

ABSTRACTS

Outside Mullingar, A Moon for the Misbegotten, and The Night Alive:
The Irish Play on the New York Stage

Stephen Watt

Critical responses to two plays—John Patrick Shanley's *Outside Mullingar* and Conor McPherson's *The Night Alive*—during the 2013-14 New York theatre season evoked the long tradition of Irish drama performed on and off-Broadway. Not surprisingly, reviewers of these productions found touchstones of relevance in describing the attractions of these plays for their readers, Eugene O'Neill's *A Moon for the Misbegotten* being one of them. But the concept of an "Irish play" is hardly univocal or even stable, as the history of Irish drama on the American stage for over 150 years demonstrates. This essay plots points of contact between Shanley's and McPherson's plays and this tradition, stopping for concerted discussions of nineteenth-century melodrama, and a tradition of modern drama in which O'Neill figures largely. One result of this process is an expanded notion of Irish drama, which includes both rural and urban components as exhibited by both *Outside Mullingar* and *The Night Alive*. (SW)

Doctor-Patient Communication and the Contemporary Biopolitics of
Disposability in Margaret Edson's *Wit*

Katarzyna Ojrzyńska

This essay investigates the ways in which the physicians depicted in Margaret Edson's 1995 Pulitzer-winning play, *Wit*, use certain communication strategies and assume authoritarian roles in order to monopolize the treatment process. It examines the discursive practices that are employed by healthcare practitioners in their conversations with the protagonist, which serve as a thin smoke screen to hide the inhumane, Foucauldian aspect of the clinic. In Edson's play, this largely verbal dehumanization, de-individualization, and objectification of the patient often reach grotesque proportions, and thus raise ethical questions related to the protagonist's situation, which creates favorable conditions for the paternalistic doctor-patient relationship to emerge. Thus, the analysis of *Wit*

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presented in this article encourages a general reflection on the contemporary approaches towards terminally ill patients, as well as on the prevalent attitudes towards death and dying, which are strongly informed by the logic of social productivity and utilitarianism. In doing so, the article sheds light on the contemporary biopolitics of disposability, which Edson depicts as going well beyond the clinical setting. (KO)

The Invisible Apocalyptic City: The Affectivity of Urbanity, Movement, and Desire in William Blake's "London," Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*, and Ivan Vladislavić's *The Exploded View*
Joakim Wrethed

This article investigates apocalyptic aspects of William Blake's "London," Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*, and Ivan Vladislavić's *The Exploded View*. The analysis explores the suitability of the urban and suburban settings of these works as backdrops for religious, semi-religious, and secular versions of apocalyptic structures. Furthermore, the central argument utilizes a Heideggerian conceptualization of desire, which distinguishes between *ontical craving* (the striving for materialist security and pleasure) and *ontological desire* (the need of a spiritual life-dimension). These aspects of desire reveal underlying affective layers of the primarily negative images of urban and suburban life in these three works. Moreover, the concept of desire is in DeLillo's and Vladislavić's works linked to the notion of speed (and lack thereof) in order to highlight modern dilemmas of *ontical craving* and nihilism in capitalist urban settings. The investigation suggests that urbanity provides an adequate venue for apocalyptic narratives in three interrelated ways. Firstly, urbanity intensifies individual suffering, egotism, and alienation in a context which has the potential of providing the ground for collaboration, community, and fraternity. Secondly, it intensifies the affectivity of capitalist ruthlessness and speed in an environment that paradoxically supports and rejects these forces (hence the *memento mori* motif in all three literary texts). Thirdly, by presenting such a dark vision of fallen mankind, it concurrently forwards a redemptive or cathartic perspective in the form of a literary response to materialist decay. (JW)

Queering Perspectives of the Uncanny in Ernest Hemingway's "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot" and "The Sea Change"

Babett Rubóczki

This essay examines the representation of gender and sexual identity crises in Ernest Hemingway's "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot" and "The Sea Change." As opposed to previous dichotomist approaches that focus on the characters' latent homosexuality, this study argues that the characters demonstrate fluctuating sexual identity that cannot be defined within the binary categories of homo- and heterosexuality. In both stories, the protagonists' anxieties arising from the fluid boundaries of sexual identity may be conceptualized through the uncanny. Exploring the cross-pollination between queer studies and the uncanny, the paper investigates how the Freudian motifs of the uncanny, such as the double, the compulsion to repeat, and the destabilization of boundaries between familiar and unfamiliar, self and Other, permeate the sexual and gender uncertainties of the characters. (BR)

In Borrowed Words and Through Recycled Attentions: On Charles Bernstein's Lyric and Elegiac Poetry

Enikő Bollobás

The essay discusses Charles Bernstein's lyric and elegiac poetry, claiming that self-reflexivity and intertextuality provide subversive underpinnings to the sentiments expressed by the speaking subjectivity. In the first part, the close reading of "All the Whiskey in Heaven" unpacks the tension between emotional immediacy and the words borrowed from existing texts. Because the words are not solely the poet's own, and because the tone is pulling in many directions simultaneously, the speaker's "mastery" over language (as well as his sentiments) seems to suffer. The second part of the essay traces, in Bernstein's earlier lyric pieces and his more recent elegies, the appropriation of Emily Dickinson's modes of attentions, including the recycling of her sentences, sentence fragments, and rhythms. (EB)

Representation of Slow Violence in the Films about Collapsed East European State Farms
Ewa Mazierska

This essay discusses cinematic representations of Eastern European state farms during their disintegration after the end of state socialism in four films: *Mgła* (Fog, 1993) by Irena Kamieńska, *Arizona* (1997) by Ewa Borzęcka, *U nas w Pietraszch* (At Home in Pietrasze, 2002) by Lidia Duda, and *Sátántangó* (*Satantango*, 1994) by Béla Tarr. It examines the process of disintegration against the history of state socialism and the post-communist era, and regards the films as illustrations of the phenomenon of slow violence as introduced by Rob Nixon in his book of the same title (2013). In the case of the films chosen for analysis, slow violence is inflicted on the inhabitants of large farms after the introduction of neoliberal policies and the dismantling of the welfare state. At the same time, each film illustrates a different authorial position, which the article labels "bearing witness," "collecting curiosities," "asking for charity," and "showing slow violence in real time." The discussion also draws upon David Harvey's critical accounts of neoliberal transformation and Mike Davis's notion of "human waste." (EM)

"Who Can Straighten What He Hath Made Crooked?": Eugenics and the Camp in *GATTACA* and *The Island*
Anna Petneházi

GATTACA (1997) and *The Island* (2005), as films of an era obsessed by biopolitics, reveal a secret and uncanny similarity between eugenic and capitalist-corporatist societies, with life being equated with biological existence, and its worth being defined on the basis of its commodity value on the "(bio)market." *GATTACA* presents the commodification of the perfectionist ideal, whereas *The Island* depicts the serial production of the body as "a product" through cloning. Both movies raise serious ethical dilemmas related to genetic engineering. The assertive presence of the immunitary logic in spatiality, human interactions, work, and surveillance shows how the two films contest the closed circuits of hygienic societies and identify within them other positions than those prescribed by the binary logic of pure/impure, healthy/ill, valued/valueless, positions which allow for subversive practices. (AP)