On one famous occasion he even suggested that the actors should rehearse in barrels, that they might 'forget gesture and have their minds free to think of speech for a while'. (II.9, p.206) In fact, many of the arguments in the early Abbey arose from the conflict between Yeats' ideal of a 'literary'



theatre and the Fays' conviction of the need for a 'theatrical' theatre. Gradually, Yeats softened his position through practical day-to-day experience of the theatre and, under the influence of men like Craig, came to realise what Flannery describes as:

the theatrical truth that the deepest emotions may often best be experienced not through the medium of language but through physical actions that eloquently speak where words no longer suffice. (II.9, p.207)

This literary tradition has bequeathed Ireland an enviable wealth of written drama. In arguing against Yeats' own disenchanted judgements of 1919, Flannery asserts that the Abbey has acted as a focus, an inspiration and a support for Irish culture in general but particularly for Irish playwriting; he reckons that the Abbey had produced over one hundred and fifty new Irish plays in the period before independence alone. (II.9, p.355) The director, Patrick Mason, points out that many of Ireland's finest writers continue to be drawn to writing for the theatre, whereas in another country they might be inclined to restrict themselves to the more private form of the novel. (I.18)

On the other hand, the very strength of the writer's position in the Irish theatre can tend to limit the contributions of the director, the designer and the actor. The overwhelming emphasis on the verbal nature of theatre has too often hampered a full exploration of visual possibilities.

- 2.9 The relative isolation of Irish theatre from outside trends and the relative under-development of its visual side are inter-related, and both help explain what I am going to pick out as the third

distinguishing feature of the Irish theatrical tradition as it has developed this century, namely, the continued predominance of realism as its mode of expression. The struggle which Yeats all but lost at the beginning of this century has left its legacy. The greater portion of Irish drama seems to observe, as a matter of course, the transparent codes of realism. Most Irish plays are set in a definite social context and they cover a wide array of social issues; poverty, emigration, smalltown prejudice, the power of the Church, land ownership, political violence, generational conflict, the effects of the new affluence, the changing positions of men and women in society, the power of the modern media, and so on.

This realism of the Irish theatre has its roots more in Ibsen than in Zola however. It is not the objectively scientific rationalist realism of true Naturalism. Rather, like Ibsen, and like Synge, the best of modern Irish dramatists have woven symbol and ambiguity into the plain fabric of realism, and have used its easily assimilable codes as

traps for the attention of the audience, which [is] then led, if it [is] willing to follow, toward [the] deeper subject. (II.10, p.70).

So, while dealing with social issues, the best plays also explore into the nature of the individual.

And again, as with the other two features of modern Irish drama mentioned, the primary assertion of realism's dominance has to be qualified. There have been occasional fantasy-dramas staged, usually in a comic vein. There have also been those playwrights who, learning their craft through the practice of realism, have gone on subsequently to subvert its codes. O'Casey is one example; Christopher Fitzsimons



singles out Thomas Kilroy, one of an outstanding generation of playwrights to emerge in the 1960s (II.8, p.198). Two others of that generation, Brian Friel and Tom Murphy, display great mastery and insight in altering or refining and ostensibly realistic idiom so as to invest it with great power. Even so, these examples do not change the overall pattern, and, as in the case of non-verbal drama, there is a great territory of the non-real which is largely undiscovered.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### The Dream - Fragmentation and Integration

- 3.1 MacIntyre and the Irish Theatrical Tradition
- 3.2 Imaginary as well as Real
- 3.3 Inherent Difficulty
- 3.4 Visual as well as Verbal
- 3.5 International as well as Irish
- 3.6 Myth as Source
- 3.7 Jung - Dreams and Myth
- 3.8 Jung - Union of Opposites
- 3.9 Jung - East and West
- 3.10 MacIntyre, Yeats, Jung
- 3.11 Dream Plays
- 3.12 Fragmentation of Structure
- 3.13 Fragmentation of Speech
- 3.14 Fragmentation of Character
- 3.15 Integration through rhythm
- 3.16 Wagner, Meyerhold, Mason
- 3.17 Magic Box
- 3.18 The Magic of the Real
- 3.19 The Peacock Theatre



### CHAPTER THREE

#### The Dream - Fragmentation and Integration

3.1 It is my contention that the plays of Tom MacIntyre which I am now going to discuss represent a radical departure from the Irish theatrical tradition in each of the three particulars I have just outlined in the previous chapter. They open themselves eagerly to international as well as to Irish influences. They set out to employ the full armoury of theatrical expression, visual and aural as well as purely verbal. And they dispense with realism as a framework, instead incorporating the real as one element within the imaginable. Their significance is greater because they constitute an experiment sustained over more than ten years and carried out, not on the periphery, but at the heart of the Irish tradition, within the Abbey Theatre. Furthermore, I see them as part of a wider attempt to broaden the Irish theatrical tradition evident during the 1980s, the future direction and success of which is uncertain.

3.2 In a note written to accompany the programme for the revived version of The Great Hunger in 1986, Dermot Healy says that the original 1983 production had:

smashed open a mirror in Irish theatre. No longer was an audience looking at themselves in a way to which they were accustomed. (II.36)

The broken mirror was the mirror of realism, of Naturalism - or the

moderate version of Naturalism which had become entrenched as the norm in Irish theatre over the previous seventy years. Tom MacIntyre says that when he began writing for the theatre in the early 1970s he had 'no interest' in what most contemporary Irish drama was trying to do. (I.16) He did not want simply to mirror the external world. Instead his plays attempt to open up the internal world, the world of what he dubs 'dream-stuff' (I.16) and what the director, Patrick Mason, calls:

the whole world of imagination, of dream, of fantasy,  
of multiple meanings, of the psyche, of soul-making. (I.18)

To sum up, Mason states more simply 'The starting point for all of them [the plays] is the dream'. (I.18)

This is clearly Symbolist territory. MacIntyre's work stems much more from the Symbolist than from the Naturalist tradition in drama. To use Hofmannsthal's terms, it presents us not with mirror images, but rather reveals to us the dream images behind the mirror. It can be seen to have an affinity too with those bastard descendents of Symbolism, Expressionism and Surrealism, and owes more to Artaud than to Brecht. Or, to conclude by referring back to the distinction I made at the beginning of the essay, it springs more from the inward-looking synthesising impulse than from the outward-looking analysing impulse.

This does not mean, however, that MacIntyre's plays ignore the external world - that they exist only in some fanciful sphere of the imagination, divorced from reality. On the contrary, his plays explore, or at least touch on, almost every single one of the social issues which I listed above as characteristic subjects for Irish drama. All of the plays are centrally concerned with the relationship between men and women. Dance for your Daddy and Snow White deal with the liberation of women from traditional constraints and the tensions



between parents and children. The Great Hunger tackles the question of the power of the Church in Irish society, The Bearded Lady that of the individual's role in relation to the state, and the question of personal privacy. Rise up lovely Sweeney explores the origins of the enduring place which violence has in Irish politics and society; it takes the half-legendary figure of the mad king, Sweeney (Suibhne Geilt), and conceives him 'as an avatar of eternal Irish troubles'.  
(I.5, Author's note)

So, just as the best Irish realistic drama does not neglect the spiritual, neither does MacIntyre neglect the social. But because his starting point is the individual rather than society, his approach is from the opposite direction. Realism describes an external social environment, and then situates its characters within it. Insights into the characters are gained through observing how they act and react within this environment. MacIntyre, however, turns this scheme inside out. The environment he reveals is the internal landscape of the mind. The conflicts within society are shown as emanating from internal conflicts within the individual; the 'issues' therefore remain, but are internalised.

Mason emphasizes the importance of working on several levels at once, the individual, the social, the universal. He says that all true theatre, all true art, does not deal in 'singular meanings' but in 'plural' or 'multiple meanings'.

The language of the theatre is never pure ..... never simply one thing. It is a very sophisticated language ..... [there should be] no single action on the stage which is not both particular and general. (I.18)  
The 'dream' therefore becomes the natural model for the 'play' because:

the language of our dreams is so extraordinarily vivid, startling, terrifying - and yet it is all made up of everyday life. The juxtapositions, the combinations are what give it its strangeness and power. (I.18)

3.3 There is then an inherent difficulty in subjecting work such as MacIntyre's to analytical discussion. A simple straightforward description of what takes place on stage will not succeed in summoning up that strange power of the work and will tend instead to make it sound obscure, pretentious, self-indulgent and ultimately ridiculous. On the other hand, a too programmatic inquiry into the sources of the work not only risks missing the point, but also runs the danger - as the actor Tom Hickey warns - of 'demeaning' the work, both in the sense of debasing it, and of robbing it of many of its meanings. (I.19) This is of course a difficulty with all artistic criticism, but even more so with an art which very deliberately sets out to explore the wide territory of the irrational, the unknown and the mystical. By encompassing such work too neatly, the critic stifles its echoes.

The difficulty is heightened by the visual nature of MacIntyre's theatre. In dealing with any visual medium, the critic is faced with having to translate images into words, but in the case of theatre the problem is exacerbated by the transient nature of the experience; the work cannot be reproduced and allowed to speak for itself.

3.4 MacIntyre's commitment to the visual side of theatre departs from the doctrine of the supremacy of the word, preached by the purist Symbolists and by the early Yeats. But it is in keeping with the practice of much of the theatre which has since flowed from the



Symbolist tradition.

His first two plays, Eye-Winker, Tom Tinker (1972) and The Old Firm (1975), despite a certain strangeness in their tone, hold to most of the formal conventions of realism and use spoken dialogue, not images, to propel their action. However, with the short one-act lunchtime play, Jack be Nimble (1976) he jettisons words entirely in favour of the visual idiom of mime. His script now is a gestural script, which was developed in rehearsal with the actors and the director, Patrick Mason. This was the first time MacIntyre worked with Mason, and marks the beginning of the collaboration which has continued up until Snow White (1988). In the next play, Find the Lady (1977), MacIntyre explores ways of reintegrating speech back into the new mimed scenario.

Following this there was a gap of several years before he wrote the third play to be directed by Mason at the Abbey's Peacock Theatre - The Great Hunger (1983). During this time, MacIntyre lived for several months - in 1978 and 1979 - in Paris, where he worked with an American dance group, the Calck Hook Dance Theatre of New York. He worked as writer-in-residence, but also trained with them as a dancer. With the company, he devised a dance-play called Doobally-Back way and this was brought to Dublin in 1979, where it was performed at the Project Theatre. This involvement with dance helped MacIntyre significantly in developing the visual idiom he was seeking for his work (I.16). Mason considers that it is in the five later plays, beginning with The Great Hunger in 1983, that MacIntyre has truly found his voice and mastered his composite visual/verbal language (I.18).

MacIntyre's commitment to what became dubbed the 'Theatre of the Image' (II.39, p.81) and to a close collaboration with actors, director

and designer shows how his is neither a purely literary theatre, nor a writer's theatre in the narrow sense. Nevertheless the plays are still based round a written text - MacIntyre regards 'the verbal score' as the 'larger element' in his work (I.16) - and this collaboration is one which has a writer very much at its heart. The work differs, then, from much of the collaborative theatre of the twentieth century, which, as I mentioned earlier, rejected the writer and the given text in favour of a collective means of creation and an improvised script.

In the case of these Irish plays, the process of creation is still in two stages; MacIntyre conceives of each play and brings it to the stage of the rehearsal script. But it is unlike most conventional theatre in that the writer is intimately involved in the second stage - the actual rehearsal period - during which the text is brought to completion in the collaborative process. A comparison of rehearsal script with finished production reveals considerable differences; additions, deletions, alterations, changes in the order of scenes, the transposing of material from one scene to another. Nevertheless, most of the basic themes, motifs, imagery and dialogue remains constant.

A particularly strong collaborative relationship developed between MacIntyre, Mason and Tom Hickey, the actor who played the male leads in the five later plays from The Great Hunger onwards. Hickey relates how, during rehearsals, these three would sometimes rotate the roles of author, director and player between them, though ultimately assuming responsibility for their own sphere. (I.19) Mason calls MacIntyre the 'guide' to the whole process but says that 'sometimes the leader is led'. (II.39, p.69)

The designer for most of the shows, Bronwen Casson, though she attended many of the rehearsals, was not involved in the rehearsal



process to the same extent as this nucleus of writer, director and actor. Even so, she found that her relationship with actors and director was much closer than is usually the case in Ireland. (I.17) Mason - to judge by the work he has done over the past decade, in partnership not only with Casson, but also with designers like Joe Vanek and Monica Frawley - always likes to work very closely with his designer and clearly thinks in very visual terms himself. This is an opinion enthusiastically confirmed by Casson, who praises his 'wonderful visual imagination'. (I.17) Monica Frawley was, in fact, the designer for the final MacIntyre show, Snow White (1988), while Frank Conway had designed the two early shows in the 1970s.

The company of actors assembled for each cast also slowly changed. Some, like Hickey and like Martina Stanley, Vincent O'Neill, Conal Kearney, Brid Ni Neachtain, Michele Forbes and Dermot Moore, acted in several productions; others only in one or two. Many of those working backstage, including the lighting designer, Tony Wakefield, have also worked on most or all of the shows.

This team of author, director, actors and designers have tried to marry the best aspects of the writer's and the collaborative theatre, and the best of the verbal and visual.

- 3.5 Mason has said that when he and MacIntyre were auditioning actors for these plays, one of the main qualities they were looking for was 'openness' - a readiness to explore alternative ways of doing things. (I.18). The work itself is characterised, as I said, by an openness to influences of all sorts. MacIntyre, in turning away from the realism of modern Irish drama, turned towards an engagement with much of the international trends which Ireland has too often shunned since the time

of Yeats.

His fruitful period working with the Calck-Hook Dance Theatre in Paris is one example of this. He also toured America in the late 1970s and saw the work of many of the alternative theatre groups still operating. As well as this, he was looking to the work of the great pioneering masters of the 'Theatre of the Image' in this century, including Vsevolod Meyerhold, Erwin Piscator and Antonin Artaud. He mentions Meyerhold as a particular inspiration. (I.16) Mason too admits a debt to Meyerhold and regards the work carried out by the Russians in the first twenty-five years of this century to have set the agenda for the remainder of the century - for theatre as for so many of the arts. (I.18)

Mason, like MacIntyre, has experience of dance. He trained with the London Contemporary Dance Company, where he learned several techniques including that of the famous American, Martha Graham. Like MacIntyre, he has a wide-ranging interest in developments in international theatre both past and present. He was born and educated in England, receiving his initial training in the theatre at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London. He returns periodically to direct in Britain, but he has grown disenchanted with most British theatre - even that of the avant-garde which he sees as too dominated by political ideology and too biased toward the intellectual at the expense of the imaginative. In general, he finds the European theatre more stimulating, but he is very impressed by the developments which have taken place in the opera in Britain since the late 1970s. He believes that the unreal world of opera has become the outlet for the imagination which the straight theatre in Britain too seldom provides. He particularly admires the work of the opera directors, David Pountney



and Andrei Serban, and the designers Stefan Lazaridis and David Fielding.

Bronwen Casson has also trained and worked abroad. She studied first at the National College of Art & Design in Dublin and then went on to the Sadler's Wells school in London. She regards her training there under the tutelage of Jocelyn Herbert as having been formative to her career as a designer. Here she learned the prime virtue of simplicity. In fact, in principle, she disagrees with the idea of fixed scenery at all - she prefers the idea propounded by the English Director, Peter Brook, of the stage as an empty space into which people and objects can appear as the drama needs them. (II.7) She believes, like Grotowski, that the setting should be pared down to its essentials and that 'everything on stage must be right'. (I.17) She is averse to many of the excesses of design which she feels became fashionable in British theatre during the 1980s so-called designer decade, and sees her work on the MacIntyre plays as being quite contrary to the spirit of that trend (I.17). Mason, too, is uneasy about some of the design in recent British theatre which has tended towards the merely decorative or merely spectacular, but he also admires much of the more conceptual work; he regards the whole 'designer theatre' label as essentially a false one, manufactured by the literary critics - 'a critical stick to beat artists with'. (I.18)

After London, at the beginning of the 1970s, Casson spent several months in Paris, as an observer, with Ariane Mnouchkine's Theatre du Soleil. Mnouchkine's is perhaps the most famous of the French collaborative groups of that time, structured along democratic lines, and dedicated to a very visual theatre. Like many of these groups in France, Germany, America and elsewhere, it was inspired by the model of

Brecht's Berliner Ensemble; as a schoolgirl, Casson witnessed a touring production of Coriolanus, performed by the Ensemble, which greatly impressed her. Casson also spent a year at Berlin, at the Schiller Theatre, and she cites the German directors Pina Bausch and Peter Stein (who also carried on the Brechtian tradition of a 'people's theatre') as enduring inspirations for her.

Among the actors too there are international influences. Hickey trained in the late 1960s at the Stanislavsky Studio attached to the independent Focus Theatre. Vincent O'Neill and Conal Kearney studied mime under the French master, Marcel Marceau. Together they founded the Oscar Mime Company, which trained two more actors, Michele Forbes and Dermot Moore. Forbes also briefly attended Grotowski's Theatre Laboratory in Poland.

Another figure, whom I mentioned in passing above, and who is singled out by MacIntyre, Mason and Casson alike, is the brilliant English director, Peter Brook. Brook emerged as a successful director shortly after the war, but he really caught the theatre-going public's imagination with his 'Theatre of Cruelty' productions during the 1960s, inspired by Artaud's fiery vision of theatre as plague. Brook at this time said that 'the Theatre has one precise social function - to disturb the spectator'. (II.23, p.1) In 1970, Brook left England and settled in Paris, where, following the example of Grotowski's Theatre Laboratory, he set up the International Centre for Theatrical Research. Since that time, his group have produced some of the most startling and challenging of world theatre, and his Bouffes du Nord theatre building has become a sort of place of pilgrimage for young actors, directors and designers from all over the world. Mason, indeed, who had seen many of Brook's 'Theatre of Cruelty' productions



in the 1960s, spent a month, in the summer of 1975, as an observer at the Centre. Mason acknowledges Brook as a lasting inspiration, though he says the most important thing all these outside models give is 'encouragement'; they are 'signposts' to finding one's own way. (I.18)

Needless to say, this position of openness to outside influences does not mean that MacIntyre's theatre is some sort of alien growth which has invaded Irish culture. On the contrary, his work is rooted in that culture. Though he disregards most modern Irish Drama, he looks back to the more ancient Irish tradition of storytelling. He has always been deeply interested in native Irish mythology and folklore, which he sees as 'central' to his work. (I.16) It is from these mythic traditions that the inspiration for much of his drama comes.

3.6 In being drawn to myth, MacIntyre is not alone. As has been seen, Wagner, and many of the Symbolists, and Yeats himself, took myth as the source for their art. Artaud, and after him Grotowski, Peter Brook and Ariane Mnouchkine, have used myth and mythic ritualized forms of drama - often from the East - as their theatre's most potent raw material. The whole deep reservoir of mythology, legend, folklore and fairytale seems to possess a fascination for those whose art looks inward more than outward, those who seek to chart the dark regions of the psyche.

In fact, almost all of the MacIntyre plays under discussion are in some way inspired by material which can be seen as mythological or folkloric. MacIntyre says of myth that so far as he is concerned there is 'no poetry, no theatre ..... without it' (I.16) Jack be Nimble (1976) takes the simple nursery rhyme as its starting point, while Find the Lady (1977) retells the story of Salome and John the Baptist. Each of the next three plays are based - very loosely - on a classic Irish

text: The Great Hunger (1983, 1986) on Patrick Kavanagh's 1942 poem of the same name which presents its farmer-hero, Patrick Maguire, as the primordial Irish peasant, his predicament unchanged over generations; The Bearded Lady (1984) on the writings of Jonathan Swift, particularly the satirical adult fairytale, Gulliver's Travels; and Rise up lovely Sweeney (1985) on J.G. O'Keeffe's 1913 edition of the medieval Gaelic legend Buile Suibhne (The Frenzy of Sweeney). The final two plays return to the nursery for their source material; Dance for your Daddy (1987) once more starts from rhyme while Snow White (1988) explores the hidden recesses of the familiar fairytale.

Some light can be cast on the relationships between dreams, myth and the human psyche by referring to the theories of the Swiss thinker and psychologist, Carl Gustav Jung, which Mason says are germane to the MacIntyre plays. (I.18).

- 3.7 Jung, was, along with Sigmund Freud and Alfred Adler, one of the founding-fathers of modern psychology. For this brief outline of some salient aspects of his theories I have relied on the Fontana edition of Jung's Selected Writings, edited and introduced by Anthony Storr. (II.14)

Though associated with Freud in his early career, Jung's mature theories developed in a markedly different direction. Freud had made famous the idea of the unconscious, a level of the human psyche, lying below consciousness, which hold impressions, experiences and emotions, forgotten or repressed by the conscious individual. Jung, however, formulated the idea of a third level of the human psyche, deeper than the personal unconscious, which he calls the 'collective unconscious'. This collective unconscious

is not individual, but common to all men, and perhaps



even to all animals, and is the true basis of the individual psyche'. (II.14, p.67)

The consciousness of modern man has therefore evolved over millennia from an older animal unconsciousness. (II.14, p.218) This survives as the collective unconscious which Jung sees as constituting by far the greater part of the human psyche, while Freud's idea of the 'ego' corresponds only to the conscious fraction of it. (II.14, p.201)

The collective unconscious contains what Jung terms 'archetypes' which he defines as 'a kind of readiness to produce over and over again the same or similar mythological ideas'. (II.14, p.70) The archetypes, being unconscious, are not themselves ideas; rather they are primordial images, which once they become conscious, manifest themselves as ideas. Jung claims that these archetypes lie at the root of 'all the most powerful ideas in history'. They can be identified most clearly in primitive mythologies, but also in the core beliefs of organised religions, and, at a more distant remove, in the central concepts of science, ethics and philosophy. (II.14, p.16) they explain why similar images, motifs and figures occur again and again across different mythological and folkloric traditions,

as well as in the dreams, visions and delusions of modern individuals, entirely ignorant of all such traditions. (II.14, p.65)

- 3.8 This last observation is extremely important. It had been in his treatment of patients, especially those suffering from psychoses such as schizophrenia, that Jung had first noticed the recurrence of these archetypal images. Freud's psychology could explain the milder forms of mental illness, the neuroses, in personal terms; they were due to

the eruption of material which the ego has tried to repress in the personal unconscious. Freud had no adequate explanation, however, for the more extreme and bizarre forms of mental illness, the psychoses. Jung explained these illnesses in terms of the eruption of material from the more powerful collective unconscious; its archetypal contents overwhelm the conscious ego and result in the fragmentation of the psyche into separate personalities. Less spectacularly, the autonomous power of the psyche could be observed in the passions of normal healthy individuals - love, anger, joy, fear - passions which often fight against reason, against the wishes of the ego. (II.14, p.215)

Jung came to believe that the psychic health and growth of the normal individual depends on his recognising and coming to terms with the unconscious part of the psyche. Jung saw this as a lifelong process, a slow growth towards psychic maturity. The body has reached maturity by the end of adolescence, but Jung believed that for most, if not all, people, full psychic maturity is never attained, but remains an ideal to be striven towards. (II.14, p.196) Such a state would be characterised by balance, unity and wholeness, because the 'psyche consists of two incongruous halves which together should form a whole'. (II.14, p.224) By reconciling these conscious and unconscious halves, the person becomes a complete 'individual'. For this reason Jung called the process of psychic growth the 'individuation process'. (II.14, p.212) He said that this ideal of personal integration appeared in mythology as an archetype. In stories it is represented by a 'quaternity', that is, four characters abiding in harmony with one another - as often happens for instance at the end of fairytales. (II.22, p.29) Pictorially, it is represented by the circular 'mandala' symbol. (II.14, p.230) Jung names this archetype of wholeness 'the



Self'. (II.14, p.19) Jung understood that this concept of wholeness is inherently difficult for the conscious mind to accept, since the essence of the conscious mind is discrimination; it must, if it is to be aware of things, separate the opposites, [but] it does this *contra naturam*. (II.14, p.275)

Things which, in nature, and at the deep natural level of the unconscious, are experienced as 'facets of the same reality' (Anthony Storr's words, II.14, p.25), become, once embodied in thought and language, categorised as opposites; mind and body, space and time, good and evil, male and female. But for Jung: 'only the paradox comes anywhere near comprehending the fullness of life'. (II.14, p.265)

According to Jung, the less psychically mature a person is the more resistant he or she will be to recognising the opposites contained within his or her psyche. Indeed, society, which revels in categories, normally requires its members to present themselves in a consistent light - be either one thing or another. The person, therefore, must assume a mask, or a 'persona' to conceal what society would regard as contradictory within his nature. The more he himself identifies with this 'persona' the more he loses contact with his unconscious and the more powerful it becomes. (II.14, p.94)

Thus, for instance, what the conscious mind perceives as 'evil' or 'dark' or 'negative' or 'inferior' is forced to remain unconscious; Freud would say it is repressed. But now, as an unconscious personality, it enjoys a greater autonomy and will not stay hidden. Instead it is projected onto something external - other people, the evil, a hated ideology. It emerges in mythology, and in dreams, as the archetype which Jung calls the 'Shadow'. (II.14, p.87). Jung says that 'the shadow coincides with the personal unconscious' and so is

relatively accessible. (II.14, p.221) Most people perceive at least some of their own faults - only the most blind (and most intolerant of others) claim to be perfect.

But deeper down, at the level of the collective unconscious, lie more obscure facets of man's nature. Jung states:

In the consciousness of every man there is hidden a feminine personality, and in that of every woman, a masculine personality. (II.14, p.221)

These also become projected, and emerge in mythology as the Anima (man's feminine side) and the Animus (woman's masculine side). Jung says that the Anima or Animus, projected onto a member of the opposite sex - in the first instance, the mother or father, later the partner or spouse - can become either the object of great love or bitter hate. To some extent then, both passionate love affairs and the 'war of the sexes' are the result of internal conflicts which have been externalised. (II.14, p.108-9) Such ideas would probably be more widely accepted now than when Jung first formulated them. Indeed, the whole debate about the 'post-feminist woman' and 'the new man' owes its origins partly to Jungian theory.

Jung identifies several other archetypes - the hero, the wise old man, the trickster and so on - but the Self, the Shadow, the Anima and Animus are the most important.

- 3.9 Another pair of opposites, which Jung himself distinguished and made famous, was that of the introverted and extroverted types of personality. (II.14, p.129) Of course the complete individual, who has attained wholeness would have achieved balance in this regard as in all others. Most of us, however, though possessing both attitudes, tend



either towards introversion or extraversion. The extravert directs his energies outward, out into the external world; the introvert focuses his attention inward, into his own being (II.14, p.140-1).

Clearly this has a bearing on the distinction I made at the beginning between art which is outward-looking, objective, analytical and based on reality and art which is inward-looking, subjective and springs from the imagination. Jung himself, in fact, claimed that whole cultures too could show a bias towards one attitude or another. He felt that Western culture was biased towards extraversion and the East towards introversion. He saw the proselytizing missionary energy of Christianity, in contrast to Buddhism's search for inner harmony, as one aspect of this. (II.14, p.224-5) He felt that the whole tradition of Western thought, as inherited from the Greeks, puts an undue value on rationality, individuality, logic, the powers of the conscious mind. The unconscious forces - intuition, emotion, instinct - are seen as inferior and even threatening. As a result, Western man can find himself cut off from his roots, alienated from the sources of his inner life. The Eastern tradition of thought is equally unbalanced in the opposite direction. It aims to extinguish ego-consciousness in a 'universal consciousness' which Jung equates with the collective unconscious. (II.14, p.224)

Jung devoted his late career to a study of the whole underground tradition in Western thought, which has its origins in the Greek Hermetica and the Jewish Cabala, as well as in Gnostic teachings. He counted as significant the revival of interest in the Hermetica and Cabala which occurred at the time of Renaissance, and the practice of alchemy which paralleled the discoveries of rational science. He regarded this whole line of exploration as a sort of 'undercurrent' to

the extraverted values of orthodox Christianity and the secular orthodoxies of the Age of Reason. He compared the relationship between these two traditions in European thinking to that in the individual person between his conscious thoughts and his dreams. Jung believed that dreams were messages from the unconscious, and the certain dream-images could represent archetypal aspects of the personality - Self, Shadow, Anima, Animus and so on - which were being neglected by the dreamer in his waking life. (II.14, p.21). And so, 'just as the dream compensates the conflicts of the conscious mind', this dark side of Western thought counterbalances the otherwise predominant rationalism. It is therefore quite natural that the Romantic Movement in art and literature, to which the Symbolists belong, should profess an interest in these dark or occult traditions, as well as in dreams, mythology and oriental mysticism.

Jung became particularly interested in alchemy. Ostensibly the alchemists sought, in the conjunction of two substances, mercury and sulphur, to create gold, and ultimately, to find what was known as the philosophers stone. Jung, however, through a study of alchemical literature, and an analysis of its terminology, concluded that:

what the symbolism of alchemy expresses is the whole problem of the evolution of personality described above, the so-called individuation process. (II.14, p.284)

As with individuation, the alchemical process aimed for the creation of a new whole through the union of opposites; the cold metallic liquid, mercury, and the hot non-metallic solid, sulphur. Both processes proceeded in stages, which could be equated; encounters with the Shadow, with the Anima/Animus, creation of Self. (II.14, p.286). Jung stated that in the dominant Western religion, Christianity, the self-



archetype resides in the figure of Christ himself. But he argued that, from a psychological point of view, Christ was unsatisfactory as an archetype of unity, being exclusively good and exclusively male. The alchemists, therefore, in seeking a true unity of opposites - good and evil, male and female - were engaged in the subversive work of trying to restore the balance in Western thought.

- 3.10 The director, Patrick Mason, says that MacIntyre and himself share an interest in Jung's theories. In fact, he cites the work of a pupil of Jung, Marie Louise Von Franz, who applied jungian ideas specifically to the study of folk and fairytale, and describes it as 'crucial' to the whole series of MacIntyre plays which he directed:

She's very influential to Tom and myself, her writing, and that whole [jungian idea] of the dream and the play as a sort of messenger from the dark side, or the unconscious side. (I.18)

This does not, of course, mean that the plays can be reduced to what the actor Tom Hickey calls 'some kind of illustration' of jungian theories of the dream. (I.19) This would be to get things back to front. MacIntyre's primary interest is in dreams and in myth, and this predates and supersedes his interest in Jung. Jung is simply a fellow explorer of the same territory who arrives by a different route, with interesting things to say.

James Flannery makes a similar point when he is discussing Yeats' system of thought and belief as set out in his mystical treatise, A Vision (1925, revised 1937). He draws attention to the fact that: the ideas of the poet [Yeats] and the psychiatrist [Jung] parallel and indeed reinforce one another to a remarkable

extent

but qualifies this by saying

Yeats scarcely knew the work of Jung and, in fact, had a profound contempt for all modern psychology as a 'modish curiosity'. (II.9, p.26)

MacIntyre, Yeats and Jung are linked only because they are drawing from the one source. This is the reason that Jung's theories can throw some light on MacIntyre's work, but they should not be considered either a source for the work, or an explanation of it.

3.11 'The starting point ..... is the dream'.(I.18)

The link between the world of the stage and the world of our dreams is an old one, and, as I have shown, it had been re-emphasized by the Symbolists at the time of the birth of the modern theatre. But it was the Swedish playwright, August Strindberg, who first actually took the dream as a model for his plays. Strindberg, along with Henrik Ibsen and Anton Chekhov, is usually held up as one of the great first-generation masters of modern drama, and, of the three, Strindberg is perhaps the most formally innovative. He adopted and explored a great variety of theatrical styles. He was one of those fluent in both Naturalism and Symbolism (deeply interested in both Eastern and Western mysticism, he devoted some years of his life exclusively to alchemical research), and also one of those who advanced beyond the fin de siècle effeteness of Symbolism to discover modes of expression more suited to the spirit of the twentieth century.

At the turn of the century, he wrote a series of what he called 'dream plays', which are landmarks in the development of a modern idiom. The second of these, called simply a Dream Play (1901), was



prefaced by a brief note, which Richard Gilman calls 'one of the key documents of modern thinking about the drama' (II.10, p.104).

Strindberg sets out his intentions:

In this dream play ..... the Author has sought to reproduce the disconnected but apparently logical form of a dream. Anything can happen; everything is possible and probable. Time and space do not exist; on a slight groundwork of reality, imagination spins and weaves new patterns made up of memories, experiences, unfettered fancies, absurdities and improvisations. The characters are split, double and multiply; they evaporate, crystallize, scatter and converge. But a single consciousness holds sway over them all - that of the dreamer. (II.10, p.106-7)

Gilman draws attention to Strindberg's phrasing; these plays are not meant to be dreams - they attempt simply to 'reproduce the disconnected by apparently logical form of a dream'. Strindberg broke the fundamental conventions of Greek drama - the famous unities of time and place - more decisively than they had ever been broken before. But Strindberg's was not simply a negative act of iconoclasm; his dream play was a positive alternative form - one with a fluid elastic logic of its own. (II.10, p.108) Gilman claims that this is a form which had 'almost no direct antecedents in the theatre', and says that Strindberg's words could be said

to describe nearly the whole of what we think of as avant-garde drama of the past fifty years. (II.10, p.107)

(Alfred Jarry's play, Ubu Roi, written three years before Strindberg's first dream play, had been a grotesque parody of existing forms; it had not sought to create a new form).

MacIntyre's work is very much in this avant-garde tradition, and Strindberg's note could almost be affixed to one of MacIntyre's plays. Like the dream, his plays break up the familiar pattern of day to experience - and the familiar realist codes of plot, dialogue and character - and recombine the fragments into strange new patterns of their own.

3.12 The chronological plot is the structural backbone of a realist play.

MacIntyre's two early plays, Eye-Winker, Tom Tinker and The Old Firm are constructed in this orthodox fashion, the only indication of a different direction being a couple of short 'collage' scenes which are used to telescope the action and suggest the passing of time. The mime play, Jack be Nimble, however, retains only vestiges of a chronology; its plot is based on a succession of encounters between the eponymous Jack and each of the other characters in turn. Find the Lady and the later plays develop this episodic 'collage' structure; the scenes become more fragmentary, sliding into one another - or being abruptly cut off. Fragments of action occur on stage simultaneously, but apparently independently of one another. Vincent Hurley remarks that

this sort of non-linear non-discursive approach is more  
a feature of modern cinema than of modern theatre.

(II.36, p.76)

Certainly, if one compares mainstream theatre to mainstream cinema, this is true. Gilman makes the remark, in fact, that the note Strindberg attached to A Dream Play in 1901 could have served as a 'manifesto and operating manual for the then new medium, film'. (II.10, p.107).

Cinema, invented in 1895, started by modelling itself on the



theatre of the day. The camera was set up and simply recorded the action from a fixed position, as if from a seat in the auditorium of a theatre. Very quickly, though, within about twenty or twenty-five years, film-makers had developed a very sophisticated language of their own, which exploited the inherent flexibility of the new medium. The basic grammatical unit of this language is the 'shot'. A bewildering range of camera shots have been developed; some of the most obvious include shorts of different focal-length, from close-ups to distance shots, shots from different angles, and moving shots, where the camera pans, tilts or zooms. The basis of cinematic syntax - the system whereby the shots are arranged so as to produce a narrative - is the process of 'editing' or 'montage'. This complex language gives the film-maker great control over exactly what the audience sees and how it perceives what it sees. He can precisely frame each image, and order precisely the sequence of images. By cross-cutting, film makers can show action happening from different points of view, or two series of actions happening simultaneously, but in different locations. The fluidity of cinema has had a big influence on certain strands of avant-garde theatre. MacIntyre and Mason share a keen interest in the medium, which MacIntyre feels has 'a great deal' to offer the theatre (I.16). Mason notes that it has often been the cinema critics rather than the theatre critics who respond most sensitively to MacIntyre's work; he feels that theatre critics, trained in literary criticism, are by and large ill-equipped to appreciate an imagistic style of theatre. (I.18)

In fact, most mainstream cinema has used its flexibility to develop an even more convincing and seamless version of realism. Most films, despite the occasional use of flashbacks, still structure

themselves round a chronological plot, and it is notable that they rarely depart from the codes of realism in dialogue, character and setting. Again, it has been left to an avant-garde to break away and explore beyond realism. The film-makers Vincent Hurley lists as particularly pertinent to MacIntyre's work are all Europeans, in whose films 'the fantastic and the mundane ..... dream and reality' are intermingled: Luis Bunuel, Jean Cocteau, Federico Fellini, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Werner Herzog, Andrei Tarkovsky. Mason says that the visionary films of Tarkovsky, with their highly controlled beautifully lit images of revelation and apocalypse, have been particularly inspiring to him. (I.18)

3.13 The fragmentation which characterises the structure of MacIntyre's plays is apparent also in the dialogue. In the early plays, the dialogue is conventional enough as regards its form, whatever about its content. Characters speak coherently to one another, answering each others questions - the pattern is straightforward. But then, with the wordless Jack be Nimble, he, so to speak, cleanses himself of speech so as to give voice to gesture and image. Find the Lady attempts to integrate verbal and visual together. The results are not always a success; the dialogue remains relatively intact and there are some extended passages of fairly formal argument between the sensualist, King Herod, and his ascetic prisoner, John the Baptist, which sit rather uneasily in the predominantly mimed framework.

The play which followed six years later, The Great Hunger, was much more daring and much more successful. Here, almost every line of speech is taken directly from the source-text, Kavanagh's poem. But what we get are snatches of the poem - no more than a phrase or a



couple of lines, sometimes just a single word - jumbled up and sewn into the visual narrative. There is very little dialogue in the conventional sense. Characters rarely ask one another direct questions, or comment directly on something someone else says. This fragmentation of speech could be seen as symptomatic of the obstructions - both social and psychic - blocking the way to true communication between the characters. Much of the communication is non-verbal, carried out through gesture or through sounds. In the rural setting of The Great Hunger the characters often converse in animal noises and animal gestures. A teasing encounter between Maguire and a schoolgirl becomes a sort of mating ritual between cock and hen (Figs 24 - 27). A game of toss-a-penny among the men develops into 'The Heifer Romp (I.3, p.50) - a mime of the mating between bull and heifer (Figs 28 - 33). The impoverished relationship between Maguire and his sister, Mary Anne, is memorably evoked in a scene where they conduct a clipped non-verbal conversation: he sits on the ground, his legs spread before him, indulges in a childlike game of banging his boots together; she answers this intermittent sound by the ritual of slowly pouring water from a kettle into a bucket. They have nothing to say to one another, and no words to say it.

The subsequent plays continue this pattern. Sometimes, as in The Bearded Lady especially, there is room for a certain amount of dialogue and argument. But always there is this same fragmentation of speech and obstructed communication. The lines of different characters occasionally engage with one another, or seep into one another, or flare up against one another, or run along parallel for a bit, but often they seem locked in internal patterns of their own. Speech circles back on itself; phrases are repeated like verbal tics: an

example from Rise up lovely Sweeney;

SWEENEY - My nation is the howl - but not the black howl.  
Some say the whinge. I say the howl - but not the black  
howl. (I.5, p.7);

and from Snow White

MOTHER - My father named a boat after me when I was nine.  
Called the boat after me. I was nine at the time.

THAT FELLA - What was it called ?

MOTHER - My father died when I was ten. (I.7, p.7)

or again, stray lines are spoken into the void; floating through the  
narrative, returning again and again, like refrains:

Patrick Maguire went home and made cocoa (I.3)

Method is good in all things, order governs the world (I.4)

All I ever wanted was to walk across a field (I.5)

Must you play the piano in just you nightgown ? (I.6)

Blood is a special kind of juice (I.7)

Always pull a peach when it lies within your reach (I.4)

You'll turn out exactly like your mother (I.6)

Watch over me on the way home (I.5).

- 3.14 Finally, this fragmentation affects the characters themselves. As  
Strindberg says, they 'are split, double and multiply'. (II.10, p.107)  
In some cases this splitting is quite explicit. In The Bearded Lady  
the central character, Dean Jonathan Swift, is represented by three  
figures, played by three actors; the young Master Jonathan, the mature  
Swift, and the elderly Old Dean. In Dance for your Daddy, the Daughter  
is flanked by Dark Daughter and Girl Child. In Snow White, Snow White  
it echoed in Rose Red, Briar Rose and Goose Girl. This sort of thing



is not altogether unusual. Even in a predominantly realist play like Brian Friel's Philadelphia, Here I Come (1965) the central character, Gar O'Donnell, is split into Gar Public and Gar Private, the latter invisible to the rest of the cast. Friel uses this device to let us hear Gar's private thoughts.

In the case of MacIntyre's plays, however, this splitting of character is more fundamental - in a sense it is what the plays are all about. On one level, all the characters in any given play can be seen as aspects of the one character - the one Strindberg calls 'the dreamer'. (II.10, p.107) They inhabit, as I said, a landscape of the mind. MacIntyre is probing the psyche, showing us its seeming paradoxes. He peoples the stage with the archetypes which lie embedded in our myths and in our dreams.

The Bearded Lady is the play which gives the most extreme example of the fragmentation of character. The whole cast - seventeen strong (see Appendix A) - can all be seen as representing conflicting parts of Swift's nature. The deepest fissure though divides his psyche into just its two basic parts - conscious and unconscious. Swift was a man of the Age of Enlightenment but he betrays in his writings a fundamentally ambiguous attitude towards the rational scientific ideals of that age. MacIntyre portrays him as figure wracked by a struggle between seemingly incompatible urges within himself, pulling him at once towards rational thought and irrational passion, the things of the mind and the things of the body, the conscious and the unconscious.

These two extremes are personified in the Houyhnhnms and the Yahoos, the incompatible inhabitants of the land visited by Swift's fictional hero, Gulliver, in the last of his four voyages. The distinction is between horse and ape. The equine Houyhnhnms are the

masters in this land, the ape-like (or man-like) Yahoos their slaves. Civilisation rules over barbarism; the conscious mind subdues the unconscious. The lives and society of the Houyhnhnms are governed by reason and dispassionate judgement. They have no understanding of avarice or deceit or any of the other human vices, nor any fear of death - nor do they feel bereavement. They proclaim their virtues:

Friendship. Benevolence. Decency. Civility.

Houyhnhnm means 'The Perfection of Nature' (I.4, p.25)

The brute Yahoos on the other hand are devoid of reason and ruled wholly by their passions; they exhibit every kind of foulness and viciousness and must be patrolled constantly by the watchful Houyhnhnms.

The distinction between the two is expressed visually in their appearance and in their behaviour. Here, Bronwen Casson's wonderful costumes contribute a great deal. The Houyhnhnms stand erect, stomachs in, chests out, shoulders back, backs arched (Figs. 56 & 57). They clasp their hands behind them and hold whips, which they flick like tails. They are smooth-bodied and clean shaven; their short hair is well groomed and ends in a neat plait at the back. (I.17) Their hooves are like stilts which add to their stature. They are a wonderful cross between dressage horses, ballet dancers and storm troopers, displaying a disciplined elegance, exuding a refined menace. The skin-tight leotards, cut away from the breast, the stamping iron hooves, the leather whips, the dashing ponytails, the exquisite gestures and poses all combine to give an impression of both narcissism and sadism.

The Houyhnhnms march and strut in military formation, always in pairs (Fig. 56); the Yahoos by contrast congregate as in undisciplined



rabble. Left to their own devices, they career through the space, screeching and chattering and gesturing wildly. They move with an awkward rolling gait, their legs splayed apart. They are filthy and unkempt, their bodies smeared with dirt. They have wild manes and their costumes are stitched with the hair from old wigs (Figs. 54 & 55). (I.17) At the approach of their overlords, the Houyhnhnms, they retreat to the margins of the space where they crouch together, sullen but cowed (Figs 63 & 64).

Swift is being stretched on the rack, pulled both ways. His master, who regards him as a 'prodigy' Yahoo, (I.14, p.224) is schooling him the exalted manners of the Houyhnhnms (Figs 63 & 64), but left on his own he always regresses to the degenerate state of the Yahoos. Tom Hickey's brilliant performance conveys both the humour and the pain in his position, as Swift's mincing attempts at mimicking the Houyhnhnms alternate with his fearful and dangerous approaches to the Yahoos. At one point he is locked in struggle with one the male Yahoos. Later he is left prostrate after a mysterious encounter with a lone female Yahoo. The two episodes are taken from Gullivers Travels but MacIntyre seems to view them in archetypal terms. The struggle can be seen as the meeting with the Shadow, the dark side of the personality, while the mysterious female represents the Anima.

However, in the end, Swift is unable to reconcile the opposites within his own nature. He seems driven to choose either the mind or the body - which is of course impossible and results in the disintegration of the psyche. Like Gulliver in the book he is banished from the Land of the Houyhnhnms (Fig. 64) and ends as a misanthropic recluse, full of disgust for humanity. In the book, Gulliver reports that upon his return to his home:

My wife and family received me with great surprise and joy, because they concluded me certainly dead; but I must freely confess the sight of them filled me only with hatred, disgust, and contempt ..... As soon as I entered the house, my wife took me in her arms and kissed me; at which, having not been used to the touch of that odious animal for so many years, I fell in a swoon for almost an hour. (I.14, p.283)

In the play, the last line is delivered by Swift to the audience 'Goodnight ..... I hope I never see you again'. (I.4, p.114) And in real life, during his final years Dean Jonathan Swift went insane.

As with The Bearded Lady, so too with the other plays. At one level all characters are one - all are archetypal. So, for instance, Sweeney, the IRA man on the run, and the Interrogator who hunts him can be seen as each other's Shadow. The battling Father and Daughter in Dance for your Daddy can be seen as each other's Anima/Animus. The father is fighting not only his Daughter, but the feminine part of his own psyche, which she represents - and vice versa. As can be seen from the cast lists (Appendix A), many of the characters, especially in the later plays, are named only in this generic way: The Interrogator, The Father, The Daughter, The Priest, The Anatomist, The Dirty Old Man, The Cat ..... This emphasizes their archetypal significance. It is interesting to note that in Strindberg's plays we find the same thing: The Stranger, The Lady, the Beggar, The Student, The Dead Man, The Colonel, The Mummy ..... And again, in Yeats: The King, The Cripple, The Angel, The Wise Man, The Fool, The Blind Man .....

James Flannery draws attention to Yeats' doubling of characters and includes it in a revealing list of things which link his work to



that of Samuel Beckett:

A major study of Beckett's indebtedness of Yeats ..... is called for with respect to their usage of double characters mirroring two halves of the same personality, their common literary and theatrical symbolism, their similar deployment of myth and ritual, and their common interest in the existential and mystical - as opposed to the social - destiny of man. (II.9, p.356).

MacIntyre, for his part, says he would empathise more with Yeats' work than with Beckett's, which he sees as too intellectual. (I.16) Perhaps he means that it is too concerned with the agonies of consciousness and not enough with the terrors of the unconscious.

3.15 He is willing to acknowledge a debt to Beckett, however, in the rhythms of his language - the pattern of repetition and variation, the doubling back and use of refrains which I commented on above. (I.16) In fact, it is through rhythm and pattern that the plays are held together. All the fragments of the shattered mirror find their places in a new design.

In The Great Hunger, MacIntyre shatters Kavanagh's poem as written text and reassembles it as a staged spectacle. The stray lines take their cue from the actions of the players. A good example is the second scene, where small-farmer Maguire and his men harvest potatoes in their stony patch of Monaghan field. The three men work in rhythm, each in his own furrow, stooping to root out potatoes with his hands and toss them into a metal bucket (Figs. 1 & 2). The language echoes the disjointed repetitive gestures of the three men, repeated time after time, and year after year. The sounds of the potatoes hitting

the metal bucket add their own music:

MAGUIRE Move forward the basket -

JOE Balance it steady -

MAGUIRE That means rain -

MALONE Down the ruckety pass -

MAGUIRE The wind's over Brannigan's -

JOE That means rain -

MALONE Down the ruckety pass -

MAGUIRE Pull down the shafts of that cart, Joe -

JOE And straddle the horse -

MAGUIRE And straddle the horse -

MALONE Down the ruckety pass -

MAGUIRE Graip up some withered stalk, graip up some  
withered stalks and see that no potato falls -

JOE Over the tailboard -

MAGUIRE Over the tailboard -

MALONE Down the ruckety pass -

MAGUIRE Going down the ruckety pass. And that's a job,  
that's a job we'll have to do in December -

JOE Gravel it -

MAGUIRE Gravel it and build a kerb -

MALONE Down the ruckety pass -

JOE And build a kerb -

MAGUIRE Gravel it and build a kerb on the bog side -

MALONE On the bog side - (I.3, p.36-37)

Language, gesture, sound and image are integrated into a single whole, like instruments in an orchestra. A word which comes up again and again in talking to those involved in the creation of these



productions is the word 'score'. (I.16, I.18, I.19). Tom Hickey speaks of:

what we call a physical score and a verbal score, and what is floating around in the air as a consequence is what I would call a psychic score. (II.68).

These plays are conceived of and performed in musical terms. Themes are first hinted at, then later on developed. Words, images, sounds and gestures reappear as leitmotifs throughout the performance. Through repetition and variation, the significance of every image and every sound is enlarged, and reverberates throughout the whole work.

I take as one example an image from Snow White. At the beginning of the play, the Seventh Dwarf, dressed in sombre black, stands alone in a spotlight and relates the tale of the poisoned princess. When he reaches the point where she lies dead in her glass coffin, he raises a black umbrella; the image is one of rain-swept funeral on a hill-side (Fig. 139). He goes on to tell us that she is not really dead, but sleeping, and, kissed by the prince, she awakes, and emerges from her transparent prison. When his story is told, the lights come up, the performance begins. On the stage is an antique dressmaker's mannequin, the bare wire frame of which recalls the umbrella. At one point in the performance, Snow White shelters underneath it; the image is one of hoops and whalebone corsets - it represents woman's traditional role, both as protection and as cage. Later again, Snow White's three acolytes whirl into the space in a snow storm, caught beneath transparent plastic umbrellas (Figs. 145 - 147); the image is of imagos, trapped in their chrysalises, struggling to be released.

Another example would be the complicated set of interlocking leitmotifs surrounding the figure of Swift in The Bearded Lady. He is

striving after the perfection of the Houyhnhnms and, through image and gesture and tableau, the visual score repeatedly links Swift with figures from history, religion, art and literature held up as ideals for mankind. So, during his trial by the Houyhnhnms he appears as a dishevelled Christ (Figs. 65-67); elsewhere he is Hamlet, the student prince of the Renaissance (Figs 60-62). A gestural motif which appears again and again in different contexts, with many variations, is the one of outspread arms, whether in triumph, or in agony. He is the Colossus of Rhodes, bestriding the miniature Lilliputian army as it parades beneath him; he is the daring showman who has killed the giant rat, borne upward in ecstasy to receive as reward a kiss from the giant Queen of Brobdingnag (Figs 51-53). This gesture reminds us of both the perfect man drawn by Vituvius<sup>r</sup> (the rational ideal) and the crucified Christ (the Christian ideal). Equally, the ladder to which the Yahoos cling for protection (and from which they defecate on top of Swift) is both climbing-frame and tree, but also cross and raft of the medusa (Figs 63 & 64).

Swift never attains this ideal. The whole rhythm of The Bearded Lady is defined by the tug-of-war between the Houyhnhnms and Yahoos for possession of Swift's soul. The stage, the landscape of Swift's mind, is fought over like a piece of territory, now falling into the control of the Yahoos, now brought again under Houyhnhnm authority. When the Yahoos are let loose, the mood is one of wild and anarchic violence. When the Houyhnhnms are in command, there is violence too, but of a more subtle kind, the implied violence of discipline and regimentation.

The pattern is completed by two scenes of nightmarish violence which frame the play at beginning and end. In the opening scene, upon the cue of Swift's terrified cry 'Rats in the bed !' the whole company



rushes to enact Swift's nightmare. There is mad activity: a sheet is spread and Swift bundled into it; the dark rats of his unconscious scurry about wildly beneath it, while everyone joins in the primitive chant - 'Rats in the bed ! Rats in the Bed !'. (I.4, p.5-6) Swift, as I said above, emerges triumphant from his ordeal, but in the closing scene it is re-enacted, this time as a shipwreck. The little boat takes Swift and his entourage into exile from the Land of his beloved Houyhnhnms, the land of pure reason. A storm brews: sounds of rain and wind and waves crashing; the mast sways from side to side and once more a sheet washes over Swift, the tumultuous wave of insanity. Blackness. The storm subsides, and the space is lit up to reveal Swift lying in a swoon on an empty stage. He drags himself to his feet and delivers the final despairing line into the auditorium which I quoted above. [It is significant that Mason, who has experience of dance, is also - as I mentioned - inspired by opera. In fact, in the last few years he has become directly involved in directing opera. Beginning with his award-winning production of the Gilbert and Sullivan operetta, The Pirates of Penzance in 1981, he has, since 1987, directed Giordano's La Cena delle beffe, Mozart's Don Giovanni, Puccini's Turandot and Donizetti's Don Pasquale. Many of the recent straight plays he has directed, like Ibsen's Peer Gynt and O'Casey's The Silver Tassie, have also used music and sound effects as an accompanying score.

This is even more true of the MacIntyre works. The early plays were performed to the accompaniment of live music; a single percussionist for Jack be Nimble, a band of three for Find the Lady. The five later plays have much more complex recorded soundtracks (though The Great Hunger also made use of a live percussionist),

incorporating a rich mixture of sounds; wind, waves, thunder, bird-cries, gongs, bells, drumrolls, voice-overs, tannoy, sonar, loud-speakers, explosions, music of all sorts - military, ecclesiastical, tribal, ballroom, disco. This is in addition to the words, which can themselves undergo wonderful contortions, and to the other noises made by the performers themselves; singing, shouting, jabbering, snorting, screeching, cooing, soothing, the stamping of feet, the smashing of plates, the bouncing of balls, the hum of machinery, the dropping of stones, potatoes thudding into buckets, water into a kettle.

For some examples of how sound and lighting effects contribute to the complete score, I will take Rise up lovely Sweeney, which shows us not the violence of Houyhnhnms and Yahoos, but the unending violence of Ireland itself. The play opens with the roar of helicopters. The stage is dark and confused. Searchlights hunt through the auditorium. The Interrogator is dimly seen ransacking the space with two dogs in harness - bare-chested actors barking and snarling. The stage is littered with newspapers, yesterday's headlines, the history that cannot be buried. The whole two-hour performance is haunted by their rustlings.

When the dogs have gone, the lights come up and Sweeney appears from this mound of newsprint - first just his hand, holding aloft the gun, Ireland's Excalibur (Fig. 73). A television stands in one corner of the stage. It flickers on and off. Its images and commentaries form part of the overall score (Figs. 79 - 81). Sweeney is broadcast full-face and side-face, a man on the run. Sweeney is the mad bird-king who fled the battle to live in the trees. At one point, the Sweeney on stage is subjected to an interrogation by this television Sweeney. His enlarged disembodied head shouts out a litany of Irish



trees; Sweeney must respond. The voice bullies the Sweeney on stage until he breaks down and weeps.

VOICE Oak ?

SWEENEY Oak - oak for shelter.

VOICE Briar ?

SWEENEY Briar for wounds.

VOICE Beech ?

SWEENEY Beech for rest.

VOICE Aspen ?

SWEENEY Aspen - aspen for shiver.

VOICE Apple ?

SWEENEY Yes, yes -

VOICE Yew ?

SWEENEY -

VOICE Yew ? Yew ?

SWEENEY Yew for coffin.

VOICE Elm ?

SWEENEY Elm for rot. (I.5, p.48-49)

Sweeney must pass the test, must know the passwords, must hold to the orthodox version, the party line. The overall effect of this scene is one of chilling violence, even though no blow has been struck. Such scenes are followed by scenes of ridiculous grotesque sentiment, like the danceband scene, where the swirling lights go way down low and everyone waltzes to the slow crooning of 'My Friend Stole my Sweetheart from Me'. (I.10).

In another scene, three women enter in procession in semi-darkness. They sit down on three chairs facing the audience. Cold spot-lights shine on them from above. They perform a synchronised

mime, in slow motion. Each is wrapped in an electric blanket; she bends to switch it on. The switches glow dull red. Each sits with her hands on her lap, then takes a white plate, studies it, raises it so that it covers her face, lays it down again. The whole sequence is performed in silence except for a high-pitched constant tone, incessant in the background. It is the neutral tone of the cardiograph registering death, of television shut-down, no more news to report. The numbing high-pitched sound, the blank plates, the slow synchronised movements, all express the loss and grief of those bereaved by violence. The cold harsh light is the light of the mortuary, the glowing switches like pathetic candles lit to the dead.

3.16 The whole concept of the theatrical performance being like a piece of music is of course firmly in the Symbolist tradition, going back to Wagner. His Gesamtkunstwerk had envisaged opera as a symphony of all the arts. The Symbolist poet, Edward Dujardin, had called for:

a poetic drama which would be like Wagner's music-drama  
in employing a minimum of action, long speeches in  
melodious rhythmic patterns, the use of verbal leitmotifs  
through the repetition of symbols, theme sentences, phrases  
and even vowels, consonants and syllables considered  
appropriate by their sound to the idea and emotion expressed.

(II, 9, p.111)

If we ignore the Symbolist concentration on words, and enlarge the idea of verbal leitmotifs to include gestural, visual and aural leitmotifs also, then we have a fair description of MacIntyre's drama as directed by Mason.

The theatre of Vsevolod Meyerhold, which developed from his early



involvement with Symbolism, is particularly relevant in this regard. As I said, both MacIntyre and Mason have looked to his work. (I.16, I.18) Edward Braun tells us that:

There was no production by Meyerhold which did not reaffirm his conception of rhythm as the basis of all dramatic expression. (II.6, p.190)

Before the revolution of 1917, Meyerhold worked at the Tsar's imperial theatres, and here he gained experience directing lavish productions of opera and ballet as well as of straight drama. At the same time he ran a private studio of actors with whom he conducted a series of more intimate explorations into the possibilities of theatre. He was particularly interested in stylised theatrical forms - Kabuki theatre, circus, the old Commedia dell'Arte tradition of Renaissance Italy - all of which depended primarily on gestural rather than verbal means of expression and required the performer to be highly sensitive to rhythm and timing. He trained his actors in the exquisite ritualised gestures of Kabuki, the gymnastics and acrobatics of circus, the clowning and buffoonery of the Commedia.

After the revolution, he emerged at the forefront of the theatrical avant-garde. He developed a system of acting which was quite at odds with the realistic method of his one-time mentor, Stanislavsky. For Meyerhold, the actor was to be a master of technique rather than a connoisseur of feelings. His system was called 'biomechanics' and was infused with the scientific spirit of the revolution, while drawing on the traditional forms he had studied. (II.6, p.165) The biomechanical actor was an athlete, capable of exercising precision control over his body, its rhythms and reflexes, as though it were a machine.

In his theories of acting, Meyerhold lay special emphasis on the

Commedia tradition of the 'grotesque'. Konstantin Rudnitsky captures the essence of the grotesque when he says:

tragedy [is] revealed in comedy, the smirk of emptiness through farce and slapstick and then, through horror and pain, the insolent comic grin. (II.20, p.15)

This mixture of the comic and the tragic was rejected as an impure theatrical form by some of Meyerhold's contemporaries, for instance the director, Alexander Tairov. (II.20, p.15) But Meyerhold insisted that this impure form was better able to convey life's complexity and paradox:

The grotesque helps the actor to portray the real as symbolic and to replace caricature with exaggerated parody. (II.6, p.126)

This accurately describes the approach taken by actors in the MacIntyre productions. Their wildly physical style of performance employs exaggerated gestures, reactions, walks, accents, and so on. In the grotesque, art's opposites - the tragic and the comic, the heroic and the base, the divine and the bestial - are united.

In the areas of direction and design also, the influence of Meyerhold can be detected in the MacIntyre productions. Mason employs several of the techniques used by Meyerhold to impart a rhythm to the dramatic performance. The action moves forward in short scenes or episodes rather than full-length acts. Andante follows adagio; static scenes where the actors remain in fixed positions, or perform measured ritual movements are alternated with dynamic scenes of frantic activity. Figures are positioned and groupings composed with great care; symmetry or balance is established and then upset. The composition is also layered from background to foreground; often the



figures upstage act in some way in counterpoint to the dominant figures downstage. Tableaux vivants are used as a punctuating device to measure the tempo of the performance.

Meyerhold also conceived of the stageset in a dynamic rather than a static way. It should not be just a passive environment in which things happen. Instead, it should actively contribute to the action. Early on, Meyerhold explored the lowering and raising of backdrops during the performance rather than between the acts. An actor might start delivering a speech against one backdrop and continue while the set changed behind him. The short episodic scenes which Meyerhold favoured provided an opportunity to colonise the stage area in ever-changing ways - one scene playing in the whole space, another concentrated on a small platform, a third ranged along the front of the stage, and so on. This policy is followed in the MacIntyre productions.

After the revolution, Meyerhold was the first theatre director to collaborate with Russian Constructivist artists, initiating what became a widespread style of design in the USSR and throughout Eastern Europe during the 1920s. Constructivist sets provided extensive facilities for interaction with the performers. They were built on several levels, truly three-dimensional structures. These levels were connected by staircases, ladders, ramps, chutes, even simple hoists. There were often a lot of doors or other ingenious means of entrance and exit. There were strange apparatuses which had to be negotiated. The set thus became a kinetic Constructivist machine, which added its own rhythm to the score. Again, parallels can be drawn with the MacIntyre productions, though their sets are usually less complex and on a smaller scale than most Constructivist sets had been.

The Great Hunger set includes as its centre-piece a farm-gate, which, as I will describe later, become an active participant in the action. The Bearded Lady's set incorporates the ladder I have already referred to (Figs. 63-64) as well as bails of hay which are moved about to become first a throne, then a classroom of desks, then a mysterious altar, and finally a ship (Fig. 69). In Rise up Lovely Sweeney the action revolves around a spiral staircase, and there is also a ladder leading to a gantry level (Fig. 92). The set of Dance for your Daddy is a distillation of modern machine living, dedicated to the worship of corporate and domestic technology; it includes a shower unit (Fig. 114), a hand-dryer (Fig. 117), a gymnastic running machine (Fig. 115), a photocopier, a paper shredder and a telephone (Plan 6). Access to this mechanised chrome-plated world is through four large swing doors. Finally, Snow White is played to the oscillating rhythm of a swing, which hangs suspended in a beautifully simple set (Fig. 141).

Constructivism, of course, aimed to be an extremely rational functional art, serving the ideology of the revolution. It is unlikely that MacIntyre or Mason would view such aims in other than an ironical light. Nevertheless they are glad to use the energy and dynamism and rhythm of Meyerhold's approach for their own ends. Indeed Edward Braun, speaking of Meyerhold's system of biomechanics, suggests that he may have done the same thing:

There seems to be little doubt that Meyerhold, spurred on by the polemical need of the times, exaggerated the scientific aspect of biomechanics in order to show that his system was devised in response to the demands of the new machine age, in contrast to those of Stanislavsky and Tairov, which were unscientific and anachronistic. (II.6, p.168)



It is perhaps unnecessary to point out that naturally Meryerhold was not the only producer experimenting with all these techniques in the early part of this century; like everyone else he borrowed and learned from his contemporaries. But he was one of theatre's most imaginative innovators and his influence on twentieth century dramaturgy has been enormous.

- 3.17 There is a sense in which what this team of playwright, director, actors and designer are trying to achieve in the theatre is analogous to what the alchemists tried to achieve in their laboratories, or Jung within the human psyche. In all three cases, a process of fragmentation leads to ultimate integration: the forms of everyday reality are broken down and re-emerge anew in the rhythms of the dream play; the base elements sulphur and mercury are broken down and chemically compounded to produce gold; the person recognises the opposites within his own nature in order to unite conscious with unconscious and become whole.

Mason in fact sees the stage as a 'magic box' wherein this transformation takes place. (I.18) This is a reference to a Renaissance view of the stage, which was an offshoot of alchemical theory, and is described in Frances Yates' book The Art of Memory. Yates' book traces the history of artificial memory systems from the time of the Greeks to the eighteenth century. She shows how, during the Renaissance, those who resurrected and explored the old Western mystical traditions of the Jewish Cabbala and the Greek Hermetica and experimented with alchemy also became interested in the system of mnemonics developed by Greek orators. As Yates says, they took what was 'a rational memory system and they occultise[d] it into a magical system'. (II.25, p.338)

Descriptions of the original Greek system had survived in documents written by the great Roman orator, Cicero, among others. Cicero had included this art of memory among the arts of rhetoric to be mastered by the orator. Yates explains the original need for a science of memory:

In the ancient world, devoid of printing, without paper for note-taking or on which to type lectures, the trained memory was of vital importance. (II.25, p.4)

The Greek system involved first of all committing to memory a series of places or 'loci'. Ideally these would be a series of real architectural spaces, for instance all the rooms - in sequence - of a large house or public building. The orator would store these ordered spaced like blank numbered pages in his mind. Then he could write his lecture or speech on these imaginary pages. Each point of an argument to be remembered (or, in some very sophisticated versions, each word, or phrase) would be visualised as an image, and the images placed in sequence in the mind, one to each room. In this way abstract concepts could be linked mentally with concrete images of people and objects. It was important for these images themselves to be memorable, as the classical texts explained:

When we see in everyday life things that are petty, ordinary and banal, we generally fail to remember them, because the mind is not being stirred by anything novel or marvellous. But if we see or hear something exceptionally base, dishonourable, unusual, great, unbelievable or ridiculous, then we are likely to remember for a long time. (II.25, p.9)

In this way, it was declared the speaker can store - and recall in



order - the various points of his discourse. Afterwards, the images can be forgotten; but the loci, the rooms or places - are like wax tablets, which remain when what is written on them has been effaced, and are ready to be written on again. (II.25, p.7)

Yates is sceptical of the more extraordinary claims made for this system though she accepts that to the practised mind it could have served as a valuable aid. (II.25, p.24)

From the theatrical point of view, the most important transformation of this rational functional system into a magical one was performed by the early seventeenth century English alchemist and Rosicrucian, Robert Fludd. In 1617 and 1619 Fludd published the two volumes of his History of two worlds, the two worlds being the macrocosm (the universe) and the microcosm (man). Fludd's memory system aims to magically store all possible knowledge of the whole universe in the mind of man. For Fludd, like all alchemists, saw the opposites 'man' and 'universe', macrocosm and microcosm, as a potential unity:

It is because Fludd's man as microcosm potentially contains the world that he can reflect it within. Fludd's occult art of memory is an attempt to reproduce or recreate the macrocosm-microcosm relationship by establishing, or composing, or making conscious in the memory of the microcosm the world which he contains, which is the image of the macrocosm, which is the image of God. (II.25, p.339)

In a similar way, MacIntyre's dream plays contain the real world in the mind of 'the dreamer' - they internalise the external.

The 'loci' which Fludd used in his system were theatres. The

stage seemed to be the most fitting place to visualise the dramatic scenes required for storing in the memory. These theatres were, in turn, to be plotted in the mind against the constellations of the heavens: the power of the stars - of the zodiac - then bring about the reaction which sears the images into the brain. The reaction is like the alchemical transformation which takes place in an enclosed vessel under the action of tremendous heat.

It is not that Patrick Mason believes in the power of the stars or the possibility of producing gold from base materials, but he is attracted to what he calls:

the idea of the magic theatre, where you have this contained space, with extraordinary action and figures moving around on it, where the containment, and the vividness of the figures - the 'imagines agents', the burning images - burn themselves into the conscious, and through the conscious into the unconscious - just as our dreams do. (I.18)

He feels theatre should have this burning effect on the audience, the power which Artaud and Brook seek, the 'impact' for which MacIntyre aims. (I.16)

And so the comparisons can be drawn. The images of the MacIntyre/Mason productions are always striking and unusual. Actions and gestures are often linked to certain places on the stage, to certain parts of the set or to certain props. These 'loci' remain when the action has passed on; then, when some fresh image returns to the same 'locus', it is as though superimposed on the lingering traces of the old. In this way the solid unmoving set itself becomes alive and transitory, changing its aspect as part of the recurring leitmotif.



Mason also emulates the alchemists' precision and control over their materials in the care he shows in composing and balancing his images. And especially in the later works, he seeks to contain the action in very enclosed sets so as to further concentrate and focus the images, intensifying their effect upon the audience (Plans 5-7).

It is possible also to detect alchemical or mystical influences in some of the shapes and colours used in the design of the shows. For instance, the curtains which are pulled across to conceal the rear entrance in The Bearded Lady (Plan 4) are printed with two large impressions of a woman's breasts. These are rendered in a very stylised manner which emphasizes their archetypal circular mandala form. Another example is the spiral staircase in Rise up lovely Sweeney. The Spiral is the mystical symbol for personal growth and development, and is linked by Jung to the alchemical symbol of the tree - trees being Sweeney's chosen habitat. (II.14, p.278) Again, in Dance for your Daddy, the six contraptions arranged in a semi-circle (Plan 6) could be seen as having zodiacal or planetary significance: the shower - the Moon, whose element is water; the hand-dryer - Jupiter, whose element is air; the photocopier - the Sun, whose element is light; the paper shredder - Saturn, who vomits up earth; the walking machine, or perhaps the telephone - Mercury, the bearer of messages.

And so too with the colours. As Bronwen Casson says the sets, and even more so the costumes, for almost all of these shows were sparing in their use of colour. The palette was usually restricted to 'blacks and whites and greys, with points of [primary] colour, frequently red'. (I.17). The colours black, white and red are the colours of alchemy. During the alchemical process, in which base materials are progressively refined to the purity of gold, they pass through three

distinct stages of decomposition and recomposition. These stages are called 'the nigredo', 'the albedo' and 'the rubedo', on account of the colour change from black to white to red which takes place in the material. (II.14, p.286)

I will take just one specific example of this use of the colours of alchemy in the design of a MacIntyre production. In Dance for your Daddy, the central character of the Daughter, is passing through the changes of adolescence. She is, as I mentioned earlier, flanked by two subsidiary personalities, Dark Daughter and Girl Child, one openly mischievous and rebellious, the other apparently innocent and affectionate. They represent all the polarities within her nature. Dark Daughter is dressed in black and Girl Child in white. The Daughter herself sports a black and white striped outfit, which indicates her more complex nature while also suggesting, by its likeness to a convict's uniform, that she feels imprisoned in her business-man father's corporate world (Figs. 112 & 113). A key prop in the play is the Daughter's pair of red panties which keep being found lying about the set by her outraged Daddy. Both by its colour and by its texture it announces itself as an alien intruder into this sterile monochrome-plated environment. Red is the colour of 'the rubedo', the third (penultimate) stage in the creation of gold. It is also of course the colour of menstruation, by which the Daughter comes of age - and threatens both the piece of mind and the authority of her father.

Finally, it is interesting to find the idea of the theatre as a magic box echoed in the writings of Yeats, who of course was interested in mysticism and the occult. Flannery says that:

Yeats viewed the overall stage picture as a kind of charm - a charm which through a highly formalised and



patterned inter-relationship of shapes and colours  
became for the audience a symbol of infinite perfection.  
(II.9, p.242)

In this then, as in so much else, the MacIntyre productions hark back to the Symbolist tradition which Yeats espoused but which has since been largely lost to Irish theatre.

- 3.18 Bronwen Casson says that one of the things that most impressed her about the production of Coriolanus by Brecht's Berliner Ensemble, which she saw as a schoolgirl, was the 'use [made] of texture, of real materials on stage'. (I.17). Brecht, though rejecting Naturalistic stage sets which aimed to create an illusion of verisimilitude, nevertheless insisted on the use of authentic materials and props in the design of Ensemble productions. The real objects would root the argument of the play in the real world of the audience's experience; but because the objects and the actors were placed in a stylised obviously theatrical setting, the spectator would not be lured into empathising with the characters in such a way as to lose his ability to judge objectively the lesson of the play.

In most of the MacIntyre productions, Casson and Mason introduce real materials and objects into the dream world; props and costumes are often 'found' rather than specially 'designed'. (I.17) In this way the design strategy follows MacIntyre's strategy for the plays as a whole, whereby elements - experiences, familiar images, snatches of dialogue - are taken from reality and introduced into a dream context to be made extraordinary. Therefore, though the practice may be learned from Brecht, the motive is in some ways the opposite to his. The real objects are present not so much to anchor the world of the play in

reality as to show how reality is transformed in the dream. this is because the play's primary aim is not to educate the spectator concerning his role in the world, but rather to awaken him to the hidden world within himself. This distinction is implicit in the remarks I discussed earlier made by Michael Patterson when he differentiates between historical and mythic theatre. (II.18, p.169)

The Bearded Lady, set in the eighteenth century, is - as Bronwen Casson says - not surprisingly the 'most designed' of all the shows, the one which makes little or no use of everyday props and found costumes. (I.17) The three shows which followed that one however, - Rise up lovely Sweeney, Dance for your Daddy and Snow White - go to the other extreme. Most of the props are authentic, and of the most banal kind: in Sweeney, a television, a fridge, newspapers, a biscuit tin, a shoe box (Fig. 79), hurley sticks and kitchen implements used as journalists microphones (Figs. 104-108); in Dance, the six modern-day contraption I have already referred to and also a hospital trolley, dustbin, dinner plates (Fig. 138) an electric carving knife; in Snow White, the umbrellas, a wheelchair (Fig. 160), a theodolite (Fig. 157), a hairbrush (Fig. 154).

This new development grew out of an experience which the members of the company shared during the preparations for Rise up lovely Sweeney, an experience which Mason says was for him revelatory. (I.18) Mason relates how the group visited St Mullin's well, outside Carlow, where Sweeney is supposed to have been killed. There they took a 'cure' from a local village healer, the seventh son of a seventh son. The ceremony involved a long procession from the ruined monastery on the crest of a hill, down through a graveyard and along the banks of a river which ran around the base of the hill. At the point where the



river passes through a mill-race, they ventured down a flight of stone steps into a cave. Here, the sacred water - fed of course by seven springs - gushed from a crack in the rock-face and splashed into a stone bowl, overflowing onto the ground. They entered this sanctuary one by one and stood up to their waists in water. The healer scooped water up from the stone bowl and, mixing it with mud, applied it to any ailing part of the body. Mason continues:

what he used to scoop up the water was an old 7UP can.

It was a kind of revelation ! That was totally authentic.

There was nothing less magic about the rock-face than about the 7UP can; both could be transformed into potent magic objects ..... So, anything on stage, if you use it like this, can be turned into that. We can take any object and it can become numinous and powerful in the dream - just as our dreams do ..... So the photocopier, or the electric carver, or whatever, is just as potent as Wotan's spear or Cuchulainn's shield - which in fact are less potent because they've become cliched. (I.18)

So, in this way, the banal is transfigured; the umbrella or the hairbrush become archetypal motifs, the semi-circle of gadgets becomes a map of the heavens. But at the same time they remain real objects, providing rich possibilities for parody and farce. Because we are presented not with singular by with multiple meanings, not with the simple masks of pure tragedy and pure comedy but with the 'Janus-face' of the grotesque (II.20, p.15), we find ourselves in two worlds at once - inner and outer - and we can glimpse the complex unity which lies unseen between opposites.

3.19 The 'magic box' in which all seven of the MacIntyre plays directed by Patrick Mason have actually been staged is the Peacock Theatre (Appendix B, Plans 1 & 2). This is the Abbey Theatre's smaller house, seating 161, situated downstairs from the main auditorium. The Peacock was instituted as part of Ireland's National Theatre when the new Abbey building was opened in 1966, ending the fifteen year exile of the company to temporary premises in the wake of the fire which had destroyed the original Abbey in 1951.

Casson points to an uncertainty in the Peacock's role. Is it supposed to be an experimental studio theatre or just a 'mini-Abbey' where less popular shows can be staged. (I.17) In fact it tries to be both. It is experimental in that the plays of first or second time dramatists tend to be produced on the smaller stage and, since 1966, the Peacock has premiered a great deal of new Irish drama. However, the theatre only occasionally stages genuinely experimental or avant-garde work, and rarely shows a sustained commitment to such work. Both Mason and Casson refer to the early 1970s (when they both first worked at the National Theatre) as a period when the Peacock, under the directorship of Tomas MacAnna, demonstrated energy and imagination in the shows it was mounting. (I.17, I.18) Casson says that during the 1980s, the MacIntyre work was seen as 'filling the experimental slot' (I.17) in the Peacock's repertoire.

The somewhat compromised role assigned to the Peacock means that as a space it is not always suitable for the staging of experimental theatre. It is too inflexible. As Casson says, the ideal performance space for much modern work is the empty space - be it small studio theatre or vast warehouse - in which the seating can be arranged in a number of ways so that any desired actor-audience relationship can be



accommodated. (I.17) Examples of the possibilities would include: the traditional end-stage, where the audience always face in one direction towards the stage; the thrust stage where the performance area literally thrusts out into the audience which surrounds it on three sides; theatre-in-the-round, where the audience is seated on all four sides, or in a circle around the performance space; the perimeter stage, where the audience is encircled by the action; a system of island stages dispersed throughout the audience such as Ariane Mnouchkine used for her epic show, 1789, which retold the story of the French Revolution; or even more informal relationships, such as those tried out by Grotowski, where the audience shares the actors' environment and the drama is performed in their midst; or again, where the audience itself moves about to follow the passage of action.

The Peacock Theatre, however, is a fairly conventional, though pleasingly intimate end-stage theatre, with its stage framed by a traditional proscenium arch (Plan 1). It is versatile to the extent that on other seating pattern is possible (Plan 2); the front eight rows of seats can be removed and re-erected facing the opposite direction on the site of the existing stage. The space in the middle vacated by these seats then becomes a sandwich stage, with spectators on two sides (or strictly speaking, three sides including the two rows of seats in the raised 'loge'). However, this arrangement is seldom used, and in fact the mechanism for making the change was out of order for some years during the in 1980s.

Mason did in fact use the theatre in this way for the production of the second MacIntyre play, Find the Lady, in 1977. The staging in this case was extremely simple. There was no set; all the action took place in the central space, and the convention was followed whereby

those actors not involved in any given scene did not retire offstage by merely to the perimeter of the acting area, where they sat on a raised bench and awaited their next cue.

Mason found the space awkward and unsuited to MacIntyre's work when arranged in this way. He says that 'the work dictates the form of its presentation'. (I.18) MacIntyre's work, which relies so much on exaggerated gestural means of expression, requires a very formal presentation if its nuances are not to be lost. The style of direction which Mason came to employ for these works, involving as I said careful composition, balanced groupings, the layering of images and the use of tableaux, works most effectively if it is viewed frontally - like a cinema screen or a painted canvas. Therefore the Peacock's traditional end-stage was in fact well-suited to what Mason was trying to do. Indeed the Peacock's tight box-stage enabled Mason to achieve the sense which he wanted particularly in the case of the later shows. On the other hand, Mason was less satisfied with the constraints which the Peacock put on The Bearded Lady and, to a lesser extent, The Great Hunger, a verdict with which the designer, Bronwen Casson, agrees. (I.17, I.18). They feel that The Great Hunger, which was less visually sophisticated than some of the later shows, could have benefited from a more informal relationship with its audience. A three-sided thrust stage would have allowed more contact. In fact, when the play toured to Kavanagh's own territory, to the Tyrone Guthrie Centre, in Co. Monaghan, the play was staged in this more open way - something Mason found to be very 'liberating'. (I.18)

The Bearded Lady was even more cramped on the small Peacock stage. It was the largest of all the productions, an elaborate costume drama set in the eighteenth century. There was a great deal of



spectacle, procession, ceremony, marching, grand tableaux (e.g. Figs, 50, 53, 56 & 57). It is notable that the plan of this set differs from all the others in that its main entrance is in the rear rather than into the wings (Plan 4). The set is funnelled towards this entrance and focuses on it, making maximum use of the depth of the stage. At one point, the Houyhnhnms actually force Swift off the front of the stage, and it seems as if the whole production would likewise like to extend into the auditorium. In fact, Mason thinks it would have been ideal if the whole theatre could have been transformed into 'a total environment, a whole Swiftian world' and the play performed as a 'promenade production' (I.18). Mason went some way towards this at the Gate Theatre in 1985 with his production of Farquhar's early eighteenth century comedy The Recruiting Officer. His designer, Joe Vanek, removed the front eight rows of seats, replacing them with benches set, as it were, in a fairground hung with garlands of flags. The play was performed both on stage and in this space.

In short, Mason says of the Peacock Theatre 'There were moments when I wanted to be there, and moments when I didn't want to be there'. (I.18)

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Design Element - An Example

- 4.1 Kavanagh's Poem
- 4.2 Fields and Sky
- 4.3 The Gate
- 4.4 The 'Mother' Figure
- 4.5 The Tabernacle
- 4.5 Costumes and Colour
- 4.6 Opening the Gate



## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Design Element - an Example

- 4.1 Vincent Hurley describes Patrick Kavanagh's poem, The Great Hunger, as:  
a poem about stagnation, enervation and the slow painful death of any hope of joy or fulfilment in the life of its central character, Patrick Maguire.

And he quotes Seamus Heaney:

It is not about growing up and away but about growing down and in. Its symbol is the potato rather than the potato blossom. (II.39, p.73).

It is set in rural Monaghan in 1942 at a time when Ireland's traditional isolation from the world had been made more complete by de Valera's policy of neutrality during what was quaintly described as 'The Emergency'. Hurley says that the poem tries to come to terms with the rural experience in a way unusual in European literature. Kavanagh, who had grown up in this bleak unyielding landscape, does not romanticise it. Nor does he idealise the peasant-farmer, Maguire, as some 'Rousseauesque natural man'. (II.39, p.74) His life is shown as hard and fruitless, tied to the back-breaking cultivation of a few stony fields which will never yield him more than a subsistence living. He is also tied to a mother who lives on, a bedridden matriarch, until he is well past middle age. He never marries, never has children, never - apparently - loses his stony virginity. Mary Anne, his grim harridan of a sister, is equally barren. He is tied,

finally, to the Church. The parish priest is the only figure of authority in the community. The Church's laws rule the world he lives in just as they rule his own mind.

Throughout the poem, Kavanagh points out the contrast between the seasonal life of the natural world, its yearly cycle of rejuvenation, growth and harvest, and Maguire's unchanging sterility:

The cows and horses breed,

And the potato-seed

Gives a bud and root and rots.

In the good mother's way with her sons;

The fledged bird is thrown

From the nest - on its own.

But the peasant in his little acres is tied

To a mother's womb by the wind-toughened navel-cord

Like a goat tethered to the stump of a tree -

He circles round and round wondering why it should be.

No crash,

No drama.

That was how his life happened. (I.13, p.22-23)

- 4.2 This then is the environment which Maguire recreates in his play and which the designer, Bronwen Casson, must recreate on the stage. I have suggested that all of the MacIntyre sets are as much landscapes of the mind as depictions of real places. Nevertheless, if analysed, the action of the play takes place in a number of locations, and the set must accommodate each of them; the fields, the church, Maguire's kitchen, his mother's bedroom, a pub, a graveyard. These mark out the narrow territory of Maguire's life. But the set shows this territory



as distilled through his own mind. Each object takes on a symbolic significance, become archetypal.

As in the case of all these productions, the set is very simple. The floor of the stage is covered with clay (layers of moulded sodden felt, covered in peat moss); it slopes up toward the back and toward the right in ploughed furrows. The backdrop of corrugated steel is a cold hard grey sky, which seems to reflect the pattern of the fields below. Fields and sky, this is the stark unchanging landscape in which the action is played out; it is composed of parallel lines which run off into the distance, but it is also claustrophobic and imprisoning (e.g. Fig. 45).

Within this landscape, three objects are placed; the tabernacle, the gate and the 'mother' statue (Plan 3). They represent the three pillars on which Maguire's world rests, the three corners of his cage. The critic, David Nowlan, described Maguire as 'trapped between Mother Church, Mother Earth and Mother'. (II.50) The gate is placed upstage centre. The tabernacle and the 'mother' figure are placed downstage of this, to the left and right respectively. The outdoor scenes, then, take place centre stage, while the church scenes are focused on the tabernacle and the home scenes grouped around 'mother'.

- 4.3 The gate is a typical five bar gate (Fig. 24). Casson says that originally it was to be a metal gate to tie in with the sky before it was decided that a wooden structure would be sturdier and also more rooted in the earth. (I.17) Besides, a wooden gate is mentioned in the poem. (I.13, p.12) Again, the five parallel bars continue the unrelenting pattern of the fields, while the diagonal bar seems to say 'no exit'. The gateposts are made of caged stones. They call up vague

images of megalithic tombs, stones perched atop one another.

Michael Harding, in a programme note accompanying the play, sees this as the gate which is shut against the world, imprisoning both Maguire and Ireland herself:

An island is like a solitary man; in danger of closing the gate and turning in on himself. (II.35)

It is also a gate within Maguire's psyche, shutting out his inner world, a barrier erected against the disturbing power of his emotions and his instincts. During scene thirteen of the play, a drama of seduction is being played out in the foreground, between one of Maguire's labourers, the shy Malone, and a local girl, the provocative Agnes. As the stage directions put it: 'Agnes possesses Malone - almost', but 'Malone manages to extricate himself'. (I.13, p.59). Meanwhile, in the background, Maguire has climbed onto the gate and engages in his own self absorbed private frolics (Figs. 34-42). The stage directions describe his actions:

He will produce a sling and fire imaginary missiles at the sky, lie on his back on the top bar of the gate and become the fish in the sunlit pool (Fig. 35), straddle the gate and ride flat out for the winning post - and win (Figs 36-37), and , finally, flatten himself upside down on the upstage side of the gate, face on view through the lower bars, legs sprouting a V from the top (Figs. 38-42) (I.3, p.57)

By the conventions which have by this time been established, the audience knows that in this dream world, time and place are fluid, constantly mutable. Fragments of experience are snatched from real life to reappear in new contexts. In this way, Maguire's gymnastics



can illuminate the awkward cavorting of the courting couple and vice versa. For instance, his dreamy supine posture could suggest the sweet pangs of love (Fig. 35); his jockeying the excitement of love's chase, and his passing the finishing post the climax of the sexual act (Figs. 36-37). This also cheekily recalls the climactic horse-racing episode in the archetypal Irish peasant play, Synge's Playboy of the Western World. Like Christy Mahon, Patrick Maguire fails to get the girl. He ends up literally head over heels - not in love, however, but in frustration - Shakespeare's 'poor forked animal', staring transfixed between the bars at life and love passing him by (Fig. 42).

- 4.4 The 'mother' figure was created as a piece of sculpture by Frank Hallinan Flood in association with Bronwen Casson. It is made of polystyrene, covered with layers of built-up felt stiffened by glue, and cracked to as to look as if made of wood. It looks enormously heavy, though it is in fact quite light (Fig. 24).

It is a wonderful piece, replete with a rich multiplicity of meanings. For a start, it is at once a bedridden old woman and a piece of furniture. Indeed it was built around a metal chair frame and the completed sculpture includes a 'household oddments drawer' in its lower section. (II.42) This captures the sense, conveyed in the poem, of the ailing mother as a brooding presence within the house rather than a real person. She must not so much be cared for, as maintained. At the beginning of the play, the figure is draped with a white sheet, like a piece of unused furniture (Fig. 1). Maguire fusses with the string binding the sheet, unties it, slowly reveals the form beneath. He takes a brush and duster from the drawer and he and his sister, Mary Anne, silently set about the daily chore of polishing this heirloom,

their mother (Figs. 3-6). At the end, when she has finally died, the figure is again draped with a sheet. The village women come in to lay out and wash the corpse. One whips off the sheet and bundles it up briskly; the other, equally business-like, throws a bucket of water over the wooden figure. It is as if they are spring-cleaning. The sudden smack of water on wood powerfully conveys the hardness of the fact of death, the cold unsentimentality of it.

But the figure is much more than this. It is an archetypal earth-mother, a wooden effigy found on some south-sea island or dredged up from an Irish bog. In one of the play's most powerful and exhilarating scenes, this idol is lead in procession through the fields, as part of some pagan rite of spring (Figs. 15-19). Amid whoops of joy, the village girls race on stage with bundles of fresh green leaves. Their impact in this world of dull-browns is striking. The leaves are distributed; the men and women wave them about, throw them in the air, chase one another. Mary Anne joins in in her own way, holding the leaves stiffly to her chest. Maguire and Malone drape the sheet round the 'mother's' shoulders and bear it on poles around the stage. There are wild shouts and a primal choral chant which grows louder and louder until it fills the whole space. The sense of release, of sheer primitive joy, is overwhelming.

But this figure is also the Christian version of the earth-mother, the virgin Madonna, an ikon cracked with grief, hands and lap shaped to receive the body of a dead son (Fig. 24). It sits squarely like a judge. In one scene, Maguire kneels and communes with it in a gruff undertone as though telling his confession.

And, at the deepest level, this solid wooden female form, which seems to weigh down one side of the stage, represents the unconscious



part of Maguire's psyche, his 'own unknown face'. (II.14, p.92) It is what Jung describes as:

sheer unconscious fact, hard and immitigable as granite, immovable, inaccessible, yet ready at any time to come crashing down upon us at the behest of unseen powers. (II.14, p.201)

The mother is the first receptacle for man's projected Anima, the feminine side that lies hidden within him. Jung explains how those who do not consciously develop their own inner side tend unconsciously to project that part of themselves onto someone else and can end up by getting into a relationship of almost total dependence with that person, be it mother, father, husband, or wife. (II.13, p.103). This seems to be Maguire's predicament. The society he is part of - so close to the earth in one way - has cut him off, by petty convention and church decree, from his own inner life. The gate is shut. The 'hunger' of the title is not simply a physical or a sexual hunger, but also an emotional and spiritual and psychic hunger.

Neither of course is his sterility simply sexual. In a scene which caused offence to some members of the audience, Maguire is sitting alone in the kitchen after his sister has gone to bed. He goes to the 'mother' figure, opens the drawer (doffing his cap as if to beg her pardon) and takes out a bellows. It is another ritual, another one of his life's ceremonies. He returns downstage, and, as if trying to rekindle the dead ashes of a fire, he works the bellows rhythmically in what becomes a parody of masturbation (Figs. 9-14). The scene is funny, shocking and pathetic, and wonderfully translates the lines in Kavanagh's poem into the visual language of the play:

He sinned over the warm ashes again and his crime  
The law's long arm could not serve with 'time'. (I , p.17)

- 4.5 The tabernacle takes the form of a golden glittering box which stands on a smooth cylindrical stone plinth. Casson recalls an earlier version supported on four timber stilts or legs, set in a little cairn of stones (I.17).

Its revised form is more clearly phallic (Fig. 40). For this is the male counterweight to the mysterious bulk of the female 'mother' figure, both within the community and within Maguire's psyche. It represents abstract reason, the laws and precepts of the Church. The pagan exhilaration which builds to a climax during the rite of spring scene is immediately tamed and suppressed when the Priest appears beside the tabernacle. The women fall silent, the men take off their caps. They kneel. The wooden effigy is lowered to the ground, once more just an ailing old woman who has been brought to mass. With the practised hand of the magician, the Priest removes the cover from the tabernacle, which until this point has also been veiled. There follows a very funny parody of an Irish Catholic mass; there are fits of coughing and sneezing which threaten to break into animal noises; Maguire and the other men frenziedly beat their caps on the ground to clear a dust free spot for their knees; rising litanies of everyday chit-chat are woven into the patterns of prayer; the dutiful Maguire passes round the collection box. The Priest then opens the doors of the magic box, reveals the chalice. The stage directions seem to encourage a sexual reading:

The Priest takes the key, kisses it. Addresses himself  
to the tabernacle door. Insertion of the key in the lock.



Turning of the key. Opening of the door. Curtains of red silk visible. Delicately, the Priest parts these. He takes out a small dingy chalice, tarnished, but it contains the mystery. He extends it to the congregation, worshipful, they yield. (I.3, p.44)

It is sanitised sexual imagery - very soft porn - like the sanitised spiritual experience which (MacIntyre seems to be suggesting) is offered by the Church to satisfy a hunger for the real thing.

The fate of those who attempt to liberate themselves and the power of the community to prohibit their freedom is shown in a later scene of the play, in which the collection box - a prop which first appears in the mass scene - is re-employed to good effect. (Figs. 43-48) In the scene, the free spirited Agnes is pursued and cornered by all the other players, who wield the extended collection boxes and rattle them threateningly at her. She is like a stray animal, a 'lost sheep' herded into the centre of the stage, where she is forced to submit and accept a collection box of her own. To demonstrate her conformity, she joins in the 'robotic dance' (I.3, p.61) in which arms and legs and extended collection boxes move stiffly (Fig. 48). The scene is particularly reminiscent of some of Meyerhold's biomechanical movements. At the sound of the lenten gong, the players slump to the ground, holding the collection boxes aloft as swaying tombstones.

The extended form of the collection box recalls the phallic tabernacle (Fig. 47). Again it represents the male force of logic and dogma. The male and female are also represented in other props, most clearly the spades and the baskets. In the seduction scene described earlier, Malone arrives carrying a spade and Agnes a basket. But during the struggle, Agnes proves the dominant partner. When Malone

flees, in his panic he picks up her basket, leaving Agnes the spade (Fig. 42).

- 4.6 The three main props in The Great Hunger's set - gate, 'mother' figure and tabernacle - are 'designed' rather than 'found'. Most of the subsidiary props however - buckets, kettle, brushes, spades, baskets, bellows - are 'found', and this is true also of all the costumes. They are borrowed from real life.

The characters are dressed very simply. The men wear ordinary working clothes - boots, trousers, shirtsleeves and braces; Maguire, the boss, sports a waistcoat and each of course wears the obligatory cap. This is an indispensable item for swatting flies, swatting each other, or - as I described above - beating a dust free spot on the church's flagstones. In confrontation between the men and women - like that between Maguire and the Schoolgirl, or Malone and Agnes - the women always come out on top, wearing the cap (Figs. 27 & 42). The women wear light summer dresses, almost to the ankle; the more daring Agnes and Schoolgirl wear theirs to just below the knee (Figs. 24 & 34), while Mary Anne protects her aged spinsterhood with several layers (Fig. 7). During the scene in which the wild pagan festival is tamed by the Priest to become the Catholic mass, all the characters are wearing their Sunday best - jackets for the men, a stoutly buttoned-up coat for Mary Anne (Fig. 21).

The Great Hunger is the exception to the normal colour pattern of the other shows. Here the dominant colours are not stark blacks and whites and reds, but more muted browns and greens. The characters merge into the full landscape by bog and ploughed field. Dermot Healy, in his programme note to the 1986 production, says 'Ritual was heavily



disguised in natural colours' (II.37). This was the first of the later plays. The soft unstylised realism of its costumes and colour helped in making the characters and their behaviours instantly recognisable to an Irish audience unused to other aspects of the play's style. Healy reports:

The humour [was] immediate. The accents exact .....

Those audiences from the country, having a certain empathy with the condition, started laughing from the first curtain (II.37).

The Priest is a special case. He is dressed in clerical black, like a magician, or as Healy suggest, like a crow scavenging the fields (II.37). Just like the red panties in Dance for your Daddy, he is marked out as an alien presence in this earthy landscape. The Priest's first appearance, however, is not in black, but in full canonical garb - in the mass scene. The bright green of the chasuble answers the bright green of the leaves which has so startled and energised the space, so invigorated the characters. But the answer it gives is a rebuke. The leaves' intoxicating fresh natural green is damped down by the ceremonial official synthetic green of the Priest's authority.

- 4.7 At the end of the play, following his mother's death, Maguire hurls stones at the tin sky, 'dodging their ricochet'. (I.3, p.65). The sound recalls the potatoes tossed into the metal buckets at the beginning. His mother is dead, Maguire has been released into a bigger prison. But it is too late. The animals of his unconscious 'gather upstage of the gate, battering at its bars'. (I.3, p.65-66) At last, he opens the gate, but they trample him. He has hidden them from himself and so they have never been tamed. After his mother's funeral,

he wanders about, lost. In the words of the poem:

A sick horse is nosing around the meadow for a clean  
place to die'. (I.13, p.23)

And the final words of the play suggest he is finally reconciled to the  
earth:

He lies down, gives himself to the ground. (I.3, p.67)



## CHAPTER FIVE

### Divided Responses

- 5.1 Ireland in the 1980s
- 5.2 Divisions in the Audience
- 5.3 Divisions Among the Critics
- 5.4 Divisions in the Abbey
- 5.5 Irish Theatre in the 1980s

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Divided Responses

5.1 These plays were performed against the backdrop of 1980s Ireland. In the North, the violence continued to yield horrors: the massacre in the Pentecostal Hall at Darkley in 1983, the bombing of the Remembrance Day ceremony in Enniskillen in 1986, and the double Loyalist/Republican funeral murders the following year. In the South, the violence was less spectacular but just as endemic: the elderly in remote farmhouses were bludgeoned for their petty savings; armed robberies became commonplace, Dublin a battleground for warring drug-dealers. Meanwhile, after much wrangling, the law on contraception was liberalised, while divisive referenda were held on the issues of abortion and divorce. It was the decade of the Constitutional Crusade, the Irish Forum, the Stalker Inquiry, the Kerry Babies, the moving statues, the Mad Dog, the Border Fox.

MacIntyre's plays, as I said before, confronted Irish audiences with these realities; the scourge of violence, the power of the Church, the precarious basis for individual privacy and freedom of conscience, the uncertain position of women. In the context of the 1980s then, his work is clearly and profoundly political.

5.2 These plays have tried to broaden the range of what is possible and permissible in Irish Theatre. They have confronted Irish audiences with alternative ways of seeing reality. This confrontation has



sometimes been fraught with misunderstanding. MacIntyre and Mahon felt it important, when presenting such work, to engage the audience in direct discussion in an effort to minimize this misunderstanding. Therefore, after each of the previews of the five later plays, they came out onto the stage and conducted a face-to-face conversation with those who had just seen the play. Mason describes the pattern which these discussions came to follow, a description which I think is worth quoting in full:

First of all you would get fierce anger. 'How dare you ! This is disordered, what you're doing !', i.e. I cannot cope with something that is not beginning-middle-end and I know which is which. And then, once you had the anger - and it was always anger - then about ten minutes in, someone would say 'I don't know though, I just thought it was marvellous' and then [someone else] would suddenly say 'well yes, I felt so too'. And the thing would get interesting and the angry people would actually leave or else be astonished and stay. And you just realised this is a very very deep thing: those who are actually quite happy to take something which they don't immediately understand, but which holds them and which they participate in and then come away and want to just let it settle and think about it; and those who must have - must have - order. Immediate. And to be disordered or to be confusing or mystified makes them very angry and it was always the anger that I found so interesting, you know, the intense anger. That is a fundamental conflict. (I.18)

This division evident in the response of Irish audiences to MacIntyre's

work echoes once more the conflict to which I have been drawing attention throughout this paper between the outward and inward looking tendencies, the rational and the irrational.

5.3 Critical opinion was similarly divided, and of course, varied from production to production. Some critics were enthusiastic, others welcomed the experiment with caution, others were generally dismissive, while perhaps praising the energy of the acting. Naturally, as ever, the seal of approval granted to The Great Hunger when, in August 1986, it won a Fringe First Award at the Edinburgh Festival and was hailed by the British press as 'a truly superb and significant piece of theatre', (II.27) led to increased acceptance of the play at home. It is notable that the show which followed this success, Dance for your Daddy, was the one which met with the most fulsome and unanimous praise from the Irish critics.

5.4 There was also a sharp division of opinion within the Abbey company itself concerning the work. The MacIntyre team working downstairs in the Peacock came to be known by some as 'the lunatics in the basement'. (I.19) This division became public in February 1988 when The Great Hunger was brought on tour to the Soviet Union along with a production of John B. Keane's realistic play The Field. Some within the Abbey clearly felt that this experiment had gone on long enough. This controversy was followed a month later by the play's tour to the United States. The play had received generally favourable reviews in Russia as in Paris, London and Edinburgh, but the New York critics did not repeat the accolade. Snow White then, which was premiered in July 1988 appeared in the wake of the Russian debacle and the American



disappointment, and the response given to it by the Irish critics was generally hostile, or at best lukewarm - in marked contrast to the rave notices they had bestowed on Dance for your Daddy a year earlier. The result was that the Abbey management shelved the show after barely two weeks. The Abbey Theatre itself was going through a period of almost continual crisis during the late 1980s, grappling with a recurring debt problem and an unsatisfactory relationship between the board and the Artistic Director. No less than five men held the post of Artistic Director in the period from 1985 to 1989. It was against this background of instability that the decision was made to take Snow White off the stage.

5.5 Mason, however, sees the decision as part of a pattern which he thinks characterises the Irish theatre of the late 1980s; a turning away once more from paths of experiment which had been opened up in the early part of the decade in favour of a more traditional realism. He cites the Arts Council's decision in 1989 to halt completely its support of dance in Ireland, and the subsequent collapse of both the Irish National Ballet and Dublin Contemporary Dance Theatre which during the past decade had begun to explore this neglected area of Irish theatre. He points to the rise of new companies like the Passion Machine whose work is resolutely grounded in Dublin working-class reality. (Indeed he could contrast the rise of The Passion Machine with the premature demise of Theatre Unlimited, another small independent company set up about the same time, which for a few years provided Irish Audiences with audaciously avant-garde productions. The Company was championed by some Irish critics, and like The Great Hunger acclaimed at Edinburgh, but it was forced to close in 1987 due to lack of Funds.)

Mason refers also to the series of popular revivals of the 1960s realist plays at the Abbey such as John B. Keane's Sive, The Field and Big Maggie directed by Ben Barnes; and to Garry Hynes' productions of Synge's work at Galway's Druid Theatre, particularly the immensely successful revival of The Playboy; and to Joe Dowling's even more successful productions, at the Gate and Gaiety theatres, of Sean O'Casey's Juno and The Plough. It is notable that when Mason himself decided to direct an O'Casey play, in February 1990, he choose not one the early realist masterpieces, but the problematical The Silver Tassie, with its mixture of realism and expressionism.

However, I believe that Mason's analysis is a little too pessimistic, or that he is exaggerating in order to make a point. Certainly, the realist and the literary continue to dominate on the Irish Stage and continue to result in some excellently stimulating theatre, as well as much that is safe and unadventurous. But there are several younger writers, like Frank MacGuinness, Michael Harding, Dermot Bolger, Anne Hartigan and Christy Nolan, who are having works staged which - like the plays of MacIntyre, though in difference ways - combine the literary with the visual and the real with the surreal. Indeed Mason himself has collaborated with MacGuinness on several occasions, including productions of his play Innocence and his adaptation of Ibsen's Peer Gynt. Both Mason and Tom Hickey have directed work by Harding, while Bronwen Casson designed Nolan's Torchlight and Laserbeams.

It is undeniable, in fact, that the 1980s - in Ireland as in Britain - have witnessed a great improvement in the general standard of design across the whole spectrum of Irish theatre, whether large production or small, whether traditional or avant-garde. The Gate



Theatre, under the directorship of Michael Colgan, has rediscovered the commitment of its early years and has been in the vanguard of this drive to promote excellence in theatre design. Mason's own productions of Oscar Wilde's A Woman of No Importance as well as the aforementioned The Recruiting Officer, Innocence and Peer Gynt, all designed by Joe Vanek, have been notable landmarks in the Gate's success. Others have been director Joe Dowling's collaborations with the designer of the first two MacIntyre shows, Frank Conway, on O'Casey's Juno, Brien Friel's Fathers and Sons and Shakespeare's Twelfth Night. And the Gate has also commissioned two of Ireland's foremost painters to design productions; Louis le Brocqy designed the set and costumes for Beckett's Waiting for Godot, while Robert Ballagh designed the show based on Beckett's prose writings, I'll go on, and also Wilde's Salome - both productions which, like Dowling's Juno, were feted abroad as well as at home. It has not only been the big established theatres like the Gate, the Abbey and the Gaiety which have shown a greater awareness of design; many of the smaller independent groups in Dublin and around the country have displayed considerable imagination while tied to smaller budgets - Galway's Druid, Dublin's Rough Magic, Waterford's Red Kettle.

Meanwhile, the Dublin Theatre Festival continue to provide a platform for theatre from Europe and around the world to be seen by Irish audiences. Indeed MacIntyre says that the enthusiastic reception accorded to the Wroclaw Company from Poland, when they brought their visual style of theatre to the Festival in 1981 and 1982 encouraged him to believe that Irish audiences would be open to the play he was then working on, The Great Hunger. This openness to outside ideas has not passed with the 1980s. As Fergus Linehan reports in an article written

in February 1990, many of the younger generation working in Irish theatre are looking more to Europe for inspiration, and to a more visual performance-based, less text-based style of presentation.

(II.40) Linehan cautions against a too ready embrace of the European model. While conceding that 'some of the finest modern theatre, perhaps the finest' has come from Europe, he laments the fact that it is nearly all the work of directors - like Peter Brook, Ariane Mnouchkine and Peter Stein. Writers are downgraded and the result is a dearth of new writing for the stage ..... [and] fewer and fewer new playwrights of international stature. (II.40)

This is one of the trends I pointed out when discussing twentieth century theatre above and, like Linehan, I noted that

our own theatre by contrast is literary. The written word has always had primacy and it still does. (II.40)

But, as I said above, it is precisely the younger generation of Irish writers who are leading the explorations into new areas of possibility. And an older writer like Tom Murphy showed in his most recent play Too late for logic (directed by Mason and designed by Monica Frawley an eagerness to experiment with a more fragmented dreamlike structure. Therefore I think it would be alarmist and even reactionary to assume that any moves to broaden the Irish theatrical tradition need necessarily threaten its unique strengths.



## CONCLUSION

This work does not seek to overturn the Irish theatrical tradition; it seeks only to be admitted to that tradition on its own terms. It is clear that these plays confront us with questions about our society and also about our own lives. But they pose questions too about theatre itself: Should we have to settle for one thing or the other? Must we always see things as incompatible opposites? Must we be satisfied with singular meanings? Need there be an unbridgeable gulf between life and art? Or need one be a slave to the other? Cannot the same medium accomodate both the serious and the popular? Cannot the same city accept both the rational and the irrational? Cannot the same theatre draw from the traditions of both history and of myth? And cannot a playwright weave elements of reality and of fantasy into the one play? Or an actor delight both the senses and the intuition with a single gesture?

## APPENDIX A

### Production Credit Lists

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JACK BE NIMBLE

By Tom MacIntyre

Jack	Stephen Brennan
Old Man/Female Figure	Martina Stanley
Doctor/Female Figure	Ingrid Craigie
Military Man/Invalid	Ronan Patterson
Director	Patrick Mason
Designer	Frank Conway
Lighting Designer	Leslie Scott
Percussionist	Fran Breen

Premiered at the Peacock Theatre, 10th August, 1976.

FIND THE LADY

By Tom MacIntyre

The Man Himself	Philip O'Sullivan
John	Raymond Hardie
Herod	Desmond Cave
Salome	Martina Stanley
Herodias	Billie Morton
Old Lady	Ingrid Craigie
Chorus	MacDara O'Fatharta
	Se Phelan
	Ronan Patterson
Director	Patrick Mason
Designer	Frank Conway
Lighting Designer	Tony Wakefield
Music	Jolyon Jackson
	Garvan Gallagher
	Greg Boland

Premiered at the Peacock Theatre, 9th May, 1977.



# THE GREAT HUNGER

By Tom MacIntyre

Patrick Maguire	Tom Hickey
Priest/Joe	Vincent O'Neill
Mary Anne	Brid Ni Neachtain
Tom Malone	Conal Kearney
Schoolgirl	Martina Stanley
	(Michele Forbes)
Agnes	Fiona MacAnna
	(Joan Sheehy)
(Packey)	(Dermod Moore)
Director	Patrick Mason
Designer	Bronwen Casson
Lighting Director	Tony Wakefield
Percussionist	Mike Mesbur

Premiered at the Peacock Theatre, 9th May, 1983. (Revived at the Peacock Theatre, 15th July, 1986, and brought on tour to Edinburgh and Annaghmakerrig, Co Monaghan in August 1986, Belfast in September 1986, London in November and December 1986, Paris in September and October, 1987, Leningrad and Moscow in February 1988, and Philadelphia and New York in March 1988).

THE BEARDED LADY  
By Tom MacIntyre

Swift	Tom Hickey
The Old Dean	Geoffrey golden
Master Jonathan	Graham Boland
Master Houyhnhnm	Vincent O'Neill
Police Houyhnhnm	Michael Grenell
Monkey	Conal Kearney
Madame Stella	Catherine Byrne
Madame Vanessa	Fiona MacAnna
Anatomist	John Olohan
Female Yahoo	Martina Stanley
Second Police	Ciaran Grey
Attendant Houyhnhnms	William Kennedy
	Dermot Moore
	Mary Anne O'Donoghue
	Robert Quinn
	Michele Forbes
	Shane Warner
Director	Patrick Mason
Movement Director	Vincent O'Neill
Designer	Bronwen Casson
Lighting Designer	Tony Wakefield

Premiered at the Peacock Theatre, 10th September, 1984.



RISE UP LOVELY SWEENEY

By Tom MacIntyre

Sweeney	Tom Hickey
The Interrogator	Vincent O'Neill
The Wife	Joan O'Hara
The Nurse	Michele Forbes
The Probationer	Brid Ni Neachtain
Casualty/Interrogator	Conal Kearney
Casualty/Interrogator	William Kennedy
Casualty	Dermot Moore
Director	Patrick Mason
Designer	Bronwen Casson
Lighting Designer	Tony Wakefield

Premiered at the Peacock Theatre, 9th September, 1985.

DANCE FOR YOUR DADDY

By Tom MacIntyre

Daughter	Joan Sheehy
Dark Daughter/Angry boy	Michele Forbes
Girl Child	Hilary Fannin
Daddy/Elderly Roue	Tom Hickey
Homme Fatal/Dirty Old Man	Vincent O'Neill
Romeo/Cat	Dermot Moore
Wife/Liz Taylor	Brid Ni Neachtain
Hubby/Bookie	Conal Kearney
Director	Patrick Mason
Designer	Bronwen Casson
Lighting Designer	Tony Wakefield

Premiered at the Peacock Theatre, 2nd March, 1987.

# SNOW WHITE

By Tom MacIntyre

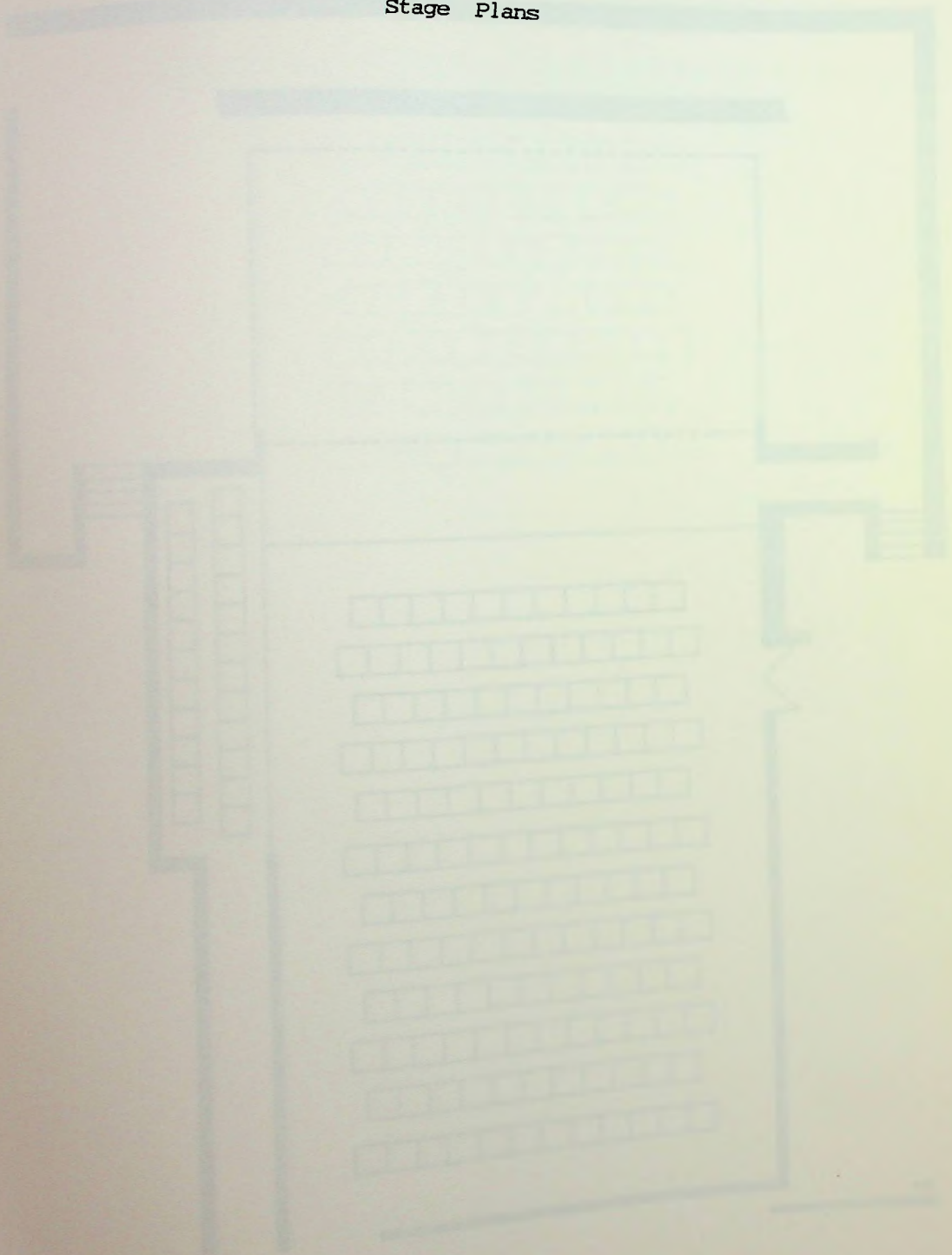
The Seventh Dwarf	Tom Hickey
The Mother	Olwen Fouere
Snow White	Michele Forbes
Rose Red	Joan Sheehy
Briar Rose	Sian Maguire
Goose-Girl	Sara Jane-Scaife
That Fella	Dermod Moore
Director	Patrick Mason
Designer	Monica Frawley
Lighting Designer	Tony Wakefield

Premiered at the Peacock Theatre, 27th June, 1988.

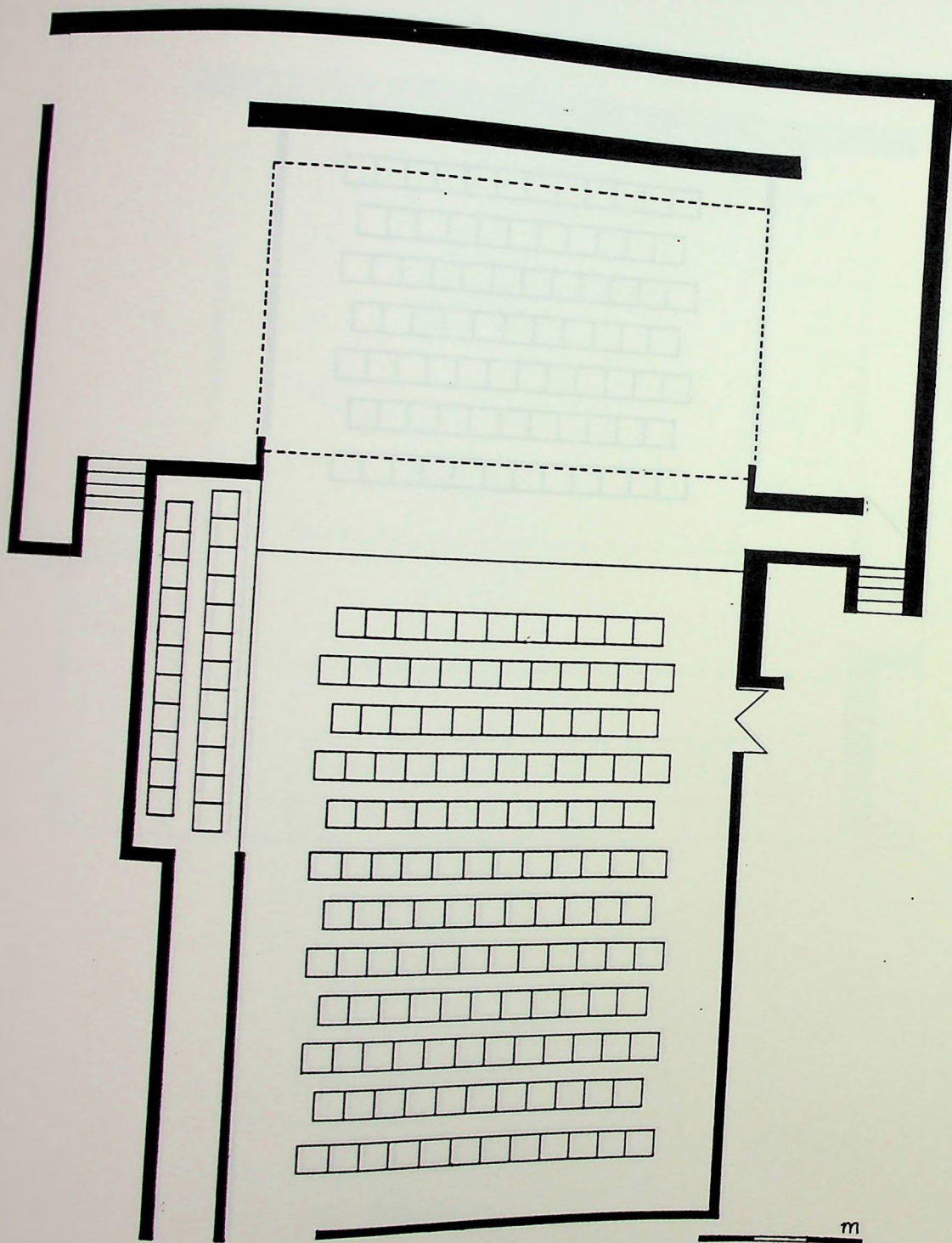


APPENDIX B

Stage Plans



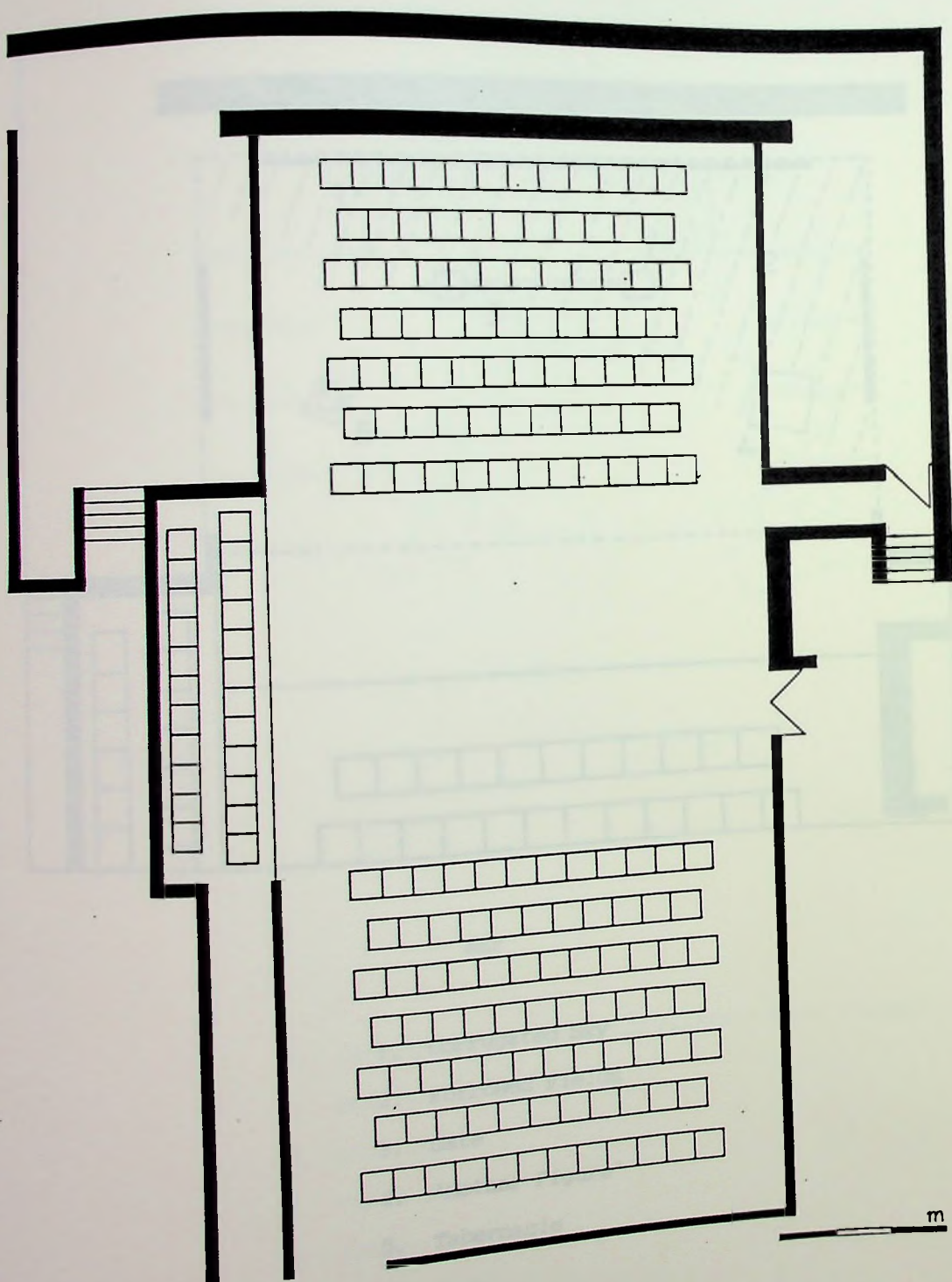
PLAN ONE  
The Peacock as an End-Stage Theatre





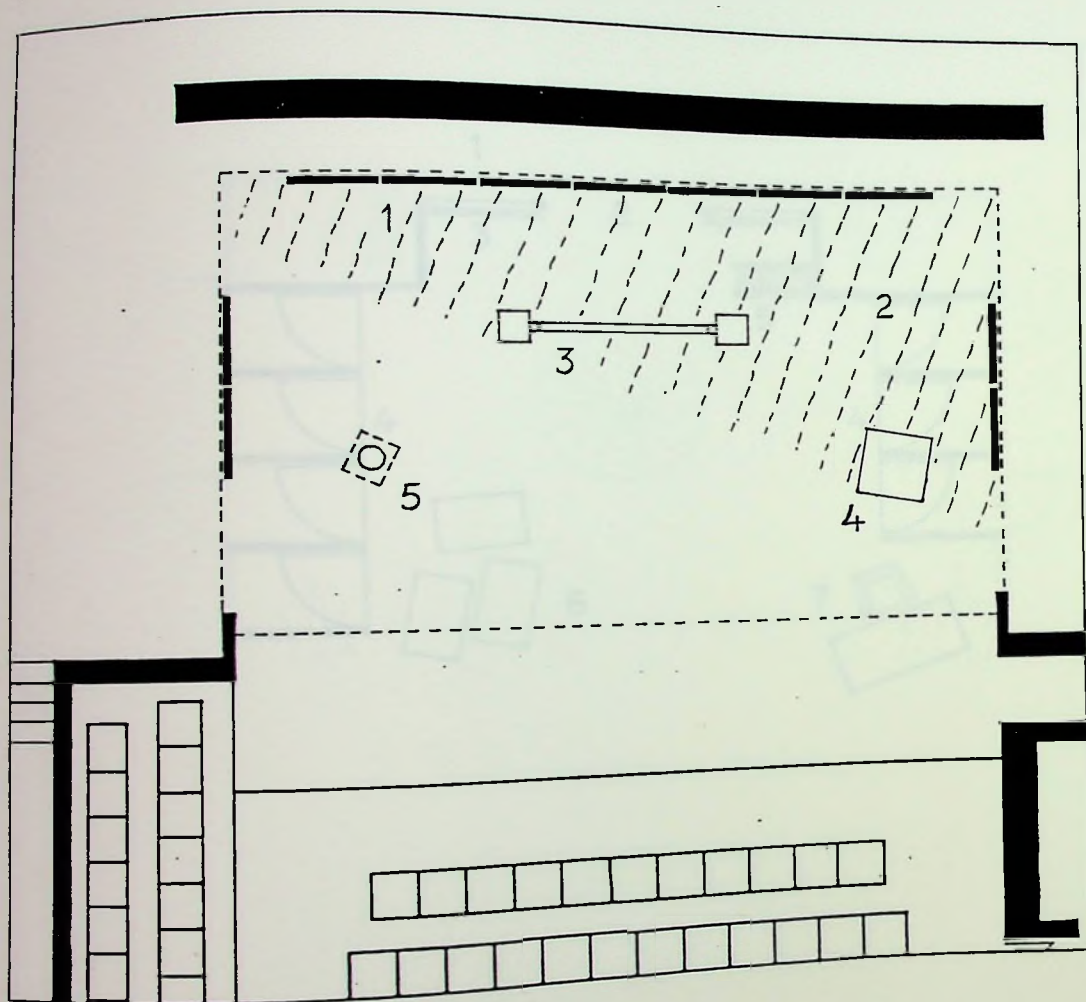
PLAN TWO

The Peacock as a Sandwich-Stage Theatre





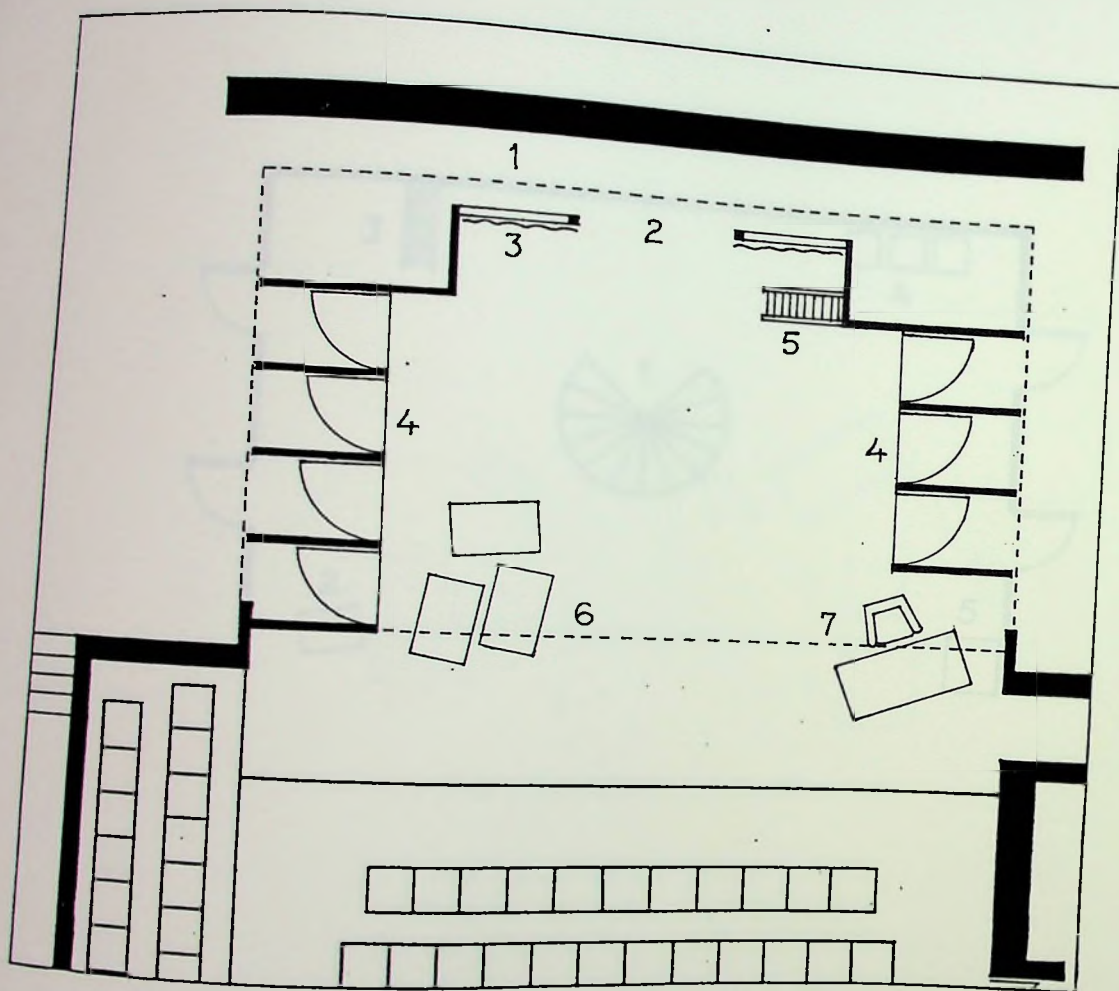
PLAN THREE  
Set for 'The Great Hunger'



KEY

1. Corrugated Sky
2. Furrowed Fields
3. Gate
4. 'Mother Figure'
5. Tabernacle

PLAN FOUR  
Set for 'The Bearded Lady'

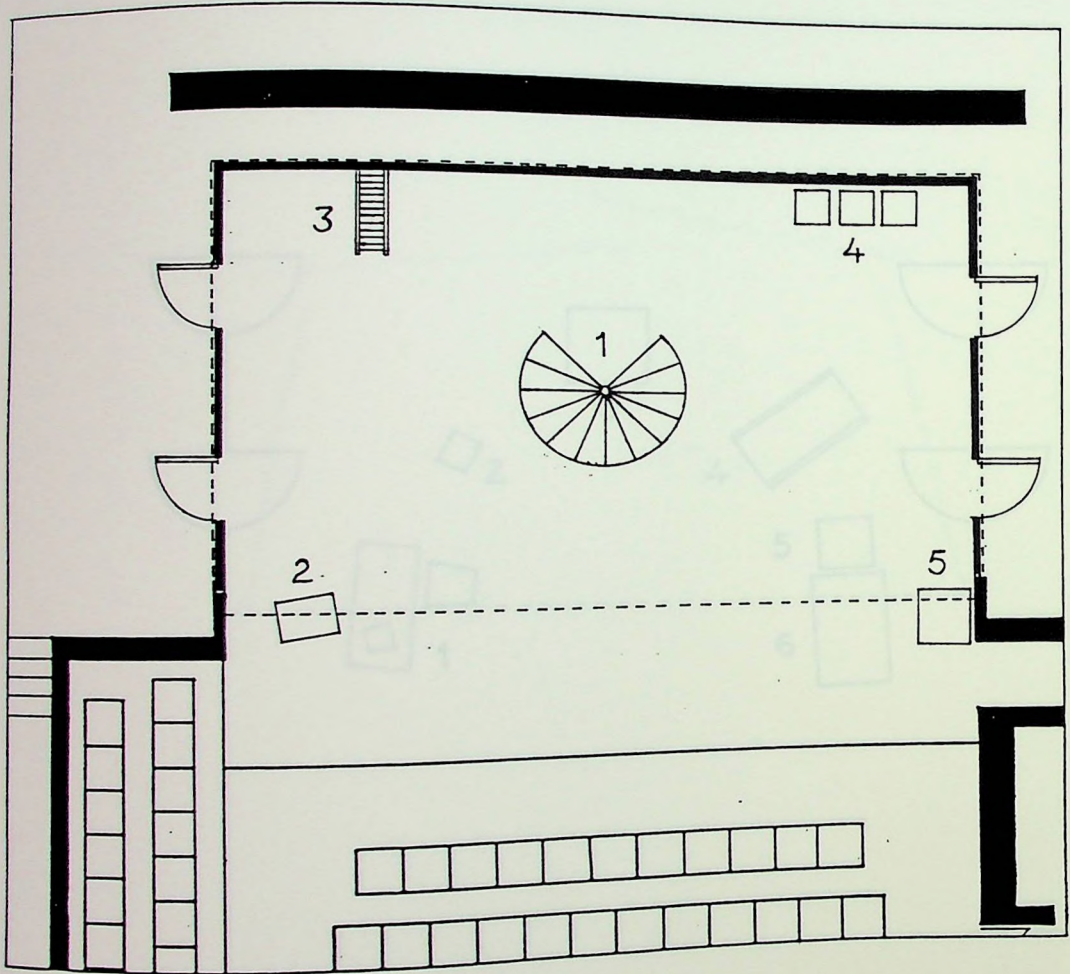


KEY

1. Cathedral Wall; Built-in Niches & Stone Plaques
2. Entrance to Stable
3. Curtain
4. Horse-Stalls
5. Ladder
6. Bales of Hay
7. Writing Desk

PLAN FIVE

Set for 'Rise up Lovely Sweeney'



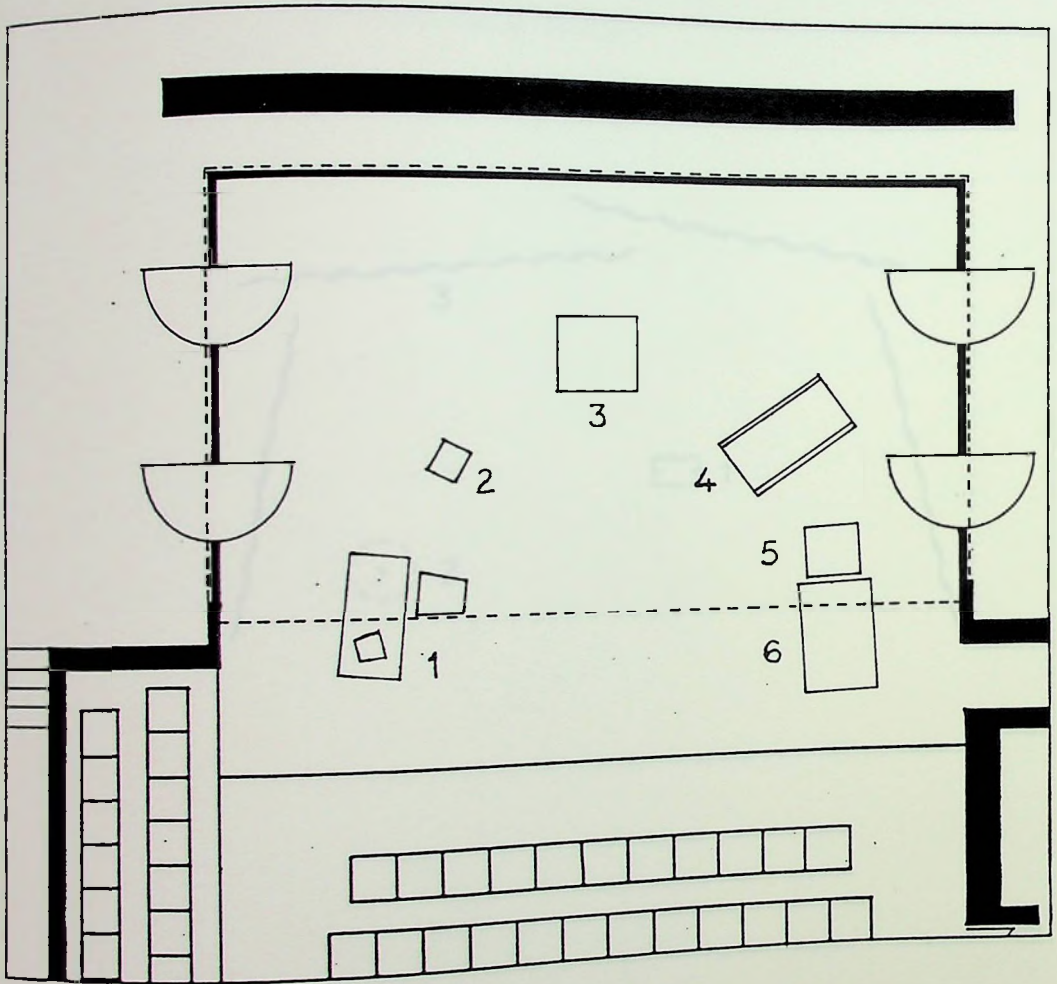
KEY

1. Spiral Staircase
2. Television
3. Ladder
4. Chairs
5. Fridge



# PLAN SIX

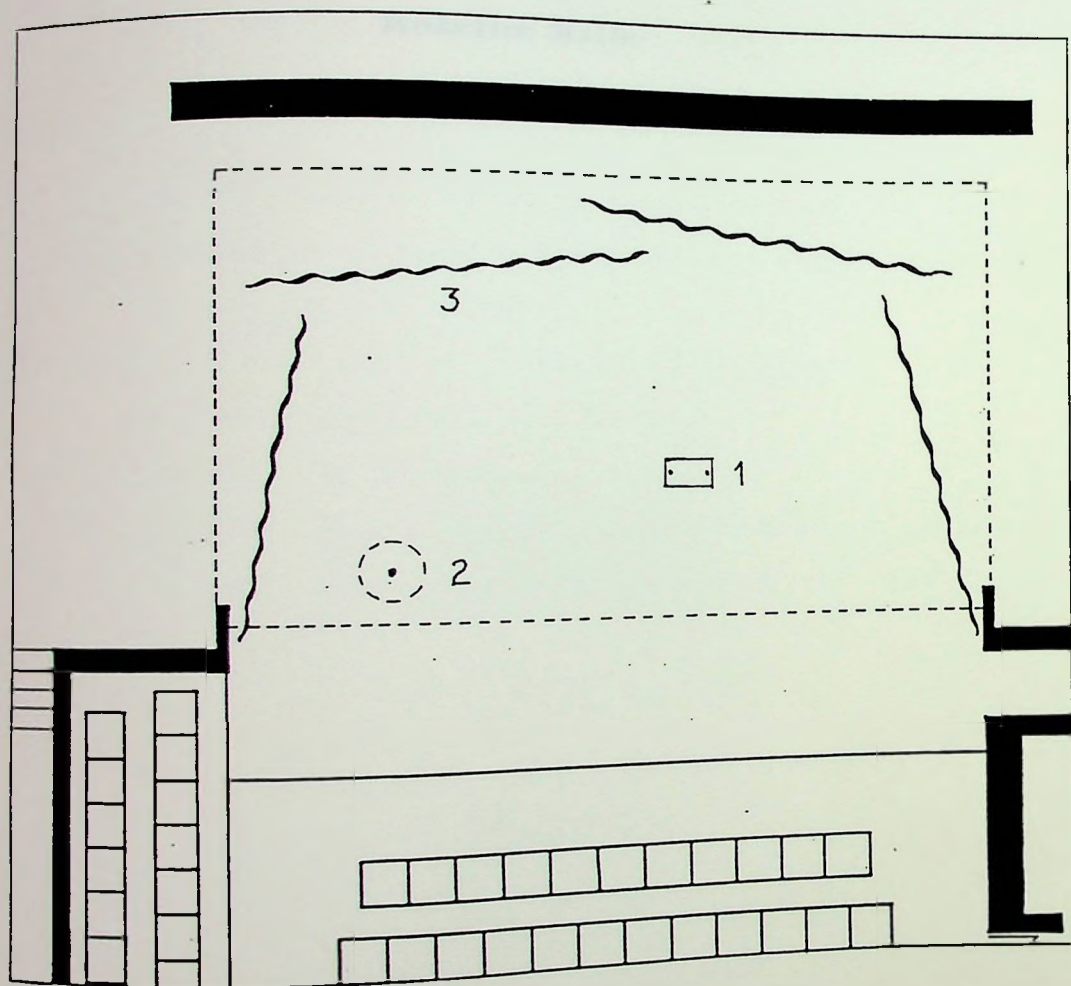
Set for 'Dance for your Daddy'



## KEY

1. Corporate Desk with Telephone
2. Hand-Dryer
3. Shower Unit
4. Gymnastic Walkin Machine
5. Paper-Shredder
6. Photocopier

PLAN SEVEN  
Set for 'Snow White'



KEY

1. Swing
2. Dressmaker's Mannequin
3. Curtain

APPENDIX C  
Production Stills



## THE GREAT HUNGER

Photographs Courtesy of Fergus Bourke

- Figs. 1-2      Maguire and his men digging potatoes.
- Figs. 3-8      Maguire and Mary Anne perform household chores.
- Figs. 9-14     Bellows sequence.
- Figs. 15-23    Pagan Festival becomes Christian Mass.
- Figs. 24-27    Maguire and the Schoolgirl.
- Figs. 28-33    The Heifer Romp.
- Figs. 34-42    Agnes and Malone - Maguire performing on the gate.
- Figs. 43-48    Agnes forced to take part in the Robot Dance.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14



Fig. 15



Fig. 16



Fig. 17



Fig. 18



Fig. 19



Fig. 20



Fig. 21



Fig. 22



Fig. 23



Fig. 24



Fig. 25



Fig. 26



Fig. 27



Fig. 28



Fig. 29



Fig. 30





Fig. 31



Fig. 32



Fig. 33



Fig. 34



Fig. 35



Fig. 36



Fig. 37



Fig. 38



Fig. 39



Fig. 40



Fig. 41



Fig. 42



Fig. 43



Fig. 44



Fig. 45



Fig. 46



Fig. 47



Fig. 48

## THE BEARDED LADY

Photographs Courtesy of Amelia Stein

- Figs. 49-50    Swifts and his entourage - he advances with a chair  
for protection.
- Figs. 51-53    The Killing of the rat - Swift raised to the Giant  
Queen.
- Figs. 54-55    Stella and the Female Yahoo.
- Figs. 56-57    Ceremonial entrance of the Master Houyhnhnm.
- Figs. 58-59    Swifts and the Giant Queen's comb - the Monkey.
- Figs. 60-62    The Anatomist lectures Swift on anthropoloy.
- Figs. 63-64    Swift tutored by the Master Houyhnhnm.
- Figs. 65-68    Swifts trial.
- Figs. 69        Departure into exile.





Fig. 49

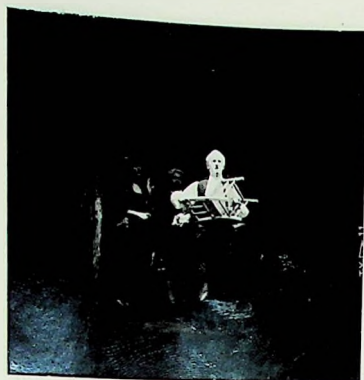


Fig. 50



Fig. 51



Fig. 52

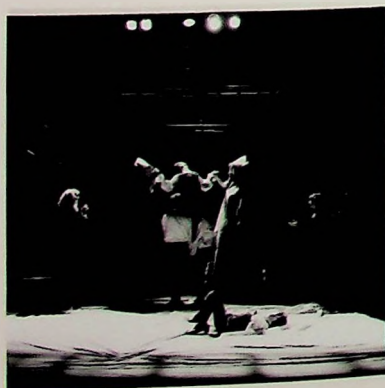


Fig. 53



Fig. 54



Fig. 55



Fig. 56

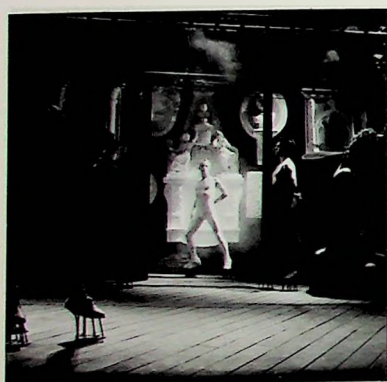


Fig. 57



Fig. 58



Fig. 59



Fig. 60



Fig. 61



Fig. 62



Fig. 63



Fig. 64



Fig. 65



Fig. 66



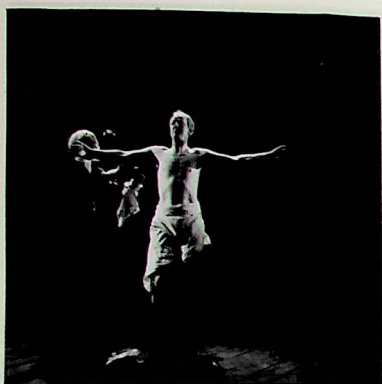


Fig. 67

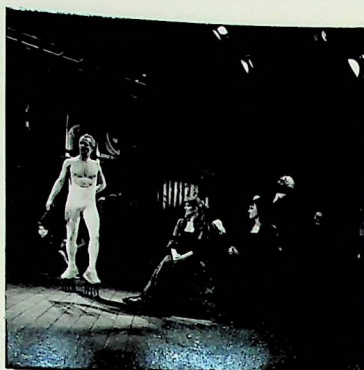


Fig. 68



Fig. 69

## RISE UP LOVELY SWEENEY

Photographs Courtesy of Fergus Bourke

- Figs. 70            Sweeney emerges from the mound of newspapers.
- Figs. 71-75        Sweeney battling with a black plastic sack.
- Figs. 76-79        The Three Casualties - Sweeney changing clothes  
                      upstate.
- Figs. 80-82        Interrogation of the Dummy - the television.
- Figs. 83-84        Pursuit of Sweeney.
- Figs. 85-90        The Interrogators ape Sweeney's violence.
- Figs. 91            Entrance of the Casualty carrying a corpse.
- Figs. 92-97        Sweeney battling with a Dummy.
- Figs. 98-99        Sweeney embraces the blind Interrogator.
- Figs. 100-103      The blind Interrogator searches for Sweeney who  
                      takes refuge by the fridge.
- Figs. 104-108      Journalists mediate between Sweeney and his Wife.
- Figs. 109-111      Sweeney's closing speech - pieta tableau in  
                      background.



Fig. 70



Fig. 71



Fig. 72



Fig. 73



Fig. 74



Fig. 75



Fig. 76



Fig. 77



Fig. 78



Fig. 79



Fig. 80



Fig. 81





Fig. 82



Fig. 83



Fig. 84



Fig. 85



Fig. 86



Fig. 87



Fig. 88



Fig. 89



Fig. 90



Fig. 91



Fig. 92



Fig. 93



Fig. 94



Fig. 95



Fig. 96



Fig. 97



Fig. 98



Fig. 99



Fig. 100



Fig. 101



Fig. 102



Fig. 103



Fig. 104



Fig. 105



Fig. 106



Fig. 107



Fig. 108



Fig. 109



Fig. 110



Fig. 111



## DANCE FOR YOUR DADDY

Photographs Courtesy of Fergus Bourke

- Figs. 112-113 Daughter emerges from the shower flanked by Dark Daughter and Girl Child.
- Figs. 114 Daddy caught red-handed by the Firemen.
- Figs. 115-116 Daddy suffers a seizure on the walking-machine.
- Figs. 117-118 Daughter uses the hand-dryer.
- Figs. 119 Fisticuffs between Daddy and the Homme Fatal.
- Figs. 120 Dark Daughter enclosed in the furry double-bass case.
- Figs. 121-124 At the races - the men study the (female) form.
- Figs. 125 Daughter grapples with Daddy.
- Figs. 126-129 Daughter's party - her Romeo, the Cat, leads a tribal dance - Daddy gets carried away.
- Figs. 130-131 Daddy strapped to hospital trolley.
- Figs. 132 The Flasher.
- Figs. 133-136 Role reversal scene - the tango.
- Figs. 137-138 The smashing of the plates.





Fig. 112



Fig. 113



Fig. 114



Fig. 115



Fig. 116



Fig. 117



Fig. 118



Fig. 119



Fig. 120



Fig. 121



Fig. 122



Fig. 123



Fig. 124



Fig. 125



Fig. 126



Fig. 127



Fig. 128



Fig. 129



Fig. 130



Fig. 131



Fig. 132



Fig. 133



Fig. 134



Fig. 135



Fig. 136



Fig. 137



Fig. 138

## SNOW WHITE

Photographs Courtesy of Fergus Bourke

- Figs. 139        The Seventh Dwarf tells Snow White's story.
- Figs. 140-144   The Mother complimented by the Seventh Dwarf.
- Figs. 145-149   Snowstorm - the whirling imagos - Mother left alone.
- Figs. 150        That Fella comforts Snow White.
- Figs. 151-154   Snow White brushes her Mother's hair.
- Figs. 155-157   Snow White takes leave of her friends, of That  
Fella.
- Figs. 158-165   The Grand Waltz - the Seventh Dwarf pirouettes in a  
wheelchair - Snow White stands motionless on the  
swing.





Fig. 139



Fig. 140



Fig. 141



Fig. 142



Fig. 143



Fig. 144



Fig. 145



Fig. 146



Fig. 147



Fig. 148



Fig. 149



Fig. 150



Fig. 151



Fig. 152



Fig. 153



Fig. 154



Fig. 155



Fig. 156



Fig. 157



Fig. 158



Fig. 159



Fig. 160



Fig. 161



Fig. 162



Fig. 163



Fig. 164



Fig. 165

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