

**‘Walking the boundaries’: Lynne Parker’s unpublished version of  
Federico García Lorca’s *La Casa de Bernarda Alba***

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## **‘Walking the boundaries’: Lynne Parker’s unpublished version of Federico García Lorca’s *La Casa de Bernarda Alba***

Crossing the frontiers looking for inspiration has been part of the Irish literary tradition, and translation and adaptation of continental writers such as Federico García Lorca have played an important role. The dissenting Lorquian voices revive in Ireland to find new meanings for the silences of the original play. This article intends to offer an analysis of an unpublished version of *La Casa de Bernarda Alba*, by Lynne Parker (*The House of Bernarda Alba*, 1993), which has not received critical attention. The study will first offer a revision of the relationship between Irish theatre and continental drama by the end of the twentieth century, to address its internationalization as well as the relationship between the North and the South in relation to theatre scene and the borders; After this, the contexts of (re)creation of the play will be analyzed, with a special interest in the situation of women in society in the Spain of the 1930s and the Belfast of the 1990s. The study of the version will include a revision of the process of Hibernization the Parker carried out from the English version she used as a source. Furthermore, an interview with the playwright will be used to illustrate some points, and the full version included as an annexe. Conclusions aim at recognizing the play as an act of linguistic acculturation and appropriation and as part of the canon of Irish rewritings of Lorca.

Keywords: Federico García Lorca; Lynne Parker; *La Casa de Bernarda Alba*; *The House of Bernarda Alba*; borders; women’s repression.

### **Irish theatre from the 1970s to the 1990s: ‘a Babel of voices’**

There is an apparent paradox at the heart of Irish theatre, which is that it has always been at its most distinctive when it has engaged with international rather than local concerns. (Lonergan 2020a, xi)

The relationship between Irish playwrights and continental writers by the end of the twentieth century has been acknowledged by Irish scholars such as Fintan O’Toole, for whom Irish theatre had then left aside the conflict between tradition and modernity, to be involved with the performance of isolated realities as a representation of the whole, wider

story: 'In the plays after the late 1980s, Ireland as a bounded place has ceased to exist. Africa and Spain seep into the Ballybeg of Lughnasa' (O'Toole 2000, 56). Llewellyn-Jones (2002) also identified a shift, in relation to the cultural identity, and saw the interchanges with other European contexts as possibilities to favor multiculturalism. In addition, this relationship encouraged the abandonment of the English influence since it opened 'a more egalitarian two-way traffic than the past imperial relationship between Britain and Ireland' (Llewellyn-Jones 2002, 143). Leaving the local perspectives aside implies that 'while the plays may have a realistic grounding, the language, characters, action and form tend to invite a shift in register' (Jordan 2010, 7), that might evoke the universality of the performances, but also the intention of the playwright to add the Irish flavour. Therefore, the resulting versions and adaptations make the relationship between the adapted text and its new context explicit using historical references or real events, new spaces to contextualize the characters, or a different, updated language. This facilitates that Irish theatre gains a readership outside the geographical borders, that these borders become irrelevant and that the Irish playwrights speak about their culture through another culture.

The internationalization of Irish theatre can also be addressed in terms of its aim to stage the national abroad. This has been outlined by Sara Keating, who highlights the role of Irish Theatre Institute in 1994, an institution in charge of the International Theatre Exchange, held together with the Dublin Theatre Festival and providing 'an opportunity for Irish producers and artists to engage in dialogue and project development with international producers, and a significant number of Irish companies and theatre artists have toured internationally as a direct result' (Keating 2013, 199). Within this same fashion, the Druid company, founded in 1975 in the city of Galway, toured some of its productions, such as *The Playboy of the Western World*, to New York and Australia in

the 1980s, which allowed the company to acquire an international dimension, and make borders irrelevant when (re)considering the concepts of Irishness, Irish or national boundaries, in a moment when ‘the advent of new technologies, interdependent economies, and increased access to travel in the late twentieth century, physical boundaries of nationhood have become permeable, and this has made national identity an act of self-identification rather than a geographical reality’ (200-201).

Most recently, Patrick Lonergan has addressed this globalization as a process that started in the 1960’s and was prompted by the conviction of some playwrights that Irish theatre ‘could only liberate itself from the past by opening to new influences, especially those from abroad’ (Lonergan 2019, 77). Within this context, in 1966, the date when the Abbey Theatre opened a new theatre, ‘major productions of international dramas such as Lorca’s *Yerma* [...] spoke directly to Irish attitudes to gender, reproduction and the imprisonment of women’ (88). Likewise, from the 1980s onwards, many European classics were adapted in Ireland, albeit, from a gender perspective, the proportion of adaptations is much lower in the case of women writers.<sup>1</sup> Lynne Parker’s version of *La Casa de Bernarda Alba*, written in 1993 and first performed by Charabanc Theatre Company at the Arts Theatre, in Belfast in the same year, belongs to this corpus. However, the text has not been published or received critical attention yet.

The relationship between Belfast and Dublin, in relation to the Irish theatre between the 1970s and the 1990s to frame Parker’s play. This relationship unveils connections between theatre practices across the borders and coincide with Parker’s vision about the irrelevance of the frontiers between the North and the South:

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<sup>1</sup> Lonergan (2019) compiled the data to justify this discrimination: from the 396 English-language translations or adaptations only a 20 per cent were written by Irish women playwrights.

Ireland, as a Republic and a very committed member of the EU, has regarded itself as a European nation before and since the foundation of the state. This is particularly true of our literary and philosophical culture, but also in our struggle for independence, so heavily influenced by the Enlightenment and connections with Europe. We will never disentangle ourselves from Britain culturally, but the political difference is becoming more marked - and in Ireland's favour. Even Unionists in NI are acknowledging the merits of an all-Ireland approach, to COVID-19 and other agricultural and mercantile concerns (and the Ulster mentality is at its heart, mercantile, not idealistic). Brexit has changed everything, along with the liberalizing and secularizing of the Republic. The (for Unionists) unthinkable notion of Irish unification is now firmly on the table. How this is reflected in art remains to be seen; my impression is that artists of all generations, but particularly young theatre makers, are politicized and concerned with global issues such as gender equality, climate change and racial equality which make borders increasingly irrelevant. (Parker 2020, 3)<sup>2</sup>

In 1972 Ireland had become part of the European Union, while the economic and political situation of the country was heavily affected by unemployment and increasing violence; in the same year the Bloody Sunday took place in the North, in the city of Derry. The revolt in the North affected the Republic and 'it would be possible to argue that the Irish theatre in the 1970s was radically politicised' (Morash 2002, 243). The Abbey and the Gate theatres in Dublin, and the Lyric in Belfast became the only subsidised theatres on the island, being the situation of the Lyric particularly complicated due to the political situation that confronted nationalists and unionists. Plays that dealt directly with the conflict, such as Patrick Galvin's *Nightfall to Belfast* (1973) were surrounded by

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<sup>2</sup> References to Parker 2020 belong to the interview that Lynne Parker gave to the author of the article on August 18, 2020. Although some parts of this have been embedded into the article, the whole text has also been included as an annexe.

controversy and violence –a car containing a bomb was left outside the theatre when the play was released.

The Lyric and the Abbey shared some playwrights, such as Sean O’Casey, whose Dublin Trilogy –*The Shadow of a Gunman* (1923), *Juno and the Paycock* (1924) and *The Plough and the Stars* (1926) – depicted the suffering derived from these political troubles. These concerns were also present through the depiction of the lives within the homes and families affected by the political situation, in northern writers such as John Boyd’s *The Flats* (1971), Graham Reid’s *Remembrance* (1984) or Christina Reid’s *Did You Hear the One about the Irishman...?* (1985). These were known as the Trouble Plays and would also be present in the Republic through Brian Friel’s *The Freedom of the City* (1973), set in Derry and performing the events of the Bloody Sunday. The Trouble plays would continue existing through the next two decades. The North and the South’s theatre also coincided on other themes such as the decline of the Church’s power; this was addressed in plays by Tom Murphy in *The Sanctuary Lamp* (1976), Thomas Kilroy in *Talbot’s Box* (1977) or Friel’s *Faith Healer* (1979).

Meanwhile, other amateur companies toured around the island, and they brought ‘a seismic shift that would utterly transform the geography of the Irish theatre’ (Morash 2002, 253). This is the case of Druid, in Galway, and other regional companies such as Rough Magic, closely linked to Lynne Parker. The knowledge and interest towards European theatre was outstanding from the 1980s, when Irish theatre started to include in its repertoire plays from other traditions, as can be seen in Frank McGuinness’ translation of Lorca’s *Yerma* (1987). The early 1980s mark the starting point of a new cultural debate in Ireland, one which questioned traditional oppositions such as Republican/Unionist or rural/urban, reflected in journals such as *The Crane Bag* or *Theatre Ireland*; issues such as the re-interpretation of the the ‘Fifth Province’ as ‘an imaginary place somewhere

beyond (and yet intrinsically part of) the historical four provinces of Ireland' (Morash 2002, 256), making reference to the irrelevance of borders. The most acknowledged critics of the time participated, including Seamus Deane, Declan Kiberd, Luke Gibbons or Fintan O'Toole. Concurrently, old plays emerged in the form of revisionist readings that favoured cultural internationalisation, although traditional thoughts on certain social issues were still undefeatable –in the Republic, for instance, both the referendum on abortion (1983), which was passed and recognised the equal rights to life of the unborn, and divorce (1986), which failed on its attempt to remove the ban, were against the rights of women, while in the North 'Evangelical churches of Ulster were as sturdy as ever' (Morash 2002, 258). Tom Murphy's *The Gigli Concert* (1983) or Frank McGuinness *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme* (1985), about the importance of accepting difference, exemplify this tendency. The plays precede the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement (1985), that fostered reconciliation from both sides of the frontier.

Community theatre emerges to also reflect this reality and a strong belief in the need of diversity: women's companies, such as Charabanc, which commissioned Parker's version of *La Casa de Bernarda Alba*, were born. Funded in Belfast in 1983 by five actresses –Marie Jones, Eleanor Methven, Maureen McAuley, Carol Scanlan and Brenda Winter– Charabanc intended to talk about women's lives but escaped any sort of labelling which could alienate them:

There is no doubt that we were feminists in the sense that we were presenting women, and very strong women, who always formed the centre of the plays, which were about empowering women. That's feminism but at the time when Charabanc started [...] there were a lot of English theatre companies, trendy, middle-class and presenting feminism, and calling themselves feminists. It could be alienating, and we were trying to encourage people to go to the theatre. (Jones in Foley 2003, 30)

The company were against traditional roles of women in Ireland and in Irish theatre and, although they reflected the Northern Irish society, their works contain issues that can be extended to the situation of women in the Republic too. In *Lay Up Your Ends* (1983) they portray the lives of Belfast women in the mills and in *Owl Delph and False Teeth* (1984) they address the role of women as subject to their men; *Now You're Talkin'* (1985) depicts women's concerns in terms of their aspirations and class differences and *The Girls in the Big Picture* (1986) talks about generations of women that go through changes but keep the feeling of unfulfilled lives, repeating the stories of preceding generations and living under a matriarchal control –as it happens in Lorca's *La Casa de Bernarda Alba*. Charabanc ceased to be in 1995 and although critics such as Imelda Foley suggest that from the 1990s 'the company's identity [...] started to dissolve. There was a sense of floundering in the choice of material: [...] Federico García Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba*' (Foley 2003, 41), I contend this: The adaptation of Lynne Parker for the company, which Foley was making reference to, constitutes a representation of a group of women from the rural community who struggle for their agency and try unsuccessfully to gain power by escaping a matriarchal dictatorship, and this sounds very much like a Charabanc show.

The 1990s saw the emergence of Marina Carr in the Republic, as one of the most relevant contemporary Irish playwrights deeply involved in the representation of Irish women: In *The Mai* (1994), the home is no longer a safe place, women struggle to coexist with a society that diminished their rights to be(come) individuals and there is not much hope for future generations neither. In conclusion, "Instead of looking like a small stunted European anomaly, Ireland in the 1990s looked like a paradigm of a certain form of postmodernity, where the local had global significance, and where relations between margins and centres are in constant flux." (Morash 2002, 265), and this was reflected in

Irish theatre across borders, through the representation of the changes in the society as whole and through ‘a Babel of voices’ (Morash 2002, 251).

### **The contexts of (re)creation: Bernarda and the Derry Mother**

I was interested in a closed and repressive society, with which, having grown up in Northern Ireland, I was familiar. But that was a practical response to doing the play as commissioned by a Northern Irish company, Charabanc. I was looking for correlations between a society that was –certainly at that stage– dominated by repressive Protestantism and a poetic Spanish work dominated by mores of Catholicism. (Parker 2020, 2)

As Parker notices, Lorca’s *La Casa de Bernarda Alba* (1936) has as one of its most important themes the effects of Catholicism on the lives of women: it addresses the situation of a mother, Bernarda Alba, and her five daughters –Angustias, Magdalena, Amelia, Martirio and Adela– in the rural Spain of the 1930s, where they struggle to coexist with a community that asphyxiates them. The institution of family is questioned through its depiction as a force that imposes long periods of mourning as an obligation for women or a way of dressing –they are forced to wear black; this virtually makes them prisoners within the walls of their homes, where they have had to become obedient domestic servants. Furthermore, religion clamps down on their sexual freedom and states that being a woman and having power are mutually exclusive: women are expected to remain silent, chaste, voiceless and unable to fight injustices. Lorca was depicting the political situation he was living: the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera and the conservative government which followed drawn from the extreme right. This is reflected in the play mainly through the character of Bernarda, described as ‘the personification of repression’ (Edwards 2003: 193), a heartless mother, a representation of the rich landowners who ruled and exploited farmers and the embodiment of extreme Catholicism and repression. For Parker, Lorca ‘understands repression, and women, and thwarted lust, and anger, and

the absurd comedy of living. Those are Irish but also universal preoccupations' (Parker 2020, 6). Lorca was blatant as regards his intentions and the realism and veracity of his play: 'El poeta advierte que estos tres actos tienen la intención de un documental fotográfico'<sup>3</sup> (García Lorca 2013, 138).

There is a close relationship between this context, where Lorca's play was originally created, and the space where Parker brought it back to life, especially as regards the situation of women. For Parker: 'In the 1980s Ireland was in deep recession, impoverished, still in thrall to the Church and yes, very inward looking and resentful of its colonial past' (Parker 2020, 5). The political situation, marked by The Troubles –1960s to 1998–, and the establishment of the Anglo-Irish Agreement (1985), affected women's agency. The laws related to their rights reflected this: abortion was illegal, except in those cases where the life of the mother was at serious risk, and divorce was difficult to obtain. The sectarian division, on the other side, marked their identity since the institution of family became essential, albeit asphyxiating, as a representation of the community and the achievement of the common good: 'If there is one element of life in Northern Ireland which is presumed to be common across the sectarian divide, it is the importance of family and kin relations, in both urban and rural settings' (McLaughlin 1993, 553). Religion played a similar role in this as 'the sectarian polarization of Catholic and Protestant communities, which is both the cause and the result of it, has had unpleasant consequences for women' (Roulston 1989, 219). Both the Loyalists and the republicans 'endorse the role of wives/mothers in furthering the cause of the community and political movement, thereby underscoring women's association with the domestic sphere'

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<sup>3</sup> 'The poet declares that these three acts are intended as a photographic record.'

(Stapleton and Wilson 2014, 2073). Therefore, traditional households in Northern Ireland were formed by big families where women were essential, mainly as caring mothers and wives. Family values were most important, and women fought for their preservation, while their concerns about personal and individual character were silenced, a 'whispered concern' (Kilmurray 1987, 180), which matches Lorquian atmosphere.

The figure of the Derry Mother, established by sociologists, is identified in this context: it both perpetuates previous stereotypes of women in Ireland as representations of the cultural identity, and embodies a strong and silent woman for whom 'martyrdom ... was a worthy goal in itself' (McLaughlin 1993, 560). This matrilineage, attached to the figure of the mother, encouraged the notions of decorum and reputation: women were not expected to enjoy their sexuality since "'respectability" involves nonsexual morality and qualities such as decency, cleanliness and thrift' (562) and female solidarity was impeded. This was confirmed by some political campaigns, which fostered the image of women as the guardians of family life and 'in the interests of the community rather than as fighters for women's benefit alone' (Roulston 1989, 222).

The space of the home, where women served the family, was a common setting for women since the time of the Ulster Literary Theatre (ULT) and 'the nationalist construct of women was vigorously promoted as that of home-maker and spiritual counsellor to the young' (Foley 2003, 14). The unionists also obstructed the development of feminism in Northern Ireland since they expected a 'espousal of loyalty to the men of Ulster' (24). This caused what Foley calls a panorama of patriarchy which was fought by the voicing of women's angry and silenced consciousness through organizations such as The Peace Movement (1976), the Northern Ireland Women's Rights Movement (1976) or the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC) (1996), which intended to improve the situation of women in the North by introducing their voice in the politics.

The image below, borrowed from the The Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum, in Belfast, illustrates this role of women in the 1990s as well as the vision of their participation in the conflict as a supreme sacrifice [*Figure 1 following this*]:

Figure 1: List of republican women who lost their lives because of the sectarian conflicts. Their deaths are significantly evoked as “The Supreme Sacrifice”, referring to their endurance. Photo: author of the article. Reproduced with permission of the museum.

### **Lynne Parker’s *The House of Bernarda Alba*: ‘the folly of repression’**

I wanted to look at how a family of women in a repressive household would begin to chafe at the constraints placed upon them –that was both a metaphorical and actual state in the Northern Ireland of the time, but again it has a universal application. (Parker 2020, 7)

Lynne Parker is co-founder and artistic director of Rough Magic, where she directed over thirty productions, and associate artist of Charabanc. Other companies in Ireland where she worked include The National Theatre, the Gate, or Druid. In the UK she collaborated with the Bush Theatre, the Old Vic or the Royal Shakespeare. She has directed a considerable number of contemporary international works, in addition to classics and new Irish writing.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> According to Playography Ireland database Parker has so far directed 37 plays. Amongst these are *A Mug’s Game* (1987), an adaptation of Moliere’s *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, the new version by Arthur Riordan of *Peer Gynt* (2011), a version of *Phaedra* by Hilary Fannin and Ellen Cranitch (2010) or the work of the new voices in Irish theatre, such as *Melt* (2017), by Shane Mac an Bhaird.

Although *The House of Bernarda Alba* was commissioned by Charabanc, Parker's work is mainly associated with Rough Magic. She established the company together with Declan Hughes –they had worked together as theatre makers while they were students at Trinity College: 'there was no other option if you wanted to work in theatre. The Abbey had just sort of closed down its director training programme and there was no opening at all at the Gate' (Parker 2001, 393). Rough premiered plays of authors such as Caryl Churchill, Howard Brenton or David Mamet for the first time in Ireland, to let the international influences permeate into the Irish scene, which had been, so far, inward looking:

We actually started not with Irish plays so much as with international contemporary work, which wasn't being done by anyone else, such as Caryl Churchill, David Mamet, Wallace Shawn, Howard Brenton, Timberlake Wertenbaker. All of this early work was in English, which a decision on our part to acknowledge our primal influences and international perspective through British TV and American movies. (Parker 2020, 3)

A distinctive Irish theatre was born: for Parker 'there is a recognizable Rough magic show' (395); the company has evolved to become one of the leading independent companies in Ireland and Parker co-founded in 2001 the 'Seek out, Encourage, Enable, Develop and Stage' (SEEDS) Program to support emerging artists and to 'repopulate Irish theatre and make sure young artists had a gateway into the business, in what had become –economically– a very challenging environment' (Parker 2020, 6). This has contributed to the promising present and future of the company.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> A new generation of young playwrights have collaborated with the company with their plays and adaptations, as can be seen in the volume edited by Patrick Lonergan in 2020 which contains Hilary Fannin and Ellen Cranitch's *Phaedra*, Arthur Riordan's *Peer Gynt*, Morna

Parker's *The House of Bernarda Alba* was written in 1993 and perceived as "amazingly at home in Ireland" (Sullivan 1994, 137). The playwright would be following other Irish playwrights who, before her, had rewritten Lorca's plays, especially his rural trilogy with women protagonists: *Bodas de Sangre* (1931), *Yerma* (1934) and *La Casa de Bernarda Alba* (1936), as seen in the compilation that follows, where *La Casa de Bernarda Alba* stands out as the play which has been revised more often [Table 1 following this]:

Table 1: Contemporary Irish translations, versions and adaptations of Lorca's plays.

In order to explore Parker's version, it is useful to address the different categories that can be established to analyse Irish approaches to continental drama. For Kosok (2004) a first type would be a translation, where no major changes are introduced in the new play; sometimes, Irish writers have local audiences in mind and, thus, they adapt their versions since they consider the English translations did not take this into account; in these cases the playwrights 'employ Irish speech patterns and Irish expressions, sometimes even Gaelic words in order to place them in an Irish cultural context' (Kosok 2004, 43). This technique, which is known as linguistic acculturation, tries to free the original play from the linguistic boundaries imposed by English translations. Other versions can be considered as a translocation to Ireland, where the playwright makes a 'skilful and highly successful attempt at accommodating the play in Ireland which pervades the whole text' (45); the playwright does this for instance, by changing the

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Regan's *The House Keeper*, Sonya Kelly's *How to Keep an Allien* and Shane Mac an Bhaird's *Melt*.

original location to an Irish one, making references to the process of colonialism and using Irish words. Finally, when the process includes major changes, such as the use of the theme of the original play to evoke Irish social realities, or when it involves a reduction in the number of characters, critics consider the resulting text to be a new play. In the case of Lynne Parker, she intended to put the Lorquian text closer to the Irish audience using the language, ‘replacing poetry with colloquial Irishisms’ (Fricker 2003). The comparative analysis carried out will be between Lynne Parker’s play and an English translation<sup>6</sup> due to several reasons; first, Parker used a translation to write her version – ‘I don’t read Spanish, so I read several versions in translation and then adapted the content as I heard it into an Ulster idiom’ (Parker 2020, 3); secondly, this analysis will serve to illustrate the (post)colonial relationship between England and Ireland, which Parker considers as an act of reinvention of ‘the theatrical use of that language and colonized the coloniser’ (Parker 2020, 2). Thirdly, this method allows to address the relationship between rewriting, adaptation and translation, and to understand that the translator or adapter for performance is imbued on an act which:

is not just the act of re-producing a given text by shepherding it across the so-called third space; it is about infusing that re-production (no matter how that is conceived) with the richness of a process that is simultaneously alive to the contexts of the original text [...] and responsive to the cognitive and affective processing of a new audience. (Johnston 2013, 373)

Through her version Parker is imbued in an artistic process that transcends the

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<sup>6</sup> The translation used has been Penguin’s *The house of Bernarda Alba and other plays* (1992), by Michael Dewell and Carmen Zapata.

relationship between source and influence and enters the process of adaptation and appropriation as recently defined by Sanders (2015): Parker adapts the English translation of *La Casa de Bernarda Alba* and she appropriates the meanings of Lorca to connect them to the existing Irish context of reproduction. Through this, the associations and relationships established between the two texts allow to draw differences and similarities and appreciate the rewritten undertaken by the playwright, as well as her intention to highlight some themes, characters or ideas. Thus, adaptation becomes a political act through which the reworked text has an impact on the spectators or readers, reinforcing societal issues of debate at the time of reproduction.

Parker hibernized the English translation through different strategies; for the playwright, one of the biggest difficulties was ‘the fact that Northern Irish speech, which is spare and Nordic in essence, is very different from the lyricism and fire of Lorca’s Spanish. Different music, different idiom’ (Parker 2020, 2). The names of the characters, for instance, add an Irish tone and a sense of humour. The character of Poncia is renamed in this version as Punch –‘Punch is an Irish surname and I thought it described her heartiness and toughness’ (Parker 2020, 8)–, Pepe el Romano is James Shannon and Angustias becomes Angustura Bitters or Old Bitters –‘just a pun on the cocktail ingredient, it’s a joke’ (Parker 2020, 8). Priests are called Holy Joes. The language is more colloquial to match the new context and the reality the play tries to evoke now, the Belfast of the 1990s: the maid uses the expression ‘give us’ (Parker 1993, 1) and Bernarda’s mother call her ‘Ba! Baba!’ (1). References to the poor are changed from *dogs* in the English text to “street vermin” (4) in Parker’s, and the way they respond is also changed. When the maid refuses to give the beggar the leftovers, in the Lorquian translation into English she answers back ‘They always give them to me’ (García Lorca 1992, 122), while in Parker’s she responds “I have me rights’ (Parker 1993, 4). This can

also be seen in the reference to the poor by Bernarda ‘The poor are like animals; they seem to be made of other substances.’ (García Lorca 1992, 123) versus ‘The lower orders are like brutes. They have a different class of soul’ (Parker 1993, 5). Other examples would be the use of *beau* or *boyo* or *swain* instead of *suitor* or *fiancé*, *prattle* instead of *criticism* or a *cad* for a despicable man. The ‘She’s so proud she puts a blindfold on herself’ (García Lorca 1992, 161) becomes ‘She’s so hoity toity she puts her own blinkers on’ (Parker 1993, 50), using colloquialisms to update the new setting. The Irish tone is also achieved through the shift in cultural references; the ‘plate of garbanzos’<sup>7</sup> as a mouth-watering dish becomes a ‘pint glass’ (5), and the ‘damned town without a river, this town of wells’ (García Lorca 1992, 125) is in Belfast the town ‘in the midst of the fetid bog’ (Parker 1993, 8), adding the meaning of the bog as a liminal and magical space that encapsulates Irish identity. Men, harvesters, are called *Hooligans* and in the bar or pub they play the fiddle, rather than the accordion.

The Lorquian themes related to women’s repression are emphasized in Parker. The lack of solidarity between Bernarda and her daughters is also seen in the Irish version through the relationship between Poncia and Bernarda. Punch is even more critical with her boss, and criticizes openly her classism and harshness ‘If her ladyship sees a flick of dust she’ll pull out the few hairs I have left’ (Parker 1993, 2). Bernarda is renamed by Parker as ‘She-who-must-be-obeyed’ (2), and her excessive religiosity is highlighted: the English ‘She doesn’t want them to see her in her domain’ (García Lorca 1992, 120), that makes reference to Bernarda’s reluctance to share her home with her in-laws, becomes in Parker ‘she doesn’t want them to defile her inner sanctum’ (Parker 1993, 2). Within this

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<sup>7</sup> ‘a plate of chickpeas’.

same fashion, Punch changes ‘May she have a horrible pain -like nails stuck in her eyes’ (García Lorca 1992, 120) for ‘May she rot in hell’ (Parker 1993, 3).

The lack of agency for women is rewritten in the Irish version: if in Lorca’s translation ‘To be born a woman is the worst punishment’ (García Lorca 1992, 144), for Parker ‘Womanhood is a curse, a wretched curse’ (Parker 1993, 31). Within this same fashion, the denounce that ‘not even our eyes belong to us.’ (García Lorca 1992, 144) is extended to ‘Even our minds aren’t our own’ (Parker 1993, 31). Adela, the embodiment of the fight and resistance against that repression, is more explicit in the new Irish context, and she rephrases some of the Lorquian symbols: the corral is for her ‘the boundary walls’ (28). The unspeakable is spoken in Parker and the caring of Adela for Pepe el Romano grows into the love of Adela for Shannon. Parker stresses the difference between Bernarda’s position, as a woman who lives within the limitations of the patriarchal system, and the positioning of her daughters, a new generation who fights to go over those limits, especially Adela. The Irish author adds the line ‘She [Adela] sees things in her way and you [the rest of the sisters] in yours’ (48), which was not in the English translation and marks her distinction. When Adela finally confronts her mother and sisters, especially Martirio, and is determined to abandon the house and live with Shannon, her original statement that ‘The shouting in this prison is over’ (García Lorca 1992, 167), is changed for ‘The reign of terror is at the end’ (Parker 1993, 57), accentuating the end of their suffering, as well as the possibility of freedom.

The character of Bernarda is constructed in Parker to embody the figure of the abuser who is cold-hearted and aware of her stronger position: ‘I was really trying to show that bullies are frequently effective as much through manipulation as through tyranny –I’ve observed some very charming thugs in my time’ (Parker 2020. 9); this can be seen in the lines she adds in the first encounter of Bernarda and Magdalena, where the

Irish director includes the sentence ‘Very softy she [Bernarda] strokes her cheek. Lena stiffens’ (Parker 1993, 8), to increase the malevolence of her mistreatment to her daughters –in Lorca Bernarda ‘bangs her cane’ (García Lorca 1992, 125), instead. Another addition happens when Bernarda recriminates Angustias for looking at men on her father’s funeral. Parker adds to ‘Who were you looking at?’ (127) the lines ‘(GENTLY) Who, darling?’ (Parker 1993, 11) and later ‘All sweet innocence hm?’ (11), to immediately afterwards striking her with the cane. The mother is, consequently, more devilish: she pretends to be a caring protector to win her daughters’ confidence and destroys it straightaway. Parker makes sure Bernarda’s intentions and her position as a repressor are well-understood: her answer to Poncia/Punch in act three ‘In this house there is no question of “yes” or “no”. my vigilance takes care of that’ (García Lorca 1992, 160) is extended to ‘There is no choice in this house between yes or no. No “Free will”. My vigilance sees to that’ (Parker 1993, 49), where the *No free will* stands out as one of the main themes in the Irish version.

The negative effects of repression are more blatant in Parker. When Martirio refers to the endless repetition of destinies for women she changes the word *wife* for *victim*, synonymizing the two concepts. Furthermore, Parker inserts sometimes longer statements which clarify the meanings hidden in Lorca. This is the case of the moment when Lena describes the house where they live and adds that she is ‘walking the boundaries’ (Parker 1993, 14), intensifying the image of a space full of barriers and frontiers for women. In the same scene, her childhood memories include in the Irish version that by then ‘the house felt bigger –less of a prison’ (14), putting into words what Lorca had only suggested.

## Conclusions

*The House of Bernarda Alba* by Lynne Parker must be acknowledged as part of the canon of Irish rewritings of Lorca. The situation of Irish theatre from the 1970s to the 1990s is marked by the interest towards the international, other European contexts and the possibility to speak about the Irish culture through other cultures. The relationship between Belfast and Dublin, the North and the South, in terms of their theatre(s) unveils connections related to the depiction of themes that reflect the social realities that affected each other; amongst these, the situation of women in relation to politics, their lives within their families and communities and their broken aspirations stand out as a major preoccupation.

This is confirmed through the examination of the contexts of (re)creation and the figures of Bernarda and the Derry Mother. Bernarda Alba lived in the rural Spain of the 1930s and represents a society where Catholicism and repression affected the lives of her daughters, doomed to live within the boundaries of their home as prisoners. Parker finds correlations between this society and the effects of repressive Protestantism in the North of Ireland. Women were here constrained again by the familial duties for whose preservation they should fight, even if this implied the loss of their individual aspirations, as exemplified through the figure of the sacrificial Derry Mother.

Parker's play is a representation of the folly of repression and its effects on a family of women in Northern Ireland that has universal purpose. Considering Kosok's categories, this version can be defined as a process of linguistic acculturation in the sense that it tries to liberate the source play from the boundaries imposed by the English translation, which Parker used. The playwright is not just reproducing a given text but being immersed in a process of appropriation, as understood by Sanders, to connect Lorca to the Irish context of reproduction. The process of Hibernization of the English

translation can be grasped through the analysis of the language and style: names of characters are rewritten to add a sense of humor and an Irish flavor; the language is made more colloquial to make it closer to contemporary audience, and some cultural references are added with the same purpose. As regards the universal Lorquian themes, these are preserved and emphasized by Parker: the lack of female solidarity and agency, the impossibility to fight repression and to achieve freedom are highlighted through the rewriting of Adela and Bernarda to state that women continue 'walking the boundaries.'

### **Annexe: Interview with Lynne Parker**

#### **About Irish contemporary theatre ....**

**MGCH:** *The relationship between Irish contemporary theatre and continental drama has been acknowledged by Irish scholars. For Fintan O'Toole (2000) the Irish theatre of the end of the twentieth century has left aside the conflict between tradition and modernity that had happened before to get involved with the performance of isolated realities as a symbol or metaphor of the whole story. By 2002 Llewellyn-Jones examined Irish theatre in relation to its cultural identity and redefined it as an expression of multiculturalism, especially in those interchanges with other European contexts, which has left behind the English influence to favour 'a more egalitarian two-way traffic than the past imperial relationship between Britain and Ireland' (Llewellyn-Jones 2002, 143). For Eamonn Jordan, in 2010, this abandonment of the local perspectives implies that 'while the plays may have a realistic grounding, the language, characters, action and form tend to invite a shift in register' (Jordan 2010, 7). Thus, different modes of representation appear and the relationship between the text and its context is made explicit by historical references, real events or the spaces used in the plays to contextualize the characters as well as the language used. Do you agree with these visions? What would you add to define the current scenario?*

**LP:** I would agree to an extent that particularly in the last 20 years European theatre has influenced directors and other makers; and also audiences. But in the work of John B Keane, Brian Friel, Stewart Parker and others you see clear examples of non-naturalism before 1990 –and you only have to go to Yeats to find a poetic, imagistic imagination at the very founding of the Irish National Theatre (to say nothing of Synge and O’Casey). And the move away from so-called ‘literary’ or text-based theatre of the 90s and 00s has shifted recently –words are important again, and in theatre they enjoy a primacy that film rarely offers. As to our imperial relationship with Britain, we may have adopted the language, but in writers such as Sheridan, Boucicault, Wilde, Shaw, Beckett we reinvented the theatrical use of that language and colonised the coloniser.

**MGCH:** *The title of the 2020 IASIL conference –where I was going to deliver a paper<sup>8</sup> on your adaptation– was ‘Creative borders’ and its aim to reflect on the concept of boundaries as creative spaces where identities are (re)defined, critical discourses generated, and literary works created. Your adaptation can be considered, from this perspective, as a creative encounter of two cultures or as an act of speaking through another culture, as McGuinness said about his own adaptation of Lorca’s La Casa de Bernarda Alba. Were the borders or frontiers something you were trying to fight through this adaptation?*

**LP:** Not explicitly –I was interested in a closed and repressive society, with which, having grown up in Northern Ireland, I was familiar. But that was a practical response to doing the play as commissioned by a Northern Irish company, Charabanc. I was looking for correlations between a society that was –certainly at that stage– dominated by repressive Protestantism and a poetic Spanish work dominated by mores of Catholicism.

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<sup>8</sup> The Conference has been postponed to July 2021 due to COVID-19 sanitary emergency.

And one of the biggest challenges was the fact that Northern Irish speech, which is spare and Nordic in essence, is very different from the lyricism and fire of Lorca's Spanish. Different music, different idiom.

**MGCH:** *In the current context of Brexit –and now of COVID19-- how do you think borders between Ireland's north and south will affect literary expressions in general and theatre in particular? What about the borders with the rest of Europe?*

**LP:** Ireland, as a Republic and a very committed member of the EU, has regarded itself as a European nation before and since the foundation of the state. This is particularly true of our literary and philosophical culture, but also in our struggle for independence, so heavily influenced by the Enlightenment and connections with Europe. We will never disentangle ourselves from Britain culturally, but the political difference is becoming more marked - and in Ireland's favour. Even Unionists in NI are acknowledging the merits of an all-Ireland approach, to COVID-19 and other agricultural and mercantile concerns (and the Ulster mentality is at its heart, mercantile, not idealistic). Brexit has changed everything, along with the liberalizing and secularizing of the Republic. The (for Unionists) unthinkable notion of Irish unification is now firmly on the table. How this is reflected in art remains to be seen; my impression is that artists of all generations, but particularly young theatre makers, are politicized and concerned with global issues such as gender equality, climate change and racial equality which make borders increasingly irrelevant.

**About your career...**

**MGCH:** *What type of plays did you first stage with Rough Magic? What was that moved you to do this and how did Lorca's work fit within this intention?*

**LP:** We actually started not with Irish plays so much as with international contemporary work, which wasn't being done by anyone else, such as Caryl Churchill, David Mamet, Wallace Shawn, Howard Brenton, Timberlake Wertenbaker. All of this early work was in English, which a decision on our part to acknowledge our primal influences and international perspective through British TV and American movies. It was Charabanc Theatre Company, based in Belfast, who asked me to do Lorca, and that was their initiative, propelled by their desire to move from making their own work into addressing major world classics.

**MGCH:** *Patrick Lonergan mentions that the distinctive character of Rough Magic was very much related to your 'ability to bring clarity to the relationship between Ireland and the outside world' (Lonergan 2019, 97) Was turning to Lorca part of this intention?*

**LP:** Again, the focus on Lorca came from Charabanc, but clarity is a key value in anything I do. With a great, universal work you don't have to try too hard to deliver its relevance to the audience; nonetheless, I felt that a setting that was recognizable to an Irish audience –and appropriate to Irish weather (rather bleaker than that of Spain) –would help establish the complexity of the relationships within the house and let the situation breathe.

**MGCH:** *You have been asked about the foundation of Rough Magic before, but I am interested in your view of it from 2020. What were the common interests that encouraged its foundation? What were your expectations? Have these been fulfilled? Would a similar process be possible nowadays?*

**LP:** The following is part of a document I prepared for our Board, hope you don't mind me quoting myself. I think we have done much of what we set out to do, but there is more to come. Like all artists and organisations we have to rise to the challenge posed

by the pandemic and other grave matters. I think a long-term collective like Rough Magic would be very hard to establish at present, which is why we seek to involve new artists in all our future projects.

The collective that was formed as Rough Magic in Players' Theatre in 1984 was a creative ensemble of seven. Over three decades the people have changed but the personality of the company has stayed constant. The common focus of the group was great theatre writing, delivered with subversive wit by a first-class ensemble. From the start the company was gender balanced and egalitarian.

Rough Magic adjusted the focus of Irish theatre in the 1980's, introducing audiences to major contemporary international writers. The 1990's saw the company commission plays from a new generation of Irish writers and forge links with producers of new writing in the UK and beyond. In 2001 we launched SEEDS, the most comprehensive development programme in Irish theatre. For fifteen years it has been a leader in the development of new theatre artists through its pioneering programmes. We continue to support individual artists and emerging companies while producing award-winning productions from both the classic canon and contemporary Irish writers.

By 2010, Rough Magic, with its base in the centre of Dublin, had become a crucial hub for theatre-makers, reflecting the pluralist nature of the company, with its emphasis on collective vision and diversity within the ensemble.

*MGCH: Rough Magic has recently been acknowledged as having had a 'transformational impact on Irish theatre' (Lonergan 2019, 3), mainly due to its openness to international theatre, and you yourself have said that Irish theatre was before Rough 'inward looking'. What was that caused this absence of international theatre on the Irish stage? Is the internationality still a distinctive feature of Rough? Are European playwrights present in its repertoire nowadays?*

**LP:** In the 1980s Ireland was in deep recession, impoverished, still in thrall to the Church and yes, very inward looking and resentful of its colonial past. The whole culture has changed in the last thirty years, as evidenced by the Same-Sex Marriage and Abortion referendums, but also by the influx of global technology, a multi-ethnic population and a confident generation that travels regularly and communicates through social media. The country has changed, and so has its theatre. Hopefully we were both conduits and symptoms of that change. We continue to do international work where possible, some of which is in translation –e.g. Jon Fosse, Michel Tremblay, Laura Ruohonen.

**MGCH:** *You co-founded in 2001 the SEEDS Programme within the context of Rough. Can you explain the principles of it and how has it worked so far?*

**LP:** SEEDS began as an initiative to support emerging writers and expanded to include all theatre disciplines; directors, designers of all kinds, producers and production managers. SEEDS is an acronym –seek out, encourage, enable, develop and stage. It was intended to repopulate Irish theatre and make sure young artists had a gateway into the business, in what had become –economically– a very challenging environment.

**MGCH:** *In Irish Drama and Theatre since 1950 (2019), Patrick Lonergan explains the concept of theatre-maker as those who are ‘free to move more fluidly between the roles of acting, directing and playwriting (among other areas)’ (Lonergan 2019, 7). Do you feel identified with this role?*

**LP:** I’m not sure I would describe myself in this way, although I do make theatre. Directing seems to me to use all the various skills I have or have acquired –visual, musical, literary– but I am neither an actor nor a writer.

### **About you and Lorca...**

**MGCH:** *What is Irish about Lorca?*

**LP:** Nothing really, he's gloriously Spanish. He understands repression, and women, and thwarted lust, and anger, and the absurd comedy of living. Those are Irish but also universal preoccupations.

**MGCH:** *Which text did you use to write your adaptation? Did you read Lorca in Spanish or you used a translation?*

**LP:** I don't read Spanish, so I read several versions in translation and then adapted the content as I heard it into an Ulster idiom.

**MGCH:** *As a director you have said you are 'the liaison between the writer and the audience, via the acting ensemble' (Parker 2001, 400). Which connections were you able to establish with Lorca in the process of translating/adapting him?*

**LP:** Hopefully a sense of immediacy for the audience –and a text the actors could play unselfconsciously and authentically.

**MGCH:** *Lorca's La Casa de Bernarda Alba (1936) addresses the situation of women in the Spain of the 1930s from different perspectives. Lorca's intention to write about the reality that surrounded him is clear when he indicated that 'El poeta advierte que estos tres actos tienen la intención de un documental fotográfico –the poet intends that these three acts are taken as a photographic documentary–.' (García Lorca 2013, 138). The subtitle of his play is 'Drama de mujeres en los pueblos de España –women's drama in the villages of Spain–' (137). Did you have a similar intention with your adaptation, i.e., did you intend to make a reflection on the position of women in Northern Ireland of the 90's?*

**LP:** I wanted to look at how a family of women in a repressive household would begin to chafe at the constraints placed upon them –that was both a metaphorical and actual state in the Northern Ireland of the time, but again it has a universal application.

**MGCH:** *Is The House of Bernarda Alba the only play you have adapted? Why?*

**LP:** It's the only play I've adapted and I've never written any other play. My uncle was the great writer Stewart Parker. I could never live up to him. But I do feel entirely fulfilled as a director, so I'll leave play writing to people who burn to do it.

**MGCH:** *For McGuinness, who also adapted this play, it was mainly about love as the force that triggered the tragic ending. What is for you the main theme?*

**LP:** The folly of repression.

**MGCH:** *The names of the characters you use have been slightly changed; you named Poncia Punch, Angustias is Angustura Bitters and you use abbreviations for the rest of characters, e.g., Bernarda is called Ber. Was this answering to any intention?*

**LP:** The abbreviations were merely shorthand. Punch is an Irish surname and I thought it described her heartiness and toughness. It had nothing to do with the magazine. Angustura Bitters is just a pun on the cocktail ingredient, it's a joke.

**MGCH:** *As I started reading your adaptation and comparing it to an English translation –I used the translation by M. Dewell and C. Zapata. (1992)– I noticed that you had added some words, and you eliminated some others... Did you follow any sort of pattern for this?*

**LP:** To be honest, I can't remember, it's such a long time ago. It was all about getting a natural flow while keeping the spirit of the dialogue.

**MGCH:** *About the character of Bernarda, it seems that, at some point, you added some lines to emphasize her harshness with her daughters; this can be seen in the first encounter of Bernarda and Magdalena 'Very softy she [Bernarda] strokes her cheek. Lena stiffens.' (Parker 1993, 8) instead of the 'She bangs her cane' (García Lorca 1992, 125) in the English version, or when she recriminates Angustias for looking at men on her father's funeral: the English version 'Who were you looking at?' (127) is followed in*

*your adaptation by '(GENTLY) Who, darling?' (Parker 1993, 11). it seems that you are trying o emphasize Bernarda's evilness...*

**LP:** I was really trying to show that bullies are frequently effective as much through manipulation as through tyranny –I've observed some very charming thugs in my time. It also gave the actress a more varied palette.

**MGCH:** *It is my assumption that your adaptation emphasizes the negative effects of the patriarchal system. Was this part of the process of (re)writing Lorca forward for you?*

**LP:** Not just the patriarchy, any repressive regime. I suppose I was trying to reinforce and clarify but it might have been stating the obvious.

**MGCH:** *How was the play received by the Irish audience in Belfast? What about the critics?*

**LP:** I think it went down very well, and I don't read critics during the show so I'm not sure what they made of it (Charabanc may have press records).

**MGCH:** *Why wasn't the script published?*

**LP:** The Lorca estate was quite restrictive and the negotiations were handled by a lawyer, who didn't seem to me to be the right person to understand what I was attempting. I felt at the time that the final version only partly represented what I was trying to do, so I wasn't motivated to publish it.

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