Joan Didion begins her 1968 collection *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* with W. B. Yeats's "The Second Coming" printed in full as an epigraph; the title and the long quotation underscore Didion's perception of the rupture of the 1960s: a revolution—sexual and political—of which she was skeptical. As she explains in her preface, she "had been paralyzed by the conviction that writing was an irrelevant act, that the world as I had understood it no longer existed."[2] Later in the same book, in the essay "On Morality" she argues that the "ethic of conscience" as a measure of a writer or anyone else's morality was an "insidious" metric; neither the individual's intention nor—as will be discussed in this essay—the *form* of the work conferred "any *ipso facto* virtue." Scholars of modernism have not been so careful. In what may be a reaction to John Carey's still-influential castigation of canonical "high modernists" in his 1992 book, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice Among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880–1939*, over the last two decades, scholars have delineated a new configuration, late modernism, which has been defined increasingly as an ethically virtuous aesthetic.

Late modernist studies to date have focused on fiction and, to a lesser extent, poetry, with scholars delineating late modernist aesthetics along politically centrist and leftist lines. In his foundational text, *Late Modernism*, Tyrus Miller includes a chapter on Wyndham Lewis, yet studies of late modernism after Miller have focused on a liberal politics. For example, Robert Genter describes late modernism as "a maturing of modernism, an overcoming of the elitism that hampered high modernism and a rejection of the more mystical claims of romantic nationalism."[3] Benjamin Kohlmann's *Committed Styles* describes late modernism as the work of "the thirties literary left [. . . which] occupies positions outside of the radical demands for art as a form of propaganda, on the one hand, and for literature's retreat from the sites of political action, on the other."[4] Most recently, Thomas Davis's *The Extinct Scene* argues, "In late modernism, we see radical avant-garde techniques marshaled for state-sponsored film and liberal norms."[5] Furthermore, the term "intermodernism" proposed by Kristin Bluemel has arisen from the scholarly trend to describe late modernist writing as essentially leftist. Bluemel's study of writers of the 1930s and 1940s shifts the critical focus from late modernism's stylistic hybridity to texts written by "often politically radical" authors who had a sense of democratic "responsibility" and who were "committed to non-canonical, even 'middlebrow' or 'mass' genres."[6] In sum, the trend in studies of late modernism has been to advocate a view of writing from the 1930s to the mid-twentieth century as an ethically sound response to political change in the interwar period, or as a democratic aesthetic that was forged as a liberal reaction to the humanitarian crisis of the Second World War.

There is a second lacuna: at present, there has been no effort to bring the scholarship on theater in the 1930s and 1940s into dialogue with theories of late modernism. I ascribe this absence to two pressures: from modernist scholarship on one hand (what Puchner identifies as "modernist resistance to the theater") and the crowded field of theater studies on the other.[7] Agitation propaganda, epic theater, dialectical theater, and social realism are all terms used to describe leftist aesthetics in the theater, doing the work that late modernism does in the fields of fiction and poetry. However, the liberal or radical political alignments of these genres of theater mean that a corpus of dramatic writing is unaccounted for, namely, theater that has its equivalent in Miller's discussion of Lewis's novels.

Recently, Emilie Morin has warned us about the dangers of incomplete accounts of theater in the interwar period by demonstrating in *Beckett's Political Imagination* that the performance histories of *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* in highly politicized contexts "grate against available models of political theater, which tend to focus on the practices pioneered by Brecht."[8] Keri Walsh, in her essay "Allied Antigone," shows the aesthetic proximity of Brecht to playwright Jean Anouilh,

whose politics were fascist—despite Anouilh's reticence to make public political statements; Walsh argues, "Anouilh's Chorus sounds like an obverse Brecht: he is distrustful of catharsis not because it defuses the desire to enact political change, but because it may in fact encourage resistance [to the French alliance with fascism] through empathy with tragic suffering."[9] In the context of Italian theater studies, scholars have acknowledged similarities between "socialist popular theater models" and fascist theater in the interwar period, when Thespian Cars—sponsored by the fascist Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro (founded in 1925)—were intended to "bring theater 'to the people.'"[10] The distance between "socialist popular theater" and the kind of drama that can be described according to Mary Ann Frese Witt's term "aesthetic fascism" (discussed further below) is further collapsed by attending to the reception of Brecht's theater within the Italian fascist regime; writing for the literary supplement to *Il Mare*, edited by Ezra Pound, in 1932 Eugen Haas described Brecht's theatre as "brutal because it is concrete (as so much German can be): obscene because strong and sincere; heavy because full of weight and sound. And, for these reasons, in my view the main value of his poetry lies in this: to interpret according to the idea; to be violent as the thought, the character, and man are; to come back to the original sound of the word; to be direct, concrete, vigorous."[11]

In this essay, I propose that the concept of a late modernist theater can describe the spectrum of politically and socially engaged theater beyond the political left, which will enable existing categories such as epic theater to be productively positioned as sub-genres within late modernist theater. To be clear, this formulation is not intended to diminish the importance of Marxian aesthetics in early twentieth-century theater or merely to give visibility to the political right. Rather, I argue that a late modernist theater has the potential to demonstrate the proximities of writers whose political ideas are at odds, and to reveal with greater accuracy points of ideological conflict and their relation to stylistic change.

An Unlikely Group: Performing "the outward turn"

The features of late modernist theater can be located by attending to points of contact where playwrights and dramaturges of conflicting political viewpoints converge on aesthetic grounds. One important juncture lies in the early history of the Group Theatre in London. In the autumn of 1934, the Group brought together a troupe of unlikely personalities whose politics abrade: W. H. Auden, Christopher Isherwood, Rupert Doone, Tyrone Guthrie, Ashley Dukes, W. B. Yeats, and T. S. Eliot. The Group Theatre company had been founded in February 1932 as an actors' cooperative, united by the vision of using dance and song as essential training for developing a "simple way of acting" that could accommodate "any play, whether ancient or modern."[12] The adaptation of popular, or even vernacular, forms of performance by Eliot and Yeats—writers whose work is generally thought to be characterized by "high" modes—illustrates the contingency of a play's politics, which extends through the published texts and the performance texts. The broad issue of textual contingency has been illustrated by Harvey Teres, who writes about the adaptation of Eliot's early criticism by the founding editors of the *Partisan Review*, and he underscores the "multiple and shifting" nature of the "ideological valences" in Eliot's criticism.[13] Teres argues for a recognition of the "complex interplay between embedded ideological configurations and possibilities on the one hand, and groups of readers responding to both these textual pressures and the limits of an ensemble of social relations on the other" (Teres, "Remaking Marxist Criticism," 67). In my formulation of a late modernist theater, I will attend to the aesthetic confluences of late modernist theatrical practices—that is, how late modernist performances manifest an "outward turn"—while attending to the published play texts' embedded ideologies, which I will argue are manifested in paratexts or in specific contexts of performance.

An example of the importance of “ideological valences” to locating late modernist theater is Auden’s *The Dance of Death*, which was the first play that was written specifically for production by the Group Theatre. Auden began writing for the Group in the summer of 1933; later that year, the Group announced its intention to reconstitute as a permanent company, and *The Dance of Death* was published in November 1933.[14] In Sidnell’s study of the Group Theatre, he describes *The Dance of Death* as “an adaptation for a middle-class audience and partly professional company of agitprop techniques. . . . the first attempt to forge a link between ‘bourgeois’ and workers’ theater in England” (Sidnell, *Dances of Death*, 68). Sidnell focuses on the political detail that is embedded in the published text: *The Dance of Death* ends with Karl Marx appearing onstage to the tune of “The Wedding March.” Sidnell’s concentration on the published work means that he misreads the performative elements—such as Auden’s use of corporate movement—as inherently leftist modes of expression. While it is true that Auden later translated Brecht (in the 1960s), the choreography of *The Dance of Death* reflects a style of corporate movement that was already incorporated in modernist ballet in the 1920s and which does not denote a specific political meaning or intention.[15] Auden’s stage directions are specific in their choreography (instructions for the chorus’s gymnastic exercises, its pairing off to dance a waltz, and a dance in which the chorus moves into the formation of a ship), but I argue that this owes as much, if not more, to the practices of modernist ballet.[16]

The Group Theatre shared a premises with the Ballet Rambert, founded by Marie Rambert, who was married to Ashley Dukes, one of the Group’s dramaturges. The Ballet Rambert and the Group Theatre shared a philosophy of dance drama as well as a performance space: “The rhythm of the theatre transcends the rhythm of dramatic dialogue and enters a purely musical sphere, where movement is greater than definition.”[17] When Dukes bought the Mercury Theatre in Notting Hill in 1930, it became a home for experimental dance drama as well as a base for the Group; as Susan Jones describes in *Literature, Modernism, and Dance*, “at Dukes’s suggestion, [Ninette] de Valois choreographed *Folies-Bergere* (1934) for Ballet Rambert” (Jones, *Literature, Modernism, and Dance*, 253). In Sidnell’s study of the Group, he concedes that there are important differences between *The Dance of Death* and agit-prop theatre; for example, he notes that in addition to Auden’s use of “highbrow” language, *The Dance of Death* “was also distinct from workers’ theatre in making use of the techniques of symbolist theatre and ballet” (Sidnell, *Dances of Death*, 68).

Here, Theodor W. Adorno’s argument about the slipperiness of meaning in Beckett’s drama can inform our understanding of meaning in relation to performance techniques, such as Auden’s use of corporate movement. Adorno writes, “if drama were to strive to survive meaning aesthetically, it would be reduced to inadequate content or to a clattering machinery demonstrating world views.”[18] This concept is key to interpreting the productions of the Group Theatre in isolation as well as to understanding their relation to a larger, late modernist turn. To describe Auden’s—or indeed de Ninette Valois’s—choreography as “symbolist” (with its fin-de-siècle connotations) is to sequester a choreography centered on corporate movement to a specific historical period. To the contrary, the Group Theatre’s productions—and W. B. Yeats’s experimental dance drama—show how corporate movement was available to a spectrum of political meanings, which made dance appealing to theatre practitioners who were seeking ways of opening modernist forms of performance onto their contemporary political contexts, without becoming what Adorno describes as a “clattering machinery demonstrating world views” (Jones, *Literature, Modernism, and Dance*, 253). Dance as a way of opening modernist form is also key to understanding W. B. Yeats’s transition from drama inspired by Japanese Noh theater (which he described in his introduction to Pound and Ernest Fenollosa’s *Certain Noble Plays of Japan* as an “aristocratic form”) to his interest in ballet, which retained an emphasis on tradition and difficulty while it

extended to corporate forms of movement, as in de Valois's choreography for Yeats's play *Fighting the Waves*.[19]

Before late modernism gained traction as a category for literary criticism, in Foster's biography of W. B. Yeats he alludes to the potential for technical and stylistic exchange between Yeats and "the Auden generation" through their mutual interest in the Group Theatre. Foster writes,

> the fragmentary, parodic effects and harsh juxtapositions of some of his own poetry in the period may represent an echo of the Auden-Isherwood dramatic tone, and Auden's interest in experiments with dance, music and speech were—in principle if not in effect—closely compatible with WBY's enduring but unrealized ambition for a poet's theatre.[20]

Yeats's persistent "ambition" led to his attempted collaboration with Dukes, Auden, and Isherwood in 1934. In letters to George Yeats, which were written from London in late October of that year, Yeats explained his plans with not a little wishful thinking:

> I swan from little theatre to little theatre & have now decided to work with what is called "the group theatre." They are about to get up displays of work by Elliot & Auden & are I believe highly skilled. They will in future play not in a theatre but in a large room which suits my "No plays." I go to see that room today. . . . My plans are the new version sketched in Rome of the dance with severed head music by Dulac, Miss De Valois as dancer. Dulac agrees. "Fighting the Waves" for flute, drum & gong, music probably by Constance Lambert. "The Resurrection" I am to write an article for the journal of "The Group" theatre explaining what I propose to do. This means that they will allow me to direct their policy to some extent.[21]

A few days later, Yeats's ideas had evolved into plans for a Group production of his plays at Dukes's Mercury Theatre. The evening would open with a tragicomedy (*Fighting the Waves*), followed by a "farce" (*The Player Queen* [in the writing of which Pound had been instrumental]), and it would conclude with *A Full Moon in March*, the "severed head play" that was Yeats's "new version of The [King of the Great] Clock Tower," with music by Edmund Dulac.[22] He explained to George Yeats,

> "Fighting the Waves" will have new music (drum, gong, flute & zither, & new masks, all suitable for a small theatre. . . . I have insisted on the inclusion in repertory of the poetical left – 3 evening[s] by me, then 3 evenings of Auden & T. S. Elliot. ([October 30, 1934?], *Letters: Intelex*, [6116]).

If this program had materialized, would scholars have already imagined a Late Modernist theater for British and Irish drama of the 1930s? By insisting on "the inclusion in repertory of the poetical left," Yeats implicitly locates a political context for his drama: not leftist, his plays are juxtaposed against those of "the poetical left," while he simultaneously identifies commonality in their aesthetic aims and practices to the extent that he imagines he will be able to direct the Group's "policy" (W. B. Yeats to George Yeats ([October 26, 1934?], *Letters: Intelex*, [6113]).

If the performative elements of drama are open to an array of political meaning, and if play texts have multiple "ideological valences," then where does the "embedded" political meaning reside? How can we locate the "opening up onto political

environs" that Miller describes as the foundation for our understanding of late modernism? Further below, I will argue extensively that attending to the paratextual elements of the play texts and performances is crucial to understanding how playwrights and theater practitioners invest the drama with political meaning without confining the text or the performance to propaganda.

For now, it is useful to attend to a brief but nonetheless particularly illustrative example of how paratextual frames function in Late Modernist Theater: the program note for Rupert Doone's production of T. S. Eliot's *Sweeney Agonistes* for the Group in the autumn of 1934. The first performance of *Sweeney* was on November 5, and there were three further performances over the following weeks. Yeats and Brecht were both in the audience on the third night of *Sweeney*, when Doone's program note outlined his vision for the play's relation to its social context:

> My production is concerned with morals as well as aesthetics. I have sought to criticize the conventionalities of modern behavior with its empty codes and heartiness—immoral but never immoral enough—decaying but so long in dying. I see Sweeney himself as a modern Orestes (the only three-dimensional character in the play). The rest are conventionalized conventional characters—the Eumenides or Bogies of Sweeney's persecution.[23]

Sweeney Agonistes was, Eliot conceded, composed of "fragments," so there was ample room for interpretive differences between producer and playwright, and Eliot was generous in his acceptance of Doone's production (Eliot to R. J. G. Johnson, April 1, 1935, *Eliot Letters*, 7:574–75). He told Yeats that "although the presentation was in important respects entirely alien to my intentions, I was very much pleased with the skill and intelligence of the production" (Eliot to Yeats, December 6, 1934, *Eliot Letters*, 7:399–400). However, Eliot cautioned Yeats that since the Group Theatre was apt to make aesthetic interventions as well as add political commentary, "it might be worth letting them do a similar private performance of one of your smaller plays, and see how you like it. I think, however, that it ought to be at a time when you could be in London to direct them" (*Eliot Letters*, 7:399–400). After seeing the production of *Sweeney*, Yeats was unwilling to concede control of his productions to the Group; he told Edmund Dulac, "I won't have Rupert Doone spreading mustard and molasses over my brown bread. I shall produce all my own plays" (*Eliot Letters*, 7:445n2). Yeats's imagery is strange but telling: he thought of his plays as whole and nourishing; production according to the sensibilities of Doone and others at the Group would change not only the flavor but would also affect their value as sustenance. Finally, the question of control over productions led to the perpetual postponement of a Yeats season for the Group. Auden's new play, *The Chase* (retitled *The Dog Beneath the Skin*), captured Doone's attention and ultimately relegated Yeats's program to the imagination.

In sum, the activities of the Group Theatre in 1934 indicate three key aspects of late modernist theater: firstly, the availability of modernist performance techniques to investment with political meaning; secondly, the function of paratextual frames in directing a play's political meaning apart from the play text or the performance text; and finally, the appeal of the same experimental modes of performance to dramatists who held leftist and right-wing political views.

Late Modernist Convergence: Imagining European Theater at the Volta Conference in Rome, 1934

Another key point of confluence of dramatists from an array of political positions is the Volta Conference on Dramatic Theatre,

which was held for a week in October 1934, a date proclaimed in the conference's program as Year XII of the fascist regime.[24] Participants gathered in Rome to reconsider the function and modes of drama in the context of political change in the 1930s. Leading figures in European drama were present, including Edward Gordon Craig, Ashley Dukes, and W. B. Yeats. The conference was sponsored by the Royal Italian Academy, whose president was Guglielmo Marconi, the pioneer of radio transmission, and it was presided over by Luigi Pirandello, who had been awarded the Nobel Prize earlier the same year. The Futurist Filippo Tommaso Marinetti served as the conference's secretary.[25] The published program for the conference outlines five aims: to put theater in dialogue with other art forms and media (specifically cinema, opera, and radio); to consider innovations in the architecture and scale of theater (both "theater of the masses" and little theaters ["Teatri di Masse e Teatrini"]); to explore new possibilities for stage design; to consider the role of performance in the moral life of the people ("Lo spettacolo nella vita morale dei popoli"); and to consider the idea of a State Theater—including the history of their organization throughout Europe, the need for state theaters in the present-day, the content of state theaters' programs, and the possibility for exchanges between state theaters.[26] This list of priorities demonstrates how the Italian fascist regime attempted to harness theater as part of its cultural program, how the regime was trying to come to grips with the possibilities for the political uses of dramatic theater, and how experimental performance techniques and innovations in stage craft were believed to be essential to these purposes.[27] My discussion of the proceedings of the Volta Conference will illustrate the direct correlation between the political far-right and late modernist aesthetics as they are currently formulated, giving particular attention to the participation and aesthetics of Anglophone dramatists at Volta.[28]

For the most part, book-length studies of the culture of fascist Italy have focused on cinema to the exclusion of theater: the *Oxford Handbook of Italian Politics* includes a chapter on cinema and television and a chapter on the press; Ruth Ben-Ghiat's *Fascist Modernities* discusses "the regime's new enthusiasm for the feature film industry" in the early 1930s; Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi's *Fascist Spectacle* studies the performance of the regime through public programs but does not address literary drama or the institution of the theater.[29] An important exception to these works is Frese Witt's *The Search for Modern Tragedy: Aesthetic Fascism in Italy and France*.

At the outset of her study, Frese Witt argues that what she terms "aesthetic fascism" (opposed to fascisms' economic and social manifestations) "can be seen as part of the early modernist belief that innovation in art could lead to revolutionary change in politics, or rather, that art and politics were two sides of the same coin."[30] She outlines a familiar list of right-wing writers who were drawn to fascism through aesthetics, including Lewis and Pound; what is crucial here is Frese Witt's differentiation of "aesthetic fascism" from "fascist aesthetics;" her focus is on aesthetics that originate outside of any given fascist movement but that may find their correlative in a political program, as is the case with Pound and Italian Fascism.[31] Frese Witt distinguishes between "bourgeois tragedy" and "tragedy informed by aesthetic fascism" as follows: bourgeois tragedy involves the "domesticizing of tragic fate," as exemplified in the characters of Hedda Gabler and Willie Loman, but "tragedy informed by aesthetic fascism"

> seeks to transcend temporal narrative, linear plot, and "democratic" dialogue to search for a more organic or special form that gives primacy to the poetic word of the author. It tends to reject the "decadent" present for a refuge in childhood, myth, atemporality or totality. . . . These dramatists seek a new form of ancient tragic fate and heroic sacrifice as well as new poetic languages. (Frese Witt, *Search for Modern Tragedy*, 17)

Frese Witt refers to Pirandello's character Henry IV as an articulation of aesthetic fascism; as I will discuss in the next section, W. B. Yeats's *Death of Cuchulain* also fits this paradigm. Building on Frese Witt's demarcation of an aesthetically fascist form of tragedy, I argue that the difference between the modernist theater from which aesthetic fascism arises and the late modernist theater under consideration here lies in the extent to which the play text, performance text, or paratextual frames for the theater engage with their political contexts. In short, where Frese Witt sees aesthetic fascism as retreating from the "'decadent' present," I argue that a deeply contextualized study of individual play texts and performance texts reveal that there is an "outward turn" in fascist as well as leftist theater, and that the Volta Conference in 1934 is an important moment in the conceptualization of a late modernist turn.

The aims of the Volta Conference illuminate an important aspect of Italian fascism's informal cooption of the theater, which was a less prescriptive experiment than the German National Socialist or Soviet Russian ideas that a "political public" could be created by the theater.[32] At the conference in Rome, practitioners focused on the adaptation and cooption of existing theatrical practices rather than the formulation of a new dramatic theory that could disseminate the ideals of the Italian fascist state. As Zamponi argues, and Frese Witt summarizes, "the prevalence of form over ideological norms. . . . characterizes Mussolini's aestheticized politics" (Frese Witt, *Search for Modern Tragedy*, 7). Italian theater, like Irish theater before the Abbey, was decentered; unlike Ireland, with its large music halls in principal cities, where melodramas were staged, the theater scene in Italy was comprised of traveling repertory companies. This practice was outmoded and increasingly unviable in the early twentieth century; as in the rest of Europe, Italian theaters were under pressure from new forms of media, especially cinema.[33] That is not to say that the theater had ceased to be important in Italy or to the fascist regime, as indicated in the program for Volta 1934. Indeed, Mussolini professed to Emil Ludwig that he had "always been very much influenced by the drama," while adding the qualifying statement, "To-day, the film is the strongest available weapon."[34]

But theater was a "weapon" of fascism nonetheless, even while it was a less explicit medium for conveying political ideas. As Berezin writes in "Cultural Form and Political Meaning":

> Spectacle, emotion, and discipline, qualities of theater in general and not fascism in particular, dominated regime and theatrical discourse on the subsidized theatre. . . . The performative, or formal properties of theater, dramatized political meanings without resorting to overt political content. (1265)

Mussolini's view of theater was of a form that was open to cooption for political purposes; as Bonsaver shows, Mussolini was "the supreme arbiter of what was going to appear on Italian stages" (Bonsaver, *Censorship and Literature in Fascist Italy*, 159).[35] Among the dramatists that the dictator most admired were Gabriele D'Annunzio and George Bernard Shaw: "I am a great admirer of Shaw," Ludwig reports the dictator saying, "but sometimes find his freakishness annoying . . . Pirandello writes Fascist plays without meaning to do so! He shows that the world is what we wish to make it, that it is our creation" (Quoted in *Talks with Mussolini*, 214).[36] Whereas Shaw's paratextual frames—his long prefaces—didactically locate the "meaning" of his plays in the way that Adorno dismisses as political "machinery," Pirandello's plays were open and available to investment with "Fascist" meaning as defined by a particular Italian context. As I will show further, the difference between Shaw's

didacticism and Pirandello's availability is the crux of W. B. Yeats's interest in Pirandello. It may also be indicative of Yeats's idea of the autonomous play text, which can only be given a precise political location by situating the play in relation to its paratextual frames (introductions and commentaries), which Yeats published separately from the play texts.

In "Il Duce's Directors," Patricia Gaborik interprets Mussolini's subsidy of Pirandello's theater as "an experiment" to test the possibilities for a National Theater that would be "free" from artistic and political control.[37] The 1934 Volta conference can be understood as a continuation of Pirandello's long (and ultimately unfulfilled) campaign for a national theater, and Yeats's expertise as the founder of the Irish National Theatre—the first subsidized theater in Europe, as he liked to boast—is recognizably his contribution to Volta's objectives.[38] What Yeats gleaned from Volta is less obvious, but close attention to the proceedings of the conference and his reaction to them shows that the vision of European theater as it was negotiated at Volta informed his plans for the Group Theatre on his return to London. Volta therefore illustrates the intersection of aesthetic fascism and leftist theatrical projects in a late modernist turn.

In the midst of the Volta conference, on October 11, Yeats wrote to the dancer Margot Ruddock about the proceedings. The previous day, Walter Gropius, the first director of the Bauhaus School, had "described his latest invention": a pliable mechanical stage. Edward Gordon Craig—hailed by Yeats as "the great man of the conference, all the young actors & producers gather round him"—mocked Gropius's new technology, saying, according to Yeats, "A producer who works for that theatre must know all that so & so knows. . . . & when he knows all that his art will be dead; and when art is dead the nation is dead. I want men of 25 in the theatre" (October 11, 1934, *Letters*: *InteLex,* [6110]). Yeats animatedly described Alexander Tairoff, the founder of the Kamerny Theater in Moscow, rising in agreement with Gordon Craig, while Marinetti—whom Yeats depicts as an embodiment of the machine—violently disagreed: "his hands went round & round in mid air as though he were turning a wheel, & faster & faster as his passion climaxed. . . . everybody shouted, while the helpless chairman [Ashley] Dukes rang his bell. So on for another hour" (6110). The "row" continued after the end of the day's proceedings, when the conference delegates, waylaid by rain, stood "in the hall waiting for taxies."

In Yeats's letter to Ruddock, the exchange is depicted as a comic interlude in a conference attended by larger-than-life personalities. But the disagreement epitomizes questions at the heart of Volta 1934: what was theater's relationship to emergent technologies? How was theater to remain a living art? The questions were political: Gordon Craig articulated and the debate exhibited the delegates' consensus that what happened in the theater set the course for the nation.[39] Tairoff's defense of Gordon Craig is important, since in Moscow Tairoff had creatively negotiated the stalemate between psychological realism and "objective spectacle" that beset Russian theater in the 1920s.[40] Tairoff sought to synthesize "emotion and form" by developing a flexible performance space in which the width, depth, and height of the stage could be adapted according to the "emotional and rhythmic effect sought in each scene of each play" (Sayler, *Russian Theatre*, 142). These innovations were in concert with Gordon Craig's use of light, color, and screens—a method of stage design with which Yeats was still enthralled. (In the same letter to Ruddock in which he described the argument over Gropius's machine, Yeats told her that Gordon Craig was "still [willing to] work for nothing for me" [*Letters: Intelex,* (6110)].)

The availability of theater to political meaning without being restricted to a specific sociopolitical context differentiates aesthetic fascism from leftist theater within a Late Modernist theatrical practice. Yeats admired the malleability of Gordon Craig and Tairoff's designs over Gropius and Marinetti's fixed technologies, and this is the same quality that Yeats praised in

Pirandello's drama. In August 1930, Yeats had written to Lewis: "Your work, like that of Pirandello, who alone of living dramatists has unexhausted, important material, portrays the transition from individualism to universal plasticity, though your theme is not, like his, plasticity itself" (Yeats to Lewis, August 7, 1930, *Letters: InteLex*, [5371]). Yeats's interpretation of Pirandello's "plasticity" (what I describe as availability to meaning) is probably informed by descriptions of Pirandello by a director on the Abbey's board, Walter Starkie, who was a scholar of Italian and don of Trinity College.

Starkie was an apologist for Italian fascism and, as Morin writes, he was "an occasional anti-Semite and a vocal detractor of 'Bolshevistic talk' and 'Bolshevistic propaganda,'" sharing an interest with Yeats "in Croce and Gentile's idealism and Mussolini's education reforms" (*Beckett's Political Imagination*, 36). In his 1926 biography of Pirandello, Starkie writes that it is unsurprising that Pirandello turned to drama, "in order that his ideas might find plastic representation. . . . the plots are not so much mere *tranches de vie*, or tales of blood and passion, as the plastic interpretation of some profound thought."[41] Starkie adds, "The plays of our author, with their power of stimulating active reflection, are the very antithesis to the passive art" (*Pirandello*, 135). Starkie's admiration for Pirandello's "active" theater chimes with his essays in the *Irish Statesman* the same year, in which he explains how Italian fascism has been "misunderstood in foreign countries" and how it articulates a "sane, idealistic patriotism" in which "the dictator" is welcomed by the Italian people because he "is able to appeal to their sense of the heroic."[42] Starkie's praise for a malleable, heroic theater resurfaces in his review of the Abbey Theatre's production of Yeats's *Oedipus at Colonus* (1927), which he admired as "graceful and pliant. . . . through the paths of folk drama and folk poetry [. . . Yeats calls] up before us the image of the Athenian national soul" (quoted in Hurtley, *Starkie*, 136–37). Starkie believed that the performance that he witnessed had the effect of instigating in the audience a collective response: "the audience . . . were profoundly moved [and] sat in solemn silence as though listening to the performance of some great ritual" (quoted in *Starkie*, 137). These observations anticipate Anouilh's idea that in the theater, the playwright "impose[s] a reality that is not real" and the people in the audience "abandon themselves to a collective reality" (a collective reality that was, as Walsh shows in the context of Anouilh's *Antigone*, "morally vacant") ("Allied Antigone," 281). Starkie's comments also buttress the theory of aesthetic fascism in tragedy as defined by Frese Witt.

Conversations at Volta about forms of performance and their availability to political meaning informed Yeats's attempt to define a new kind of drama, which he described in his 1934 "Introduction to *Fighting the Waves*" as arriving at a "concrete universal," an Hegelian concept that has precise bearing on Yeats's right-wing politics. Yeats imagined that this would be a dramatic form that would be mythical in its remove from "character and circumstance" yet would be given "concrete" expression through an heroic figure (in Yeats's plays, the figure of Cuchulain). Yeats turned to a specific performance technique, dance, to embed contingency (what Starkie and Yeats called Pirandello's "plasticity") in order to resist confining the play to a particular political meaning and thereby ensure its universality.

A close reading of the dance in *Fighting the Waves* illustrates aesthetic fascism in late modernist theatrical practice. The play is framed by two dances, which are intended to "balance" one another (*Variorum*, 564). The Prologue to *Fighting the Waves* instructs that the opening dance, by a dancer wearing a Cuchulain mask,

> represents a man fighting the waves. The waves may be represented by other dancers: in his frenzy he supposes the waves to be his enemies: gradually he sinks down as if overcome, then fixes his eyes with a cataleptic stare upon some

imaginary distant object. (530)

The lighting changes; the stage is revealed to be empty, and the musicians, who function like a Greek chorus, begin to speak. At the close of the play, The Woman of the Sidhe, who is also masked "so that she seems more an idol than a human being" and whose "movements" may also give this "suggestion," dances a dance of "bitterness" that "expresses her despair for the loss of Cuchulain" (554, 564). In addition to these performative frames at the beginning and end of the play, there is a third dance, at the center of the play, on which the action pivots. The Woman of the Sidhe awakens the Ghost of Cuchulain and almost succeeds in conveying his spirit to the otherworld. To prevent this abduction, the Figure of Cuchulain—whose body has been possessed by Briacru, "the maker of discord"—demands that Cuchulain's wife, Emer, renounce her love for her husband. Emer complies, and this enables the Ghost of Cuchulain to re-inhabit his body (the Figure), which is signified by the actor who plays the Figure of Cuchulain donning the mask of Cuchulain that is worn by the dancer in the opening sequence.

Taking into account a range of sources including the stage directions (paratextual to the performance text), Yeats's "Introduction" to the play, and Yeats's speech from the Volta Conference about his ambitions for a "heroic" drama and their relation to Irish political change, it is clear that Yeats's resolution is ironic: the warrior Cuchulain remains tied to the carnal instead of being elevated to a spiritual plane. Yeats provides an epilogue to *Fighting the Waves* that contains a thrice-occurring refrain articulating a sense of futility and emphasizes the failure of Cuchulain to attain heroic transcendence: "O bitter reward / Of many a tragic tomb! / And we though astonished are dumb / And give but a sigh and a word, / A passing word" (560, 562). The death of Cuchulain—which marks the warrior's metamorphosis from the historical figure to the mythological hero—is delayed indefinitely.

Without being informed by Yeats's stage directions, which prescribe a dance that conveys "bitterness," without the framing devices of the "Introduction to *Fighting the Waves*" in both its 1932 and 1934 iterations or Yeats's Volta speech (all discussed below), the play is available to interpretation as achieving a happy ending; after all, the lovers are reunited and the tomb is denied. With such oppositional interpretations of *Fighting the Waves* in view, it is clear that the paratexts are essential to identifying precisely how a play opens onto its political surroundings. Furthermore, without these paratexts, it is probable that only leftist theater will be identified as late modernist since totalitarian or otherwise antidemocratic forms are more inclined to use mythical referents, which are already accommodated within high modernist frameworks. In sum, the paratextual frames are the key indicator of the shift from high modernist to late modernist aesthetics within aesthetic fascism.

Yeats's envisaged program for the Group Theatre, which included *Fighting the Waves*, illustrates how late modernist theatre accommodates aesthetic fascism beyond the genre of tragedy that is the focus of Frese Witt's study. In addition to informing Yeats's *Fighting the Waves*, the Volta Conference inspired his revision of *The King of the Great Clock Tower* into *A Full Moon in March*, a play that he added—along with the farce, *The Player Queen*—to his envisaged program for the Group Theatre in London. Yeats stated that *A Full Moon in March* was "simpler" and more concrete ("freed from abstraction and confusion"), but by the same token the play retained flexibility through his use of dance and through the staging that was informed by Dulac's use of light and color (567).

Yeats delivered a speech at the Volta Conference that invested his plays with a political motive, and this speech is a salient example of how deep contextualization can provide paratextual frames for the theatre. Yeats proclaimed that his own drama was

"active" and had the potential to reunite a divided people who were without a unifying heroic personality. He referred to the historic division of the Irish Parliamentary Party over the controversy surrounding its leader Charles Stewart Parnell, a figure who is consistently Yeats's touchstone for the Irish heroic. At Volta, Yeats's references to Parnell carried additional weight with the "Parnellite split" serving as a cipher for the more recent Irish Civil War of 1922.[43] Yeats asked his audience in Rome: "Had Parnell been betrayed? Who had betrayed him? Families were divided, son against father, brother against brother." He continued, "In the midst of that disillusionment, of that bitterness, the Irish imaginative movement began" (*Convegno di Lettere*, 386). Yeats regaled his audience with the story of the riots over the *Playboy of the Western World*: "Picturesque, poetical, fantastical, a masterpiece of style and music, it roused the populace to fury" (388). The Irish National Theatre's history, Yeats implied, was that of a long struggle against a "populace" or "mob" that had been miseducated by party politics and who lacked a heroic leader. Later in his speech, Yeats described his squabble with the Abbey's company over Gregory's play, *The Rising of the Moon*: "The players would not perform it because they said it was an unpatriotic act to admit that a policeman was capable of patriotism. One well known leader of the mob wrote to me, 'How can the Dublin mob be expected to fight the police if it looks upon them as capable of patriotism?'" (391). Yeats concluded his speech by declaring, "Every political party had the same desire to substitute for life, which never does the same thing twice, a bundle of reliable principles and assertions" (391). The "bundle of reliable principles" seems to allude to the image of the fasces reified in Italian Fascism, since by 1934 Yeats was disillusioned with Mussolini (whom he had briefly considered to be capable of inspiring a cultural renaissance).

With the suggestive reference to the fasces, Yeats appears to be surreptitiously signaling to his audience his dissent against the totalizing iconography of party-political Italian fascism, even when his ideas about theatre are in alignment with what Frese Witt describes as "aesthetic fascism" in Italy as "a product of the aesthetic nature of certain political experiences such as the merging of self with a crowd representing national identity—the totalizing work of art representing the totalitarian state made famous by Walter Benjamin" (*The Search for Modern Tragedy*, 2). Starkie's description of *Oedipus at Colonus* also gestures to his interpretation of Yeats's drama as a "totalizing work of art." Yeats's own interest in "totalizing theatre" is illustrated in his discussion of *The King of the Great Clock Tower*, the play that he was revising during the Volta Conference (turning it into the play *A Full Moon in March*). In a letter to Edmund Dulac in December 1934—about 6 weeks after Volta—Yeats described *The King of the Great Clock Tower* as "theatrically coherent, spiritually incoherent." He told Dulac that his revision was driven by the need to "work out" a "blood symbolism" that had "laid hold upon" him, an impulse that Yeats believed came from "beyond the will" (Yeats to Edmund Dulac, December 10, 1934, *Letters: Intelex*, [6145]). Yeats's idea that a play had the potential to deliver both theatrical and "spiritual coherence" and could also merge "self and crowd" is further evident in the way that he discussed his play *Fighting the Waves.*

Whether or not the specific image of the fasces is intended, Yeats's speech makes it clear that he advocates a flexible, rather than fixed, dramatic mode, and that he believed that the availability of political meaning ("plasticity") enabled the theater to deliver a spiritually transcendent responsiveness to any given real political context. In sum, the Volta Conference is an extreme iteration of the way that left- and right-wing politics converge without colliding in Late Modernist theatrical practice. Conversations at the conference reveal how the Italian Fascist state was deliberately exploring the ways that innovative theatrical forms might give expression to fascist aims, and Yeats's participation in the conference demonstrates how his commitment to "plasticity" in theatrical practice—a play's availability to political meaning without being invested in restrictive,

specific meanings—illustrates how Frese Witt's theory of aesthetic fascism in the genre of tragedy can be developed into a conceptualization of late modernist theater.

Framing Late Modernist Theater

In *Reframing Yeats*, Charles Armstrong observes, "One of the major challenges for someone interpreting Yeats's work consists in figuring out what to do with his self-interpretations."[44] If every context is a paratext, as Genette envisages (however terrifying this proposition is for theater historians), then the "outward turn" of modernist theater may be even more multivalent and contingent than other late modernist genres. The potentially vertiginous array of interpretations of theater's "outward turn" can be governed by paying close attention to changes to a given play's paratextual frames, as I will illustrate with regard to Yeats's "Introduction to *Fighting the Waves*," which is just one of the many introductions, notes, and commentaries that he provides for his work. Yeats's introductions return us to Adorno's idea of "the primacy of the text," and as Julia Jarcho illustrates in *Writing for the Modern Stage* this primacy is not "an outmoded piece of antitheatrical modernism." Rather, Yeats's Introductions show us how to "value the script as a form apart."[45] In this case, they are not scripts *per se*, but they are interpretations that enable the autonomy of performance while paradoxically anchoring the play text to an actual political reality, or—as in the case of *Fighting the Waves*—multiple political realities.

The "Introduction to *Fighting the Waves*" is particularly noteworthy because, in contrast to the readily apparent frame for Auden's *The Dance of Death* provided by Doone's programme note, or even of Yeats's late play *Purgatory* and its relation to its accompanying eugenicist pamphlet *On the Boiler* (1939), there is not one "Introduction to *Fighting the Waves*" but two. The differences in the two versions of the "Introduction" illustrate the multivalent frames for late modernist theater and the "slipperiness" of meaning identified by Adorno; the very "slipperiness" that allows Yeats's drama to maintain its aesthetic quality also enables its function to encode fascist politics.

The introduction was first published in *Dublin Magazine* in 1932, then it underwent an almost total rewriting prior to its publication in *Wheels and Butterflies* in 1934. Only the first paragraph of the introductions is identical, and the 1932 text significantly opens *Fighting the Waves* onto its Irish and Italian contexts. The 1932 "Introduction" frames Yeats's vision for his drama as actively counter-revolutionary:

> We might, if the Irish Government at the establishment of the Free State had done something no revolution of strong farmers, clerks and lawyers would permit, have founded a school that could have substituted, as only a literature without satirical or realistic prepossessions could, positive desires for the negative passion of a national movement beaten down into party politics, compelled for a century to attack everything, to suspect everybody. Only a Caesar could do what I want, but now that the Cellars and Garrets have taken to some kind of half pious communism they may produce one. I write for Caesar's eyes.[46]

Yeats's imagined Caesar, for whom he claims to write, will define and direct a national culture through public institutions:

> let Caesar talk to the Curator of the Museum; first doubling the Museum's inadequate grant. . . . let Caesar command our Irish schools and colleges to teach Berkeley, side by side with more modern philosophy, or side by side with Aquinas as

> though he were Gaelic, and Kant or Aquinas Greek, and so save us from that popular science that is the opium of the suburbs. (“Introduction to Fighting the Waves,” 9–10)

The text resounds with the contemporary, and the 1932 introduction’s echoes can be heard in Yeats’s Volta speech in 1934 when he condemns the “Irish democratic party.”

Moving deeper into one of the contextual frames for the play, Yeats’s allusions in the 1932 “Introduction” can be clarified with reference to drafts of the “Introduction to *Fighting the Waves*” in Yeats’s White Vellum Notebook, also known by its manuscript number MBY 545. The notebook is in private hands and is only accessible to scholars by way of poor quality and continually degrading microfilm copies that are held in the Houghton Library at Harvard, the National Library of Ireland, and the State University of New York, Stony Brook.[47] Yeats used the notebook from 1930–1933, and it contains “unpublished drafts of introductions and prefaces, notes on fascism and on Irish censorship” (Chapman, “White Vellum,” 43). On the lower-right corner of a two-page spread dedicated to thoughts on *A Vision*, Yeats draws a line. Under it, he inscribes an early set of notes for “Introduction to *Fighting the Waves*” that begins with a surprising mention of the socialist Republican Peadar O’Donnell and specifically mentions O’Donnell’s novel, *The Knife* (1930):

> Speak of Peadar ODonnells novels --- a possible dictator.
>
> appeals to Cellars & Garrets. Suggestions for [?law/him].
>
> [. . .]
>
> Speak of our failure as resulting from our being
>
> too Greek, & not realistic. Might speak of uniting
>
> philosophy to our early eighteenth century—Berkeley mainly—
>
> as <Gaelic should> Greek should be with Gaelic.[48]

Yeats retained the connection between Greek and Gaelic in the 1934 iteration of the “Introduction,” where the allusion to Irish Republicanism is replaced by Yeats’s mention of “blueshirts” among other right-wing movements across Europe.

O’Donnell’s Marxian Republicanism may have inflected Yeats’s insistence on a politics of historical materialism in his 1932 “Introduction to *Fighting the Waves*” (9).[49] When Yeats made the first notes for the “Introduction,” did he believe that O’Donnell might become a “Caesar” who could replace the “negative passion” of party politics with a positive political program? In September 1931, Yeats had “chanced on” O’Donnell at the Abbey Theatre, where O’Donnell was speaking to the Abbey’s accountant about arrangements for hiring the theater for an Irish Republican convention. Yeats’s impression was of an “emotional sympathetic person. . . . I asked if he would come and see me next time I am in Dublin, and he said he would if he wasnt in gaol. He said he had been thinking of writing us a play but that in all probability in the next two or three years everybody would be in too great a fever to write anything” (Yeats to Lady Gregory September 23, [1931], *Letters: InteLex* [5513]). O’Donnell surfaces in Yeats’s “Notes” to *The Resurrection* (1931)—a play that Yeats added to his intended

program for the Group—where he writes, "So far I have the sympathy of the Garrets and Cellars, for they are, I am told, without exception, Catholic, Communist, or both!" (*Variorum*, 933). In contrast to the 1932 "Introduction," the *Wheels and Butterflies* (1934) version emphasizes the transcendental power of modernist literature—or, in Yeats's words— "some typical books—*Ulysses*, Virginia Woolf's *Waves*, Mr. Ezra Pound's *Draft of XXX Cantos*" in terms reflective of Yeats's interest in Hindu spiritualism; the 1932 version asserts, "We know nothing of the past if we do not know where men lived, what they handled and wore," and Yeats imagines the National Museum including "examples of the arts and crafts of an epoch when our civilization seemed about to climax" ("Introduction to Fighting the Waves," 9).

Reaching back further into the archive, in 1930—two years before Yeats published the "Introduction to *Fighting the Waves*" in *Dublin Magazine*—Yeats wrote to Olivia Shakespear about his plans for a volume, *Wheels and Butterflies*. He explained,

> the wheels are the four introductions. Dublin is said to be full of little societies meeting in cellars & garrets so I shall put this rhyme on a fly-leaf
>
> To cellar & garret
>
> A wheel I send
>
> But every butterfly
>
> To a friend.

He added, "The 'Wheels' are addressed to Ireland mainly—a scheme of intellectual nationalism" (Yeats to Olivia Shakespear, December 2, 1930, *Letters: InteLex,* [5414]).[50] It is clear that *Wheels and Butterflies* had a long incubation between 1930 and its publication in autumn 1934. As late as August 1934, Yeats was still lingering over the manuscript, telling Macmillan that he had delayed sending the "general preface" out of expectation that there would be "some disturbance" in Dublin over the production his play *The Resurrection*, which was included in the book: "There has been no disturbance. That play and my new dance play [*A Full Moon in March*] have filled the house, people standing up" (Yeats to Harold Macmillan, August 2, 1934, *Letters: InteLex,* [6079]). *Wheels and Butterflies* was finally published just prior to Yeats's departure for the Volta conference in Rome. On his return to Dublin, he sent copies to Shakespear, Dulac, and de Valois, and he focused his efforts on organizing a production of his plays for the Group Theatre. The thick paratextual frames for Yeats's intended program for the Group Theatre demonstrate seemingly autonomous theater's responsiveness to political contexts. What may seem to the theater historian as endless archival work ultimately shows how these plays are available to meanings that are otherwise inaccessible, and it demonstrates how important thorough contextualization is to understanding the ways that aesthetic fascism and democratic aesthetics were proximal (and indeed, in the Group Theatre, were bedfellows) in a late modernist theatrical practice.

Defining a Late Modernist Theater

Davis argues in *The Extinct Scene* that late modernist writing is "simultaneously aesthetic *and* political," reminding readers of Woolf's initial plan for a hybrid essay-novel before she separated the text into *Three Guineas* and *The Years* (*Extinct Scene*, 6, 72–73). Similarly to Woolf's severing, Yeats attempted to divide the political immediacy of his paratextual frames from the

ostensibly autonomous play texts.[51] The severance of overtly political content from the literary work characterizes the modernist element in a late modernist text: its ability to stand as an autonomous aesthetic work while also making itself available to investment with political ideas. My case study of Yeats's involvement in the Group Theatre illustrates that the latent politics in late modernist theater surface when a play is read alongside its deeply historicized paratexts.[52] Yeats imagined his "butterflies," a production of three plays, taking wing among the small, cultivated audience of the Group Theatre, while the "wheels"—his introductions—were intended for a select audience that could effect real political change. Yeats demanded control over his productions because, unlike Eliot in the case of *Sweeney*, he believed that he had written a complete text, and he insisted on being able to mold the "plastic" elements of his drama.[53] A collaboration with the Group was attractive *because* of "the poetical left": the potential of a small company, whose ideas of theater were conversant with contemporary arts, to stage his "heroic" theater that, according to its paratextual frames, opened onto its contemporary political contexts.

Davis argues, "The way to make sense of late modernism, then, is to plot it more firmly within its historical moment and to ask how it marshals aesthetics to think that moment" (*Extinct Scene*, 14). Theater, by its very theatricality, demands contextualization; it is only by scrutinizing the play text's availability to political meaning and by giving close attention to the play's framing that late modernist theater's opening onto political contexts can be ascertained. Novelist, travel writer, and romantic liaison of W. B. Yeats, Ethel Mannin, gestures towards this model of theater in her autobiography *Privileged Spectator* (1939):

> The most effective propaganda is always that which is implicit. . . . How many people, for instance, have ever thought of *Troilus and Cressida* as an anti-war play? Possibly not even Shakespeare himself. Yet the spirit of the play is full of disgust and disillusion concerning war, and a contempt for those who indulge in its futility. . . . the propaganda is undoubtedly there, for the aware.[54]

In *Stage Fright*, Puchner outlines the "critical commonplace" that "much of modernist art deliberately cut itself off from all engagement from the public sphere," which leads to "modernist anti-theatricality . . . By the same token, the avant-garde's embrace of the theater and of theatricalism can be taken as a sign of the avant-garde's greater affinity to populism and the masses." Critical bifurcation of "modernist theater" (with Yeats and Eliot as exemplars) and "avant-garde theatre" (e. g. Auden and Brecht) is at fault for a dialectical problem that Puchner attempts to resolve with his term "(pro) theatricalism" (Puchner, *Stage Fright*, 9 and passim). I argue, developing from Frese Witt's definition of aesthetic fascism in tragedy, that the theatricality of "modernist" and "avant-garde" theater is expressed through movement, often through dance, which allows aesthetically fascist "mythical" theater to remain separate from political contexts, while the paratextual frames for the theater open directly onto those contexts.[55] The incorporation of Yeats—and Eliot, and Anouilh—in a theory of late modernist theater is to resituate late modernism generally, moving it from an exclusively leftist political position to an inclusive category that acknowledges the complications brought about by the aesthetic proximity of writers who occupy a vast, and ethically problematic, spectrum of political opinion.

Notes

[1] Joan Didion, "On Morality," *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* (London: 4th Estate, 2017 [1969]), 157–63, 163.

[2] Joan Didion, “A Preface,” *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, xiii–xvi, xi–xii. Thanks to Cara Lewis for her collegiality in answering questions about editions of Didion’s book.

[3] Robert Genter, *Late Modernism: Art, Culture, and Politics in Cold War America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 10.

[4] Benjamin Kohlmann, *Committed Styles: Modernism, Politics, and Left-Wing Literature in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 4.

[5] Thomas S. Davis, *The Extinct Scene: Late Modernism and Everyday Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 11.

[6] Kristen Bluemel, introduction to *Intermodernism: Literary Culture in Mid-Twentieth-Century Britain*, ed. Kristen Bluemel, (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 1.

[7] Puchner writes, “just as contemporary theater studies tends to continue avant-garde theatricalism by virtue of its largely uncritical dedication to the value of theater,” or I would add, the value of particular theorists (e.g. Brecht), “studies on literary modernism tend to perpetuate the modernist anti-theatricalism through an uncritical erasure of the category of theater.” Of particular relevance to my argument here is Puchner’s discussion of “Yvor Winters and Helen Vendler, for example, [who] openly reduce Yeats’s plays to poetic literature that has nothing to do with the theater” (Martin Puchner, *Stage Fright: Modernism, Anti-Theatricality, and Drama* [Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins, 2002], 8).

[8] Emilie Morin, *Beckett’s Political Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 9.

[9] Keri Walsh, “Allied Antigone: Jean Anouilh in America and England,” *Modernism/modernity* 23, no. 2 (2016): 277–95, 280.

[10] Mabel Berezin, “Cultural Form and Political Meaning: State-subsidized Theater, Ideology, and the Language of Style in Fascist Italy,” *American Journal of Sociology* 99, no. 5 (1994): 1237–86, 1255.

[11] Eugen Haas, “Affari Esteri—Bert Brecht [Foreign Affairs—Bert Brecht]” in *Il Mare: Supplemento Letterario, 1932–1933*, ed. Stefano Verdino, (Rapallo, Italy: Rapallo Historical Society, 1999), 49–50. My thanks to Giulia Bruna for the translation.

[12] Michael J. Sidnell, *Dances of Death: The Group Theatre of London in the Thirties* (London: Faber, 1984), 50.

[13] Harvey Teres, “Remaking Marxist Criticism: *Partisan Review’s* Eliotic Leftism,” Lucy McDiarmid and Maria DiBattista, eds. *High and Low Modernisms: Literature and Culture, 1889–1939*, ed. Lucy McDiarmid and Maria Dibattista, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 65–84, 67.

[14] W. H. Auden, *The Dance of Death* (London: Faber, November 1933).

[15] For Auden’s translations, see *Bertolt Brecht Plays*, trans. James and Tania Stern with W. H. Auden (London: Methuen, 1961); and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, trans. James and Tania Stern with W. H. Auden (London: Methuen, 1963).

[16] For example, see *Dance of Death* when the Chorus dances in the formation of a ship, 20–21; for photographs of De Valois’s productions at the Festival Theatre in Cambridge (including *Eumenides* [1926], *Richard III* [1928], *Prometheus Bound* [1929], and *Antigone* [1931]), see Richard Allen Cave, *Collaborations: Ninette de Valois and William Butler Yeats* (Alton, UK: Dance Books, 2011), images 8, 9, 10 and 12, n. p.

[17] Susan Jones notes: “This statement arguably stands as a manifesto for the work of both” (*Literature, Modernism, and Dance* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013], 253).

[18] For the multivalency of “meaning” in drama, see Adorno “Trying to Understand *Endgame*,” in *New German Critique* 26 (1982), 119–150, 120.

[19] For images of productions of *Fighting the Waves*, see Richard Allen Cave, *Collaborations: Ninette de Valois and William Butler Yeats* (Alton, UK: Dance Books, 2011).

[20] R. F. Foster, *Yeats: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 2:517.

[21] W. B. Yeats to George Yeats, [October 26, 1934?], in *Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats: InteLex Electronic Edition*, ed. John Kelly (Charlottesville, VA: InteLex, 1992) (Accession 6113).

[22] In his “Notes” to *The Resurrection*, Yeats writes, “after some years came the thought that a man always tried to become his opposite, to become what he would abhor if he did not desire it, and I wasted some three summers and some part of each winter before I had banished the ghost and turned what I had meant for tragedy into a farce: *The Player Queen*” (*Variorum Edition of the Plays of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Richard K. Alspach, [London: Macmillan, 1966], 933).

[23] *The Letters of T. S. Eliot, Volume 7: 1934–1935*, ed. Valerie Eliot and John Haffenden (London: Faber, 2017), 7:375n1. See also Sidnell, *Dances of Death*, 324n32.

[24] Reale Accademia D’Italia, *Convegno di Lettere: Il Teatro Drammatico* (Roma: Reala Accademia D’Italia, 1935-XIII), n. p.

[25] Lino Pertile writes that the Academy, founded in 1927, “offered the highest accolades—and a good salary—to Italian scientists, scholars and artists in exchange for support or even simple acquiescence [to the regime]. Again, many respected intellectuals, with the exclusion of the Crocean hard core, yielded to the temptation. Marinetti, ironically enough, the old arch-enemy of all academies, was one of the first to be appointed” (“Fascism and Literature,” *Rethinking Italian Fascism: Capitalism, Populism, and Culture*, ed. David Forgacs [London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1986], 162–84, 172–73). For Marinetti’s ideas about radio, see Timothy C. Campbell, “Marinetti, *Marconista*: The Futurist Manifesto and the Emergence of Wireless Writing,” in *Broadcasting Modernism*, 51–67. Marinetti, as discussed above, was invested in the idea of theatricality, but—as I demonstrate below—his ideas about the mechanisms of theatricality differed significantly from Pirandello and Yeats. For Marinetti’s early “realization of a new theatricality,” see Puchner, *Stage Fright*, 12.

[26] Translations my own.

[27] For pioneering work on the sociology of theater and its relationship to Fascist Italy, see Mabel Berezin, “Cultural Form and Political Meaning.” For censorship of theater under the regime, see Guido Bonsaver, *Censorship and Literature in Fascist Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 158–68. For a comparison of Marinetti’s, D’Annunzio’s, and Pirandello’s ideas about cinema and technology, see Michael Syrimis, *The Great Black Spider on its Knock-kneed Tripod: Reflections on Cinema in Early Twentieth-century Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2012), 1–23.

[28] The importance of Anglophone drama in Italy in the following decade is illustrated in Antonio Bibbò, “Irish Theatre in

Italy During the Second World War: Translation and Politics," *Modern Italy* 24, no. 1 (2018): 45–61.

[29] Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922–45* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 79 and Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy* (London: University of California, 2000), 148–82. See also Syrimis, *The Great Black Spider*.

[30] Mary Ann Frese Witt, *The Search for Modern Tragedy: Aesthetic Fascism in Italy and France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 2.

[31] See Frese Witt, *Search for Modern Tragedy*, 3–4. The word "program" is used here, since Frese Witt follows historians in illustrating the impossibility of defining a universal fascist "ideology."

[32] For a discussion of these examples, and a qualifying statement about the parallel of Nazi and Soviet theaters, see Puchner, *Stage Fright*, 12. The Volta conference has its parallel on the political left with the Frankfurt School, which sought to bring Marxist critical theory to bear on artistic praxis, especially Walter Benjamin's theorization of tragedy. The crucial difference between the two institutions—and a major difference on which their legacies rely—is that the Frankfurt School was grounded in a body of theoretical writing that superseded any particular national context. Fascism, on the other hand, did not have recourse to such a unifying theory; indeed, the failure of Italian fascism to theorize itself, historians argue, was largely to blame for the difficulty in establishing and disseminating Italian fascism; See for example, Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: a History of Italy since 1796* (London: Penguin, 2008), *passim*.

[33] Anxieties about radio were also prevalent among anti-fascist modernist writers; Cohen, Coyle, and Lewty write, "The vision of radio was unifying, shared by observers as disparate as Virginia Woolf and John Reith, could be and was construed in more threatening terms, as the spectre of social control, or (as with White) the looming homogenization of mass culture. Indeed the vision turns nightmarish when linked to the advent of fascism, as in the proliferating megaphones in the writings of W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood," *Broadcasting Modernism*, 5.

[34] Emil Ludwig, *Talks with Mussolini*, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1933), 211, 213.

[35] For Mussolini's censorship of Pirandello's libretto for the opera *La favola del figlio cambiato* by Gian Francesco Malipiero, see Bonsaver 74–75.

[36] Stanley Weintraub notes that Shaw visited Italy four times between 1926 and 1931, when he believed "what he was told, and what he read in the British press, which repeated Fascist propaganda about an imperial revival;" in 1929, Shaw spoke to the BBC about "Democracy" and declared, "Who can blame Signor Mussolini for describing it as a putrefying corpse?" (Weintraub, "Shaw and the Strongman," *TLS,* July 29, 2011, 13–15, 13).

[37] Patricia Gaborik, "Il Duce's Directors: Art Theaters as Instruments of the Fascist Revolution," in *Vanguard Performance Beyond Left and Right*, ed. Kimberley Jannarone (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015), 37–59, 45. The Abbey Theatre's early history is characterized by debates over what constitutes a "national" drama and exemplifies how the ostensibly "free" National Theatre is politicized by its context. It is important to note that the Italian corporatist state was officially opposed to subsidizing private enterprises, but ten "theatrical projects" received funding between 1927 and 1940, including Pirandello's Art Theater, which was subsidized from the beginning of the regime.

[38] In July 1936, Pirandello was notified that 35 million lire had been allocated for a National Theater. Pirandello's death in December of that year, the Pact of Steel in 1939, and then the Second World War were compounding factors in the failure of an Italian National Theater to materialize (Gaborik, 49).

[39] For a succinct summary of theories of theater's relation to the public sphere, see Puchner, *Stage Fright*, 10–11.

[40] For Tairoff, see Oliver M. Sayler, *The Russian Theatre* (London: Brentano's, 1922), 141.

[41] Walter Starkie, *Luigi Pirandello* (London: Dent, 1926), 134–35.

[42] Jacqueline Hurtley, *Water Starkie: An Odyssey* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2013), 122.

[43] See, for example, "At Parnell's Funeral" in Peter Allt and Russel K. Alspach, *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 541.

[44] Charles I. Armstrong, *Reframing Yeats: Genre, Allusion, History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 63.

[45] Julia Jarcho, *Writing and the Modern Stage: Theater Beyond Drama* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 14.

[46] "Introduction to Fighting the Waves," *Dublin Magazine* (April–June 1932), 7–11, 8.

[47] For a discussion of the notebook's history and contents, see Wayne K. Chapman, "Yeats's White Vellum Notebook, 1930–1933" in *International Yeats Studies* 2, no. 2 (2018): 40–59. I am grateful to Wayne Chapman and Neil Mann for their assistance with the source and the transcription.

[48] White Vellum Notebook, 245, Houghton Library, Harvard.

[49] In "Notes" to *Resurrection*, Yeats writes, "empirical evidence [is] the only evidence that moves the mass of men to-day" (*Variorum*, 934). The unlikely union of right- and left-wing politics is facilitated by Yeats's interpretation of Hegel. In the "Genealogical Tree of Revolution," which accompanies "A Race Philosophy," Yeats writes that Hegel had resolved the antimonies, enabling "a diametrically opposed yet related series of propositions, centring on the materialist/idealist polarity. . . . Fascism, which had once seemed the antithesis of communism, now looked more like its mirror image." Claire Nally summarizes, "For Yeats, both political regimes represent the suppression of individual freedom and thus are to be rejected" ("The Political Occult: Revisiting Fascism, Yeats and 'A Vision,'" in *W. B. Yeats's A Vision: Explications and Contexts*, ed. Mann, Gibson, and Nally, (Clemson, SC: Clemson University Digital Press, 2012), 329–343, 341.

[50] In "Notes" to *Resurrection*, Yeats quotes this verse: "Even our best histories treat men as function. Why must I think the victorious cause the better? Why should Mommsen think the less of Cicero because Caesar beat him? I am satisfied, the Platonic Year in my head, to find but drama. I prefer that the defeated cause should be more vividly described than that which has the advertisement of victory. No battle has been finally won or lost; 'to Garret or Cellar a wheel I send'" (*Variorum*, 935). These "Notes" may indicate that Yeats's interest in O'Donnell arises from his perception of O'Donnell as emblematic of the "defeated cause," namely, Socialist Republicanism.

[51] This distinguishes Yeats's technique from Shaw's, since Shaw insists on the political element, threading it throughout the plays themselves and driving it home in his lengthy prefaces.

[52] This is also demonstrated in Walsh's discussion of Anouilh's *Antigone*, which I cited at the beginning of this essay: when Anouilh's *Antigone* was refashioned for an Allied public in the United States, its translator, Louis Galantière, included a program note to ensure that the audience interpreted the (newly) intended political alignment: Antigone's "triumph" and Creon's tyranny. Importantly, the director of the New York production of Anouilh's *Antigone*, Guthrie McClintic, added a concluding speech from the Chorus that indicted Creon for a blasphemous "political purge . . . a hideous offense against God and man" (quoted in "Allied Antigone," 284). In *Antigone*, too, we see methods of diegetic theater employed to marshal political alignment (see 284–85).

[53] Puchner argues that modern drama learned "the limiting and control of the audience . . . from the closet drama" (*Stage Fright*, 19). Yeats's investment of control in public theater can therefore be interpreted as an extension of his "literary" plays and his drawing-room productions for a counter-public.

[54] Ethel Mannin, *Privileged Spectator* (London: Jarrolds, 1939), 28–29.

[55] Antonin Artaud later theorized, "This whole active, poetic way of visualising stage expression leads us to turn away from present-day theatre's human, psychological meaning and to rediscover a religious, mystical meaning our theatre has forgotten" (*The Theatre and Its Double*, trans. Victor Corti, [London: Calder & Boyers, 1970], 35.