

will inform the future. For scholars and students interested in the evolution of Irish drama as Subject and art (nationalistic, cultural, and political), Trotter succeeds in offering a fresh perspective.

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**Race in modern Irish literature and culture**, by John Brannigan, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2009, 256 pp., £65.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0748638833

There is no such thing as an Irish face, but I know one when I see one.  
 (Pete Hamill)

Pete Hamill's conviction that he knows an Irish face when he sees one is just the kind of specious racial conviction explored by Brannigan's *Race in Modern Irish Literature and Culture*. Though Hamill is an Irish-American author, his assumption of Irish racial visibility and his indirect linkage of Irishness with whiteness has been a feature of Irish culture on both sides of the Atlantic for at least two centuries.<sup>1</sup> Brannigan devotes his study, on the contrary, to debunking the myth of Irish racial homogeneity, a myth that he identifies as foundational to the Irish state. Despite the presence of Protestants, Jews, and travelling people in Ireland, the 'face' the Irish state presented to itself and to the world, he argues, was Catholic, settled, and white. Thus, Brannigan insists, Irish racism did not begin with the increase in immigration to Ireland that accompanied the economic boom of the 1990s. Instead, the new immigration intensified the exclusivity and white supremacism that had been embedded in Irishness since the country's inception. Brannigan's book is an important contribution to the growing body of work that is forcing us to complicate older images of Ireland as a non-white, anti-colonial, 'Ireland of the welcomes'.

Each of the book's chapters is engaging and original, providing a closer look at a particular era in the modern Irish relationship to race and a particular manifestation of that relationship. The first chapter focuses on the racial rhetoric that accompanied the formation of the Irish state. The forging of the Irish race, whether in speeches given at the 1922 Irish Race Congress in Paris or in the smithy of Stephen's soul in Joyce's *Ulysses*, is discussed not in terms of its nationalist or revolutionary overtones, but its imperial, conservative undertones. In the following chapter, Brannigan illuminates the influence of racial typology on Irish society, connecting a Harvard anthropological study of Irish faces in 1930s Ireland to Irish artists' preoccupation with themes of facelessness and effacement. Chapter 3 looks at the cult of Irish homogeneity that made certain Irish residents into aliens and rejected refugees and pursued protectionist policies. The final chapter looks at the Irish identification with an oppressed, 'black' identity that has often served to mask Irish whiteness and the fear of the black other.

Throughout, Brannigan juxtaposes literary and cultural texts in productive ways. His consideration of Joyce's *Ulysses* alongside Hannah Berman's 'The Charity Box' (1923), for example, connects Stephen's inability to 'immune himself from [the] logic' of anti-Semitism (53) to the 'callou[s] indifference' of Berman's anti-Semitic narrator to the suffering of a Jewish fellow train passenger (67). The later painting of Jack Yeats is

juxtaposed with the novels of Samuel Beckett and Liam O'Flaherty to explore how 'effacement is, in effect, a clandestine articulation of *non serviam*' that resists others' attempts to mark Irishness (134). The limits of Irish 'hospitality' are explored through John Ford's *The Quiet Man* (1952), whose immigrating protagonist is accepted once he proves his Irish parentage, and Kate O'Brien's *The Last of Summer* (1943), whose immigrating protagonist is ostracised because of her mixed Irish-French parentage. In the final chapter, Sean Lemass's visit to Nigeria for the independence celebrations is critiqued through readings of Desmond Forristal's unpublished play 'Black Man's Country' (1974) and Austin Clarke's satirical poem 'Flight to Africa' (1963).

Certain threads in the book stand out as making important contributions to recent scholarly debates. Throughout, Branigan shows us examples of cross-racial solidarity undercut by racist expressions of white supremacy, whether in Douglas Hyde's speech to the Irish Race Congress, Stephen's singing of an anti-Semitic song in response to Bloom's singing of a Zionist song in *Ulysses*, or the minstrel-like appropriations of black culture seen in 1970s rock bands. With Michael Malouf's study of Eamon de Valera's claims of cross-racial solidarity in mind, Branigan asserts, '[S]uch claims [...] are often invested in complex strategies of acquiring legitimacy or recognition, in which gestures of affiliation are never clearly distinguishable from acts of appropriation' (181). Gestures of anti-racism that was suddenly reversed by the incursion of non-whites into 1990s Ireland. Speaking of Irish support of missionary work, for example, Branigan explains that it 'relied upon the temporal and spatial disjuncture of black African and white Irish identities' (191-2), with Irishness always regarded as more civilised.

Branigan also comments on the Irish scholarly preoccupation with Irish racialisation to the exclusion of Irish racial ideologies. He opposes those who attribute racial prejudice within modern Irish culture [...] are merely overlooked as the secondary, or belated, signifiers of an effectively redundant colonial interpretative regime' (6). On the contrary, he insists that 'racial ideologies [...] need to be examined at the point of their iteration in order to understand fully [their] specific historical conditions, forms, objects and effects' (7). Unfortunately, he points out, race is 'relatively underexplored as an affective agent in Irish culture' (6). To those who would respond that Branigan is inserting a consciousness of race where it did not exist, he explains that the artists, politicians, and racial scientists under discussion were all 'drawing from the same cultural well of racial classification' (105). In the same vein, Branigan accounts for the presence of racial ideologies despite the absence of a black community by saying:

blackness does not have to be signified visually, or to appear as epidermal or corporeal presence, in order to be the object of ceaseless speculation [...] it is in verbal discourse that blackness is figured as a constantly reiterated presence in Irish culture. (203)

Due to the 'insinuating' (5) nature of race in Irish culture and the tendency of Irish studies scholars to ignore it, Branigan's calls to 'reach an understanding of how cultural productions construct and contest the social meanings of race' (7) and to explore the 'complex legacy' of 'how white Irishness has been historically produced' (206) are especially important.

Confronted with such numerous examples of Irish race-thinking over the century, the reader may start to feel despondent. However, Branigan does leave his narrative with hope. For example, in his discussion of the fiction of mid-century Ireland, he reminds us that writers demanded that community 'be reimagined beyond the dubious and destructive

allure of race' (227). In the last chapter, Brannigan shows us how Phil Lynott, the mixed-race lead singer of the 1970s band Thin Lizzy, moved beyond the cultural appropriation of blackness so common to bands at that time to 'articulat[e] his Irishness as well as his blackness' and evolve a 'cultural strategy which tend[ed] towards adoption, fusion, and translation' (212). How such a strategy might be mobilised against the type of prejudice that fuelled the 2004 vote to withhold citizenship from immigrants' children will be the question that artists and anti-racist activists will need to answer.

#### Note

1. Pete Hamill, 'Introduction', in *The Irish Face in America*, ed. Julia McNamara (New York: Bulfinch Press, 2004), 7–9.

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