

and partly through his marital relationship, meant that he could make his extreme philosophical pronouncements without anxieties about jeopardizing income. According to Yde, make them he did, and while former critics have offered up Shaw's propensity for melodramatic exaggeration as a rationale for the extreme nature of some of his suggestions for solutions to social ills, Yde wonders whether we should take these more seriously.

In doing so, he does not always contextualize Shaw's politics and his bureaucratic Fabianism in relation to those of his compatriots. It was common among the intellectual elite, from all sides of the political spectrum, to accept fairly unquestioningly many of the tenets of eugenics, for example. As John Carey so pointedly noted in the early 1990s, the intellectuals of the early decades of the century were not exactly enchanted by the 'masses', the fear of whom fuelled repeated literary attempts to define the social horrors they embodied as a group.

Of particular note here are Yde's analysis of Shaw's 'modern utopia', in his chapter on *Back to Methuselah* and a stimulating chapter on 'Shaw's Totalitarian Drama of the Thirties'. Here he explores Shaw's *Geneva* and *The Millionairess* in the context of his own suggestion that Shaw's view of the world was that it is made up of those 'who command and those who are meant to obey': those 'refusing to obey must be compelled'.

At times Yde's thesis somewhat overwhelms his evidence: for example likening Shaw to Marietti seems more than a little to obfuscate the fact that, as he states, Shaw always played his politics pluralistically, shifting through philosophical positions in his bid to be simultaneously progressive and conservative. The alignment with the avant-garde doesn't work politically nor in terms of the theatrical works Shaw produced, most of which are built on thick dialogue and rely on the efficacy of language on stage.

However, in providing a challenging approach to Shaw, Yde's work makes an interesting and valuable contribution to Shaw studies, even if at times the enthusiasm to substantiate a thesis overrides the cultural-historical complexity of the readings suggested.

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Miriam Haughton and Mária Kurdi, ed.
Radical Contemporary Theatre Practices by Women in Ireland

Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2015. 251p. €25.00.
 ISBN: 978-1-909325-75-3.

When #wakingthefeminists insisted that the Irish theatre hierarchy recognize the contributions of female performance-makers, the movement ironic-

ally gathered international recognition. Haughton and Kurdi's book on the radical in contemporary Irish female performance is a timely confirmation of the unassailable contributions of women in this regard, while amplifying the political necessity of #wakingthefeminists. The collection documents female cultural producers across interdisciplinary practices, while examining the proximities of feminism, post-feminism, and queer theory to Irish female concerns of religion, reproductive justice, sex work, economic crisis, immigration, post-conflict drama, acquired disability, and lesbian ageing. Haughton and Kurdi curate practices that identify as female as much as feminist in order to expand the parameters of what may be deemed radical.

The radical, then, is filtered through the intentions, affect, and form of art works, enabling wide-ranging discussions such as Olwen Fouéré's performance virtuosity as an 'excription' of the inscribed female body to Áine Phillip's digestion of a fetal cake; Amanda Coogan's urinating vagina as sympatico with the self-birthing tragedy of Annie Lovett; Stephanie Preissner's rhymed responses to abuse and, the self-dispossession of Veronica Dyas in the face of single female debt.

The collection charts the about-face of recent Irish politics situating the apparent excesses of the Celtic Tiger (in Leeny's reading of *Sodome, My Love*) alongside post-feminism's embrace of hyper-femininity. In devastating contrast, the histories of religious institutional and state enslavement of women in the Magdalene Laundries underpins several chapters and is made harrowing in the prose of Haughton's recollections of ANU's *Laundry*.

Creedon's reading of *Taking Back our Voices* infuriated me but was also my highlight. The self-inspection of historical representations of sex work at the Abbey Theatre led to an anti-sex work production with sex workers. Creedon does not explicitly tackle the Abbey for a single-sided staging or for their disavowal that the decision was political, but merely aesthetic in purpose. Instead, she interposes with the Sex Workers' Alliance Ireland and their self-advocacy decriminalization project and, in doing so, implicitly shows how institutions disallow certain female voices, while permitting others on a depoliticized basis only. This showed me how Irish cultural institutions continue to excel at moral constructions of the feminine.

This book is useful for scholars and practitioners interested in contemporary women's performance culture and its responses to the political issues of Irish womanhood with respect to reproductive injustice, the myths of Irish femininity constructed through the moral barbarism of the Irish Catholic Church, and the legal position of women with respect to the Irish state.

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