

Lecture notes by Stephen Hardy

(for Introduction to Literature lectures “British Modernisms” and “Modern Irish Drama”)

I'm going to provide you both with a short lecture to cover the slides pertaining to Irish drama which you have been provided with by Dr. Horáková, but also, and first, I want to conclude the lecture on modernism that I didn't quite finish last week. The lecture on Irish drama, which I will send to you later, will include some historical background that may be pertinent to your British Studies exam, as I mentioned at the end of that lecture. So, to be clear, I'll finish with modernism in this mail and then move on to Irish drama and its historical background in a later one.

So, last week, I provided you with a general background to the development of British literary modernism but said relatively little about the main literary practitioners of the period, in poetry, T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, in the novel, two 'waves', as I see it, of modernism (though the first wave is not always included in the category), Henry James, Joseph Conrad, and Ford Madox Ford, the second, what are more usually considered as leading modernist writers, E. M. Forster, D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce (a figure who straddles both of the topic areas of my lectures, so he may crop up twice. For the purposes of the mini-exam that precedes your essay, all you really need to know is who wrote what (don't worry about dates).

So, just to review the first wave (see also the British studies lecture I sent you for the Edwardian period). Henry James was already a highly established author before the 20th century. He came from an exceptionally talented family and specialised in complex dramas primarily but not exclusively involving American characters but quite often set in one of, and sometimes all of, three countries, America, England, and Italy. Like Conrad and Ford he is an international figure, and also prefigures the poets Eliot and Pound in choosing to live in London and Paris rather than America. His most famous novel, 'Portrait of a Lady', appeared in the later 19th century, but he was still writing in the 20th century and produced a trilogy of major novels, 'The Ambassadors', 'The Wings of the Dove', and 'The Golden Bowl' in very early years of that century. His writing develops a complex way of treating questions of good and evil, in an age when the traditional, religious conception of this system of judgment was also becoming more open and complex, in a less religious, much more open, and much more commercial age. The complexity of his writing equally resides in his approach to human consciousness and his increasingly detailed picture of how characters think as they develop their relations with one another. This approach anticipates the notion of a 'stream of consciousness' usually attributed to the writing of some of the later modernist writers. The term itself was first employed by his brother, the philosopher William James. The second of these writers, the son of a Polish revolutionary and a merchant seaman in the British navy for many years, Joseph Conrad (real name Konrad Korzeniowski) developed his mature fiction in the early 20th century), though he had already produced a number

of essentially seafaring adventure fictions before this and had started to gain a name for himself. His novels are almost always concerned with how individuals behave under testing circumstances and manage to prove themselves (or not). This is not presented as a simple matter of bravery, but something much more complex and demanding. At the turn of the century, Conrad produced two important works, 'Lord Jim' and 'Heart of Darkness'. The first of these is a novel where the main figures haunted by the fact, as he sees it, that he did not behave with sufficient courage and responsibility in a shipwreck at sea and how he spends the rest of his time trying to redeem himself. The second is a highly poetic, imagistic, meditative tale concerning the ivory trade in the Congo and is usually viewed as a particularly searching and critical account of European imperial practices in Europe. He later produced what many people consider to be the most important novel ever written in English, 'Nostromo', written shortly after the other two books. This novel is set in South America and includes a much wider range of characters and a complexly perspectival narrative. Perspective is particularly pertinent to the last of the three 'first wave' writers, Ford Madox Ford, who was of part-German background and changed his name from Ford Madox Hueffer during W.W. I. His novel 'The Good Soldier', while written during W.W. I, does not deal with that war. It considers the behaviour of two couples and in particular that of a respectable man of military background who pursues endless, partly secret amorous adventures. The story is complicated by the narrator, who is never at all sure, what exactly he is talking about and confuses him and us in terms of the way in which we should read his narrative. He is in many ways the ultimate 'unreliable narrator', while at the same time, he appears to be transparently honest - he's an American! Ford himself moved to the U.S. after having volunteered to fight in W.W. I, even though he was considerably over age.

The 'second wave' of what is often termed 'high modernism' actually begins with works sometimes written just before and during, or just after W.W.I. The two crucial poets in this respect are both American, Ezra Pound and his slightly younger follower T.S.Eliot. Both are often highly demanding in terms of the knowledge demanded to fully appreciate and sometimes, just to understand their poetry. Pound, in his poetry of this era, was strongly associated with the approach known as Imagism. Imagist poems presented their reader with a few, juxtaposed images which the reader had to interpret in some way. Pound's poem, 'In a Station of the Metro' is the most famous poem of the era in this respect.

T. S. Eliot produced a more complexly reflective form of poetry, beginning with 'The Love Song of Alfred J. Prufrock', a monologue, where the writer, an intellectual of some sort, wonders about the point of everything, his own dubious status in life, and his general helplessness. A series of later poems produce similar meditations, in slightly different modes. But the poems are, as good poems always are, as much about their form and mode of address as about their content. Eliot produces a disjointed, somewhat prosaic style, but one which is full of memorable lines, often bathetic (look it up!) in contrast to the more pathos oriented poetry of the 19th century's Romanticism. Eliot's best known poem, published in the early 1920s, is 'The Waste Land', a much more

demanding poem, dedicated to Pound, highly perspectival in nature (think of the work of painters like Picasso in this period, with their often puzzlingly multi-perspectival presentation of their subjects, in this respect) and full of literary allusions, while providing a portrait of an increasingly international but also increasingly anxious and disorientated world, suffering from the lack of a system of guiding beliefs, which the Christian church had previously provided. The significance of religion to Eliot becomes more explicit in his later poem, 'The Four Quartets', written and published before and after the Second World War, where a highly meditative approach to subjectivity, religion and English history, among other things, again provide a major challenge to the reader but one which is more caring and pastoral in tone.

The oldest of the four novelists to be considered here, E.M. Forster, wrote his first famous novel 'A Room with a View' before W.W. I. The novel is essentially a comedy of manners set in both England and Italy, where a group of tourists meet in a hotel and, two of them, one English (the girl) and one American (the guy) fall inconveniently (for a number of people, particularly, the girl's family and her fiancé, who is probably homosexual) in love. Forster himself was homosexual but kept his sexuality (in a country where homosexuality was still designated as illegal until the 1960s) a secret. The novel, though, explores the contrast between the emotionally restricted English middle-class culture of most of its participants and that of the Italians they encounter and, the philosophically and emotionally less inhibited father and son, the latter of whom starts to woo the girl, when they meet as the result of witnessing a murder in the middle of Florence. The next major novel of Forster was 'Howard's End', which deals with the limitations of the English class system, though from a comparable emotional perspective to his previous novel. Then, at the end of the 1920s he produced his masterpiece, 'A Passage to India'. Forster spent a lot of time, not only in India, but in Egypt, where he met his Indian friend and lover, to whom the novel is essentially dedicated. The novel again provides a plot derived from a certain form of emotional melodrama but includes both a searing critique of British middle-class values in relation to imperialism and a searching examination of the possible meaning of life, comparing European and Indian approaches. Forster essentially stopped writing and publishing novels after this but lived a long time and eventually, much later, allowed his account of a homosexual love affair in 'Maurice' to be published, when times had become more tolerant.

Our next writer, is one whom Forster greatly admired and supported, the much more emotionally frank D.H. Lawrence. Lawrence was of working-class origin, probably bisexual by nature (though it is not clear whether he was ever actually actively homosexual, in the sense of having genital sexual relations with other men) and significantly, though not primarily, influenced by Walt Whitman, the American homosexual poet. The main point in this respect is that all of the four novelists we are considering in this period, to a greater or lesser extent, challenge the restrictive social and legislative attitudes to sexuality and sexual relations. Lawrence made sex the central thematic aspect of his work, though he was also developing, like Eliot, a complex alternative metaphysic and a critique of the increasingly, industrialised and mechanised

period in which he wrote. He wrote widely and prolifically, partly in order to make a living, and his work includes poems, stories, criticism, and novels.

The most important of these are 'Sons and Lovers', 'The Rainbow', 'Women in Love', and 'Lady Chatterley's Lover'. The first of these introduces us to rural-industrial working-class life in the midlands of England and the emotional development of its hero who is deeply attached to his mother, antagonistic towards his father, a miner, and who goes through two significant and very intensely evoked love affairs. During and after W.W.I Lawrence involved himself in a project he initially called 'The Sisters', which eventually produced the next two novels of the four mentioned. 'The Rainbow' describes and explores the courtship and marriages of three generations of a midlands family, looking at how those relations develop from generation to generation and including various social and metaphysical as well as emotional issues (issues, not problems). The novel is written in a very intense, rhythmical, emotive style, includes the depiction of a lesbian relationship and was regarded as obscene by many. The second novel of 'The Sisters' project, 'Women in Love', focuses on the relationships of two sisters from the third generation of the Brangwen family, a teacher and an artist. One develops a relationship with another teacher, the other with the dynamic young owner of a coal mine. The two men also develop a relationship with one another. The novel is written in a considerably different, more analytical style than 'The Rainbow' but covers similar themes and develops its approach to them. Finally, 'Lady Chatterley's Lover', published at the end of Lawrence's relatively short life provides a later look at England and its social and sexual condition after Lawrence himself had spent more than ten years travelling the world with his own wife, considering and observing the cultures of other countries and continents (though he never made it to Africa). The publication of this novel was prohibited in England until 1960, when a trial at which E.M. Forster finally allowed its publication and made it the new symbol for the 'sexual liberation' of 'swinging' sixties England.

The other English novelist of our big four is Virginia Woolf, one of the leading figures in the so-called Bloomsbury Group, an informal association of talented young middle-class intellectuals, often radical in their views. Woolf is often seen as the great 'feminist' pioneer of twentieth century English literature, which she certainly was, though she didn't like the term to be used of her. Her breakthrough novel, her third, 'Jacob's Room', which appeared in the middle of W.W.I is again, a very perspectival and in many respects, imagist novel, written in usually very short paragraphs and chapters, almost giving the sense of a series of pictures, or photographs, The story it tells is of Jacob, a young middle class intellectual who we witness growing up, going to university and finally becoming more or less adult before he is killed in World War I. A significant part of the novel is devoted to Jacob's considerably unsuccessful relationships with women but its main power derives from the nature of the presentation of the story it tells.

Woolf's next and more successful novel, 'Mrs Dalloway' tells the story of a woman rather than a man. This time a woman who has fully reached maturity and is beginning to get

old, to her dismay. The action of the novel is set on a single day, one on which Mrs Dalloway is arranging a big party, but the novel proceeds by way of a number of flashbacks in relation to Mrs Dalloway's thoughts about the key relationships in her life: with her husband, with the man she almost married but didn't, and who has recently returned to Britain, and her best friend, Sally Seaton, with whom at one stage in her life she was clearly in love and perhaps still is. The novel is not narrated only from the perspective of Mrs Dalloway, the lively, loving, middle-class party-girl. Various figures provide a multi-perspectival narrative and there is a parallel plot provided by the story of Septimus Smith, a war casualty suffering from severe PTSD and the desperation of his young wife in trying to control his behaviour. The two plots reach their climax at the end of the novel, as Septimus 'crashes' Mrs Dalloway's party in a very dramatic fashion. One of the things the novel does is present London in a fashion comparable to that of the figure of the 'flaneur' as discussed when I gave the 'live' lecture.

Woolf's most celebrated novel is 'To the Lighthouse', written later in the 1920s, and set during the seaside holiday of a family strongly resembling Woolf's own. The novel is divided into three parts. The first part is set before W.W.I and shows the family having their holiday but providing us with glimpses into their consciousness of things and each other. The figure most focused on is the mother, who wonders what she has done with her life as she takes care both of her husband, her large family, and the local community in which the family's holiday house is situated. The second, relatively short section, is set during W.W. I and provides a kind of 'corridor' between the past of the family's pre-War life and the future of its post-War life, treated in the final section. The house is deserted and we learn of the various figures of the family, some of whom, including the mother, have died. The third and final section of the novel is primarily presented through the eyes of Lily Briscoe, a young female painter, who is a friend of the family and, like a number of characters, spends her holidays with them. Lily is approaching middle-age and single. Like the mother in the first section, she wonders what she is doing with her life but focuses her thought as much on her painting as much as on the family. She takes care of Mr Dalloway, an academic, as he mourns for the loss of his wife, but in a manner, as in the first part of the novel, which shows his more male, self-interested character, less open to the world and care for it and the people in it. Her own model for behaviour becomes Mrs Dalloway and she reaches a breakthrough in her painting and in her sense of life as she comes to realise this.

Finally, the Irish novelist James Joyce, perhaps the most iconic of all the Modernist writers. Joyce, family, 'wrote nothing but masterpieces'. He began by publishing a series of short stories set in Dublin, simply called 'Dubliners'. These provide a series of snapshots into the life of the second most important city in the British Empire, providing a scathing analysis of the limitations and corruption of that society. Again, the style of the stories is as significant as the content. Joyce's dispassionate (though in certain respects intensely emotional) presentation of the characters in his stories is highly reminiscent of that of the mid-19th century French novelist Gustave Flaubert, author of 'Madame Bovary', though Joyce was also strongly influenced by the work of Henrik Ibsen, the

great late 19th century Norwegian dramatist. The stories follow the lives of Dublin characters from almost the cradle to, in a certain sense, the grave. The last story in the collection is called 'The Dead'.

The next phase of Joyce's writing career is devoted to a bildungsroman initially entitled 'Stephen Hero' but eventually entitled 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man'. The novel was mostly completed before 'Dubliners' was completed. It is a quite demanding account of a young man's development from being a religious, emotionally confused adolescent into a more confident, more political adult. Aesthetics, religion are mingled together in the story of Stephen Dedalus's education. Joyce described himself as a 'Thomist' in aesthetics, someone highly influenced by the teaching of St Thomas Aquinas, the great intellectual religious figure of the European mediaeval period. The style of the novel changes as the novel and its main character develops.

Joyce produced two late, great masterpieces. The first of these, 'Ulysses', is usually regarded as the masterpiece of 'high modernism', along with Marcel Proust's 'A la Recherche du Temps Perdu'. It is not an easy book to read, as its style changes and develops from chapter to chapter, or 'episode' to 'episode' as Joyce preferred to term them. The novel, like all of Joyce's four main fictions, is set in Dublin and the action, as in Mrs Dalloway, takes place on a single day, in this case in 1904 (the novel was published in 1922, about the same time as T.S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land', but don't worry about remembering dates), the day when Joyce met his future wife. There are three main characters in the novel's three parts (again like Mrs Dalloway, but Woolf's novel appeared after Joyce's; he was more likely to have been an influence on her than vice versa): Stephen Dedalus in the first part, Leopold Bloom in the lengthy second part, and his wife Molly Bloom in the third part. In one way these represent, the Son, the Father, and the Holy Spirit, Stephen is a rather despondent, academically oriented, individual, rather lost, particularly in relation to the opposite sex.

Leopold Bloom is an Irish but part-Hungarian and Jewish. He is highly sociable and while not well-educated is a keen learner. He is often treated as an outsider by the people he knows and his wife is having an affair with a local opera-singer. Stephen and Bloom often encounter one another in the novel but only properly meet in the longest chapter in the novel, set in a bordello, where Bloom essentially takes on the role of his father, protecting him from trouble while he is drunk. He will eventually take him home and introduce him to his wife, producing a kind of holy family.

The novel's chapters are modelled on the narrative of Homer's 'Odysseus' and show Joyce's interest in combining the ancient classical world both with the modern and with the other crucial element in the formation of European culture, the Jewish and Christian worlds (Roman Catholicism is, of course, a combination of the two) but in relation to a third element, the Celtic culture of Ireland (and, of course, other parts of Europe).

Joyce's final 'novel' is entitled 'Finnegans Wake'. It slowly came to fruition and was only published shortly before Joyce died in 1939. It is almost impossible to read, One of the

best ways to begin to read it is to read it aloud, not worrying too much about the content, as if you were a kind of child, It is set at night (the night of the one day of Ulysses), the time of the unconscious, and concerns itself with the history of the world as well as two characters of cosmic proportions, the male Humphrey Chipper Earwicker, aka, Here Comes Everybody, and Anna Livia Plurabelle, who also has a host of other names. The novel is written in about seventeen languages at the same time (using Lewis Carroll's notion of the 'portmanteau' word). The first words of the novel are the last words of a sentence that begins at its ending.

Alright, so much for Modernism. I'll send you a mini-lecture on Irish Drama (with a little background history) next time. SH

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So, as promised, here comes the lecture on modern Irish drama, prefaced by a brief introduction to modern Irish history to put things in historical perspective (and, as mentioned before, the twentieth century element of this brief history has some relevance to your British studies work), particularly the so called Easter Rebellion of 1916.

Modern Irish history essentially begins (unlike my 20th century characterisation of 'modern Irish drama') in the late 16th century with the so called 'planters', soldiers and adventurers from Protestant England and, a little later, Scotland, licensed by the government, developing areas of land in Catholic Ireland and treatise the locals in a way partly comparable to the way that British colonies in America treated native Americans. The first wave of modern settlement or 'plantations' took place around Dublin and the south of Ireland in the reign of Elizabeth I but a later wave under James I in the early 17th century came from Scotland and like the colonisers of America were often more radically Puritan in their outlook on life. The middle of the 17th century saw the Civil Wars and relations between Protestants and Catholics became murderously aggressive. Ireland was eventually subdued in favour of the Protestants due to the military interventions of Oliver Cromwell, best remembered in Ireland for the massacre at Drogheda (near Dublin) in 1653.

Cromwell's ruthless subduing of the Catholic Irish was then further developed after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. What then emerged for the next hundred years was what is often termed the Protestant 'Ascendancy' culture (indicating that the Protestants had 'ascended' to full control of the country, even though they were in a minority – imperialist culture). Catholics were excluded from civil representation. This is the period of the building of grand country houses (and, in cities like Dublin, as in Edinburgh in Scotland, grand terraces and public buildings) displaying the power of the Protestant upper classes.

Slowly, during this period, however, a sense of wanting full independence from Britain developed, as in the thirteen colonies in America, and like there, particularly in the late

18th century. The leaders of what essentially developed into a movement for independence were Protestant but there was, of course, support from the Catholic majority, though not straightforward since Catholics were still suffering from the greedy exploitation of Protestant landowners.

Things came to an initial climax when Ireland received from another Catholic country, France, under Napoleon who had ideas of using Ireland as a stepping stone to the invasion of England. Wolf Tone, the great leader of the first modern Irish rebellion, was defeated (since help from Napoleon failed to materialise) and committed suicide in order to avoid the humiliation of public execution. In order to restore dominance in Ireland, the British passed an Act of Union (1800-1), making Britain the United Kingdom of Britain and Ireland.

The yearning for independence in Ireland developed throughout the 19th century and was further intensified by the Great Famine of the 1840s during which almost half of the population of Ireland either died or emigrated. The situation, caused by the failure of the potato crop, on which the rapidly growing population of Ireland was hopelessly overdependent, was not helped by a government in England dogmatically committed to the notion of leaving everything to 'market forces' and which consequently refused to provide the necessary aid to the starving millions in Ireland. This kind of policy was later repeated in India, even in the early 20th century.

In the later part of the 19th century, the movement towards what became to be known as 'Home Rule' developed under the half American Irish leader, Charles Parnell. Parnell was eventually removed from power by a combination of the Conservative Party in Britain and the Catholic Church in Ireland with the help of a scandal over his private relations with a married woman but the Liberal Party in Britain was sympathetic to Home Rule and introduced a series of bills to try and achieve Irish independence. The third of these was eventually passed in 1913 but war broke out in 1914 and the process of movement towards independence was interrupted.

For some groups in Ireland this was not good enough. A whole series of grips and some of the political organisations, often including military elements, combined in 1916, under the official leadership of Padraic Pearce, an Irish schoolteacher who taught Gaelic, and who demanded a 'blood sacrifice'. These forces invaded the main Post Office in Dublin, the centre of communications in Ireland, in what became known as the Easter Rising of 1916. It was not a popular rebellion and was quickly defeated, but the manner of the execution of its leaders, without a full trial in the military conditions of W.W. I where British soldiers were executed for desertion or sometimes for refusing to get out of trenches to be slaughtered by German machine-gun fire, quickly turned public opinion in their favour.

After the end of W.W. I, the Anglo-Irish war broke out. This was a vicious war, with secret services on both sides carrying out brutal attacks. Eventually the two leaders, Winston Churchill, for the Foreign Office, on the British side, and Michael Collins



(sometimes termed 'the Irish Lenin') on the Irish side came to an agreement and the country was partitioned into two parts, the six counties of what came to be known as Northern Ireland and the Free State of Ireland. This was not enough for some of the Irish leaders since Ireland was essentially given the status of a dominion, not a fully independent republic and the Irish Civil War, even more ruthless than the previous war, raged for the best part of a year. Michael Collins was assassinated and his former friend, Eamon de Valera, another half-American Irishman became the leader of the pro-Republican forces, who eventually emerged victorious. Essentially under his aegis, Ireland became an independent, Catholic, and highly puritanical republic. Writers like James Joyce, never a great admirer of the Catholic Church in Ireland, left the country in disgust and, in Joyce's case, never returned to live there. Ireland remained neutral during W.W.II (though, in practical terms it often helped Britain) and de Valera paid his respects to the German Embassy in Ireland when Hitler's death was announced. In 1948 a fully independent Republic of Ireland officially came into being with de Valera as its president.

That's the historical background. Now for the literature, though here too we need to return to a slightly earlier period than the 20th century. In the later part of the nineteenth century, the movement to maintain and in many cases restore the Gaelic language and Gaelic Irish culture took on a new intensity. Part of this tendency was the so called Celtic Twilight where poets and dramatist provided modern versions of the mythology and folklore of the older Celtic culture. This was part of the Irish Literary Revival (as in the Czech national revival) The leading figure in this respect, both in drama and in poetry was William Butler Yeats, a brilliant lyric poet and one of the founding figures of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, which played a similar role to the Czech National theatre. The Irish National Theatre was founded in 1899 and opened to the public in 1904 but before returning to it and Yeats, we need to consider two other Irish playwrights, also from Dublin but who didn't stay there: Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde and George Bernard Shaw, whose most famous works were first performed in London and who were very much a part of British and London society.

Wilde was among other things a gifted scholar who studied classics both at Trinity College, Dublin and at Oxford where he was hugely influenced by the aesthetics of the great Oxford scholar, Walter Pater, who like Wilde was homosexual, though more discreet and cautious about his homosexuality. Wilde's two most famous works, the novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and, most important for our purposes, *The Importance of Being Earnest* were produced in the 1880s.

This play, one of the most popular and critically acclaimed plays written in English is itself a product of Wilde's aestheticism. Wilde's emphasis, as with everything he wrote, was on style, and on subtle, social disruption, presented, as much of Shaw's and Joyce's writing would be, in the form of comedy, though his particular artistic weapon, rather like that of his contemporary in Germany, was epigram; short snappy phrases and sentences designed to be memorable.

The play, which was performed to the public at the same time as his trial, essentially for being homosexual, was turning him into a notorious figure. This meant that it attracted large audiences, at a time when Wilde's reputation had been waning, but also that it was taken off the stage after less than a hundred performances. The four main characters, the two men Jack and Algernon, (so who is Earnest, or should that be Ernest? -watch or read the play to find out) and the two women Cecily and Gwendolen. Or is that right? Cecily and Gwendolen, throughout the play, behave as if they were men, at least in certain respects in terms of what are or were generally thought of as masculine virtues such as dominance and self-confidence while Jack and Algernon, while complex figures, particularly Jack, with his secret identity, often behave like indecisive blushing violets in front of the ladies. The constantly outraged Lady Bracknell and Algernon's butler, Lane, also play crucial roles. The play, through its dialogue, developed in a style where Wilde suggested that he wanted the most precise and challenging forms of beauty and wisdom to be expressed as if they were nothing more than casual conversation, challenges and subverts most of the dominant cultural presumptions in the society of its day, particularly in relation to gender and class, but in numerous other related areas, as you can gather to some extent even from the extract from its opening scene, as indicated in the relevant slide.

The other major contemporary London-based Irish playwright, G.B. Shaw was a more directly political figure, a Fabian (a form of early, moderate socialist) like the later Virginia Woolf, his plays directly addressed the English class system and its injustices, notably in his play of 1912, 'Pygmalion'. One of the two main characters in this play is a man with the very Irish-sounding name of Higgins. An expert in pronunciation he is convinced that one of the problems in English society is that when someone opens their mouth in England they make someone else despise them, so he develops the project of training a lower-class Cockney flower-seller into a society lady, simply by putting her into the right clothes, developing a few manners, and crucially and more challengingly, getting her to learn how to speak with an upper-class form of pronunciation. Despite being a comedy, the play is a thorough indictment of class-division in England, again delivered from a partial outsider, an Irishman. The play remained famous, not least because of its adaptation into a Hollywood musical starring Audrey Hepburn and Rex Harrison, 'My Fair Lady'. I'm not a great fan of musicals, but even I like this one.

In an earlier and less well-known play, 'John Bull's Other Island', written in 1904, Shaw also had things to say about his own country. Two friends living in England, Tom Broadbent and an Irishman who prefers life in England, Larry Doyle, go to live in Ireland, as Broadbent decides to run as a Member of Parliament there. Broadbent is charmed and fascinated by Ireland while Doyle is critical and often disgusted. The play revolves around these long conversations between the two on the differences between the two countries, as indicated in the relevant slide including an extract from one such conversation.

Three years after Shaw's play about Ireland, another, the most influential play in Irish literary history, was performed at the Abbey Theatre with its first performance producing riots instigated by Irish nationalists and republicans who regarded the play as an offence against public decency and the Irish nation. They had been used to watching heroic plays, written by such figures as W.B. Yeats, showing the exploits of ancient Irish heroes and displaying the integrity and beauty of Irish culture. The new play, 'The Playboy of the Western World', written by a protégé of Yeats and whose work he fully approved of, one John Millington Synge, presented a very different approach. The play concerns the story of a playboy, a young, roaming, figure, a kind of wandering tramp, Christy, (clearly suggesting the name of Christ) who turns up one day in a rural Irish pub. Initially, he does not attract the interest of the locals of the pub, and invites the scorn of the dominant figure there, the young Irish barmaid, Pegeen. However, he decides to reveal the true reason he is roaming the country. He has been in a quarrel with his bullying father and has battered him to death with a shovel. This revelation from the young, somewhat shy, almost feminine, young man (whose character is in contrast to the dominant, confident, more masculine barmaid) immediately arouses wonder and admiration from everyone in the bar, even, eventually, Pegeen. His new found popularity is eventually lost as his father, who he has only stunned, returns from the dead, as it were. Now shamed, Christy tries to redeem himself by killing his father again, but this time, the people in the pub, afraid of being implicated in the murder, tie him up and are ready to hang him, only for his father once more to return from the dead. Christy escapes and in the wake of events Shawn, the fiancé of Pegeen, refuses his proposal laments that she has lost 'the only playboy of the western world'. The play is significant not only for its content, which provides a realistic portrait of rural Ireland, not as beautiful cultural core, but as poor, ignorant, dangerous and lawless, but for the way in which the characters express themselves, their speech, which is the real sign of the beauty of the culture. They speak in a form of Anglicised Gaelic, which really does have the ring of ancient heroic speech; as in all of these plays, the manner in which people express themselves, including the sound, is crucial. Much of this was learnt from Synge's book about the remote community of the Arran Islands in the far north, where Gaelic was still fluently spoken and about which he had previously written a book, entitled dimly, 'The Aran Islands'.

While Yeats is an important Irish playwright, who like many writers of the time, wrote his plays in verse (though Synge's play was written in prose and produced a new, more realist trend in Irish drama). But his most important contribution to Irish culture was as a lyric poet, modern Ireland's national poet, and his most dramatic poem was written about what one of the most famous Irish literary critics and cultural historians, Declan Kiberd, has described as a piece of 'street theatre', the Easter Rising of 1916. The poem is dimly titled, 'Easter 1916' and describes the change in Yeats's own attitude towards the leaders of the rebellion, from fools, innocent or despicable, as he initially saw them, into martyrs for their country. The poem is intense, solemn, and highly moving, probably the most single most powerful political lyric poem ever produced in English, and the end

of it, solemnly intones their names, and ends with its highly ambiguous refrain: 'All changed, changed utterly/ A terrible beauty is born', combining aesthetics and the view of a 'beautiful' Ireland, with its ever present, dark, terroristic side.

Another writer not usually known for his plays (although he did write one, 'Exiles') is James Joyce. He was, however, tremendously interested in the new technology coming out of Italy and more or less introduced the cinema to Ireland. This interest is partly displayed in one of the episodes from his most famous novel, 'Ulysses'. Joyce may have been an exile, self-exiled from his native country, but he was still, despite being a socialist and internationalist, still an Irish nationalist too, but in a different form from organisations like the IRA, who, like Yeats, he despised. All of his work is set in Dublin, including 'Ulysses' and in the long bordello scene in the novel, entitled 'Circe', he portrays a kind of surreal world, where while Stephen and Bloom visit the bordello, Bloom has constant complex, sexual, Freudian, dreamlike fantasies, where he becomes an increasingly 'womanly man'. Again social subversion is accompanied by sexual subversion. By subversion, I mean both a questioning and partial undoing of existing social conventions in ways which offer a more open and tolerant version of society. Again, a passage from this scene is provided in a slide, partly to illustrate the tremendous linguistic experimentation involved throughout the novel, and in this long, one hundred pages or so, 'play', in everything but name. The film dramatisation of this part of the novel is, not surprisingly, the most effective part of the interesting film version of Ulysses, produced in 1967.

One of the most famous of Irish dramatists and one of the most famous Irish writers is Joyce's protégé, Samuel Beckett. While Joyce might be termed a 'maximalist' in terms of the scope of his later, encyclopaedic novels, 'Ulysses' and 'Finnegans Wake', Beckett is perhaps the world's most famous 'minimalist' writer. The first part of career was devoted to writing novels but after World War II, which he spent as a member of the French Resistance (he had followed Joyce to France many years earlier), he started to turn to drama and in 'Waiting for Godot', first performed in 1953, he produced the first major, minimalist play. The play follows the non-adventures of two nobodies to whom nothing happens. They appear to be two tramps but also perhaps refugees, waiting for someone who will provide their lives with some form of redemption, but he never does come, and they keep on waiting. Again, the play is a comedy, and again, the play, almost entirely depends on the dialogue of these two characters, whose exchanges are markedly short and neither of whom appears to be blessed with a great deal of intelligence. The play is not a comedy but not one of manners, as in Wilde, politics, as in Shaw, heroism, as in Yeats, realism, as in Synge, or surreal fantasy, as in Joyce, it has a more existentialist ring and is written in the period of philosophical existentialism in France, primarily represented by Jean Paul Sartre, as well as in the so-called 'Theatre of the Absurd' which has its origins, particularly in this play, at about the same time. Vladimir and Estragon, 'Didi and 'Gogo' has they call each other, may be comic characters but the comedy the apparent stupidity of their dialogue displays is as haunting as it is funny.

The last representative play I wish to draw your attention to is the more recent 'Translations', written by Brian Friel in 1980. Friel, from Northern Ireland and a friend and collaborator of Northern Ireland's most famous poet, Seamus (pronounced Sheymus) Heaney (known in N.I. as 'famous Seamus') was a prolific playwright, and this play formed part of a new project and theatre company he formed and developed with Northern Ireland's most famous actor, Stephen Rea and called 'The Field Day Theatre Company'. Both Rea and Liam Neeson, along with another very famous Irish actor, Ray McAnally, appeared in the first performances of the play. The play was first staged not in Dublin, but in Derry, one of the centres of 'the Troubles' in Northern Ireland in this period.

The play has clear echoes of some of the plays so far discussed, particularly aspects of those by Shaw's and Synge's plays about Ireland, it too is set in the Irish countryside, but clearly relates to the sources of the Troubles in earlier Irish history. As in Shaw's play, Friel's concerns the adventures of two 'visitors' to Ireland, one English (Yolland), one of Irish origin (Owen), but these visitors are soldiers, whose job is to help with a geographical surveying of the Irish countryside, one which includes changing the names of all the villages from their Gaelic names into crudely Anglicised versions. This is part of the picture provided of the intrusive nature of British colonisation and the imposition of the English language. The play focuses particularly on the learning of languages, particularly in the informal, Gaelic, 'hedge schools' in the countryside. There Yolland, who is quite keen to be sociable and who starts to fall in love with one of the school's students, Maire, as she does with him. The problem is that they do not understand each other's language. One of the most memorable scenes in the play, part of which is presented in one of the slides, is when the two start to talk to each other, desperately and sometimes comically trying to communicate with each other, sometimes using the little they know of Latin as an intermediary language. The play is in many ways a depiction of a tragedy but the romantic element, particularly in this scene, also makes it touchingly human.

Alright, that's the end of this lecture. Just a reminder that for your test you don't need to worry about dates, just the names of plays and playwrights and that of Ireland's most important theatre.