

# Active Speech

Critical Perspectives on Teresa Deevy

Edited by  
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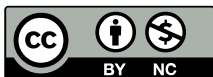




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Cover design: Jeevanjot Kaur Nagpal

Cover image: Photo by Jed Niezgoda ([www.jedniezgoda.com](http://www.jedniezgoda.com)). © All rights reserved. Suzanne Savage and Lianne Quigley performing in Teresa Deevy's *Possession* which was created and directed by Amanda Coogan in collaboration with Lianne Quigley, Alvean Jones, Linda Buckley, Dublin Theatre of the Deaf, and Cork Deaf Community Choir. Creative producer Lynette Moran produced *Possession* at the Project Arts Centre 21–24 February 2024, while Susan Holland produced the production at the Granary Theatre for the Cork Midsummer Festival performances, 21–23 June 2024. *Possession* was funded as part of ART:2023: A Decade of Centenaries Collaboration (the Arts Council and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport, and Media).

### 3. TSI: Teresa Deevy, or What Do We Know about *[The] Reapers*?

*Shelley Troupe*

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On 18 March 1930, the Abbey Theatre premiered *[The] Reapers*, the first of Teresa Deevy's plays to receive a professional production.<sup>1</sup> It is a very good example of the ephemerality of the theatre because to consider the question 'What do we know about *[The] Reapers*?' entails exploring the surviving textual and production evidence. To locate these materials, the researcher must begin a Theatre Studies Investigation (TSI) of Teresa Deevy's three-act play to discover fragments from which we can piece together a hazy picture of the Abbey's production. At present, no known copy of the script has survived and the large-scale efforts at the University of Galway to digitise the Abbey Theatre's archives have revealed only the production programme, a copy of which is also available in Maynooth University's Teresa Deevy Archive. So, what do we know about *[The] Reapers*? At the time of writing this piece in autumn 2022, clues relating to Deevy's play comprise reviews of the play's premiere, academic writing on the play, Deevy's thoughts quoted in that writing, and the Abbey's production programme. From these sources and W.B. Yeats's dramaturgical feedback on a draft of the script, we glean some interesting observations about *[The] Reapers* such as the interpretation of its title and the play's plot, the Abbey Theatre's production and reception of it, and possible influences on Deevy and her work. Because of the fragmentary nature of available evidence,

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1 *[The] Reapers*, directed by Lennox Robinson, the Abbey Theatre, Dublin 18–23 March 1930. The production ran from Tuesday to Sunday evening and included a Saturday matinee.

this chapter does not offer an extensive interrogation of the play or production; rather, it presents responses to and mini-arguments about the surviving archival materials. New evidence uncovered after the final draft was completed is addressed in the coda to this essay and provides some interesting findings.

## The Title

The question about the inclusion of the definitive article in the play's title is reminiscent of the academic debate about the location of the altar in ancient Greek theatre. Much prevailing discourse situates the altar in the middle of the orchestra; however, using archaeological evidence, Clifford Ashby theorises that it might have been at the front, along the side, could have been portable, or may not have been located in the orchestra at all.<sup>2</sup> Without a copy of Deevy's script, present-day scholars cannot conclude the title of Deevy's play with absolute certainty, and the use of the play's title in academic work reveals the frailty of theatre historiography when physical evidence is not available.

In her article 'Resisting Power and Direction', Úna Kealy cogently argues that the title is *Reapers* as John Jordan referred to a copy of the script in an essay written for *Irish University Review* in the mid-1950s; Jordan also contended in a later interview that he confirmed the play's title with Deevy herself.<sup>3</sup> In a letter to Lennox Robinson, Deevy's mentor and producer of the Abbey's production of the play, Yeats also refers to the play as '*Reapers*'.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, the physical remnants of the play—the Abbey's programme and existing reviews—refer to the work as '*The Reapers*'. The only other academic known to have consulted a copy of the play, Nathamal Sahal, uses '*The Reapers*' in his analysis of the work and includes a letter from Deevy who he quotes as saying: '....For the

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2 Clifford Ashby, *Classical Greek Theatre: New Views of an Old Subject* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1999), pp. 42–61.

3 Úna Kealy, 'Resisting Power and Direction: *The King of Spain's Daughter* by Teresa Deevy as a Feminist Call to Action', *Estudios Irlandeses*, 15 (2020), 178–192 (p. 188, fn. 2).

4 Illinois, Morris Library (ML), Lennox Robinson Papers, W.B. Yeats to Lennox Robinson, 9 March 1929, MS 091 1/5, pp. 1–3 (p. 1). Special thanks to Dayna Killen for generously sharing Yeats's letter to advance this scholarship on Deevy's work.

subject of *The Reapers* blaming the sowers is a very real one, in Ireland'.<sup>5</sup> In response to Sahal's inclusion of the definitive article and citing Willy Maley's criticism of Sahal's misunderstanding of Deevy's plays, Kealy chooses to refer to the play as '*Reapers*'.<sup>6</sup> Further, Temple Lane uses '*Reapers*' in a 1946 article for the *Dublin Magazine*.<sup>7</sup>

The question of the title of Deevy's play as *Reapers* or *The Reapers* seems pedantic and unimportant, particularly since 'the' is such a miniscule word. However, this uncertainty showcases the significance, not only of the word, generally, but of how we understand these few remaining fragments of Deevy's play. With the definite article, *The Reapers* might refer to a specific set of reapers—ostensibly the microcosm of characters in the play. As *Reapers*, however, we can broaden our interpretation of the information left behind in short quotes from the play and from critical responses to it to consider Deevy's reapers as those living in the macrocosm of Ireland. Yeats's dramaturgical note that 'the allusions to the censorship should go and all general statements about religion' points up Deevy's interest in interrogating contemporary issues facing Ireland and, perhaps, foreshadows her exclusion from the Abbey under Ernest Blythe's direction later in her career.<sup>8</sup> To draw attention to this subtle difference in meaning—and without the original typescript, or a copy of it as evidence—I refer to the play as [*The*] *Reapers*. Crucially, physical evidence itself can be flawed. In this instance, say a copy of the script is unearthed in the future, but is a draft of the play rather than a copy of the script as it was presented at the Abbey Theatre in March 1930. We would have no way of knowing what had been changed for production. Even so, a draft would push forward our analysis of [*The*] *Reapers*. In essence, *something* is better than *nothing*.

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5 Nathamal Sahal, *Sixty Years of Realistic Irish Drama* (Bombay: Macmillan, 1971), p. 135. This quotation also points up the fragility of theatre studies when faced with an absence of evidence as Sahal's archive—if it exists—is not available for consultation.

6 Willy Maley, "'She Done Coriolanus at the Convent': Empowerment and Entrapment in Teresa Deevy's *In Search of Valour*", *Irish University Review*, 49.2 (2019), 356–369.

7 Temple Lane, 'The Dramatic Art of Teresa Deevy', *Dublin Magazine*, 21.4 (1946), 35–42.

8 ML, MS 091 1/5.

## The Play

Without Deevy's script, recounting the play's narrative hinges on critical and academic reports of it. It is, perhaps, significant that a clear-cut plot does not emerge from the reviews since, as one reviewer notes: 'I am under no obligation to spoil an evening's pleasure by retelling the plot where in any event the plot is nothing [...]'.<sup>9</sup> That 'the plot is nothing' was a sentiment echoed in other reviews.<sup>10</sup> Sahal concurs with reviewers' findings on [*The*] *Reapers* noting that '[t]he plot is very meagre', but goes on to argue that the play 'reveals the fatalistic tendency of the Irish people' and includes Deevy's quote that was mentioned above.<sup>11</sup> An argument regarding the play's narrative is found in Jordan's 1955 assessment of Deevy's work: 'This is a play about Catholic "Big Houses", Ballinrea House and Glenbeg House, and the psychological conflict between the two Doherty families which occupy them'.<sup>12</sup> Writing in *Women's Personality Parade*, published in June 1948, R.M. Fox observes that the play 'had a middle-class setting. It dealt with business and family troubles and how these affected various people'.<sup>13</sup> All of these descriptions point to a play in which a group of middle-class, Irish

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9 Digital Repository of Ireland (DRI), The Teresa Deevy Archive, C.P.C., 'Drama Notes: The Reapers', <https://doi.org/10.7486/DRI.95944b571>. The review has a handwritten annotation that the excerpt is published in the *Irish Statesman*.

10 See, for example, the *Irish Times*: 'What it was that she [Deevy] wanted to say got so entangled in her method of saying it, that it failed completely to emerge' and *Dublin Opinion*: 'What the play lacks is a thing on which many present-day critics have agreed not to insist, and that is a plot, or rather, a good plot'. DRI, The Teresa Deevy Archive, "'The Reapers": First Production at the Abbey Theatre', PP/6/178(3), <https://doi.org/10.7486/DRI.5999vb302>, and DRI, The Teresa Deevy Archive, 'Stage and Screen', *Dublin Opinion*, PP/6/178(4), <https://doi.org/10.7486/DRI.5999vb32m>

11 Sahal, *Sixty Years*, p. 135 and p. 136; and Deevy in *ibid.*, p. 135, respectively.

12 John Jordan, 'Teresa Deevy: An Introduction', *Irish University Review* 1.8 (1956), 13–26 (p. 14). This information provides an opportunity for future research as Ballinrea House and Glenbeg House are both actual dwellings. Located in Ballinrea, Carrigaline, County Cork, there is little to no information available about Ballinrea House, which could be a renovated estate house or a newly-built house. Glenbeg House, in Glenbeg, County Waterford, though, is a restored Jacobean Manor included in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. If both houses existed when Deevy was writing the play, it would be interesting to study their history and if they were occupied by families with the same surname.

13 Dublin, National Library of Ireland (NLI), Papers of Patricia Lynch and R.M. Fox, R.M. Fox, 'Theatre Personalities, 15—Teresa Deevy', June 1948, MS 40,377/2, pp. 11–12, p. 12.

Catholics are not only affected by the past, but are at odds with each other in the present. These ideas are interesting in terms of the wider sociopolitical context of the play's setting, 1923.

The Abbey's production programme specifies that the action of the play's first and second acts occur on a 'summer afternoon in 1923' and a 'few hours later', while Act Three takes place '[t]hree weeks later'.<sup>14</sup> 1923 is a significant year in Irish history, marking as it does the end of the Irish Civil War. Following on from the Irish War of Independence (1919–1921), the Anglo-Irish Treaty partitioning Saorstát Éireann (the Irish Free State, now known as the Republic of Ireland) from Northern Ireland was signed in London on 6 December 1921. The Irish Civil War began on 28 June 1922 when Anti-Treaty forces were attacked by Pro-Treaty forces in Dublin. Anti-Treaty forces ended the Civil War on 24 May 1923. Setting the play just shortly after the conclusion of the Civil War suggests that [*The*] *Reapers* draws attention to the conflict through Deevy's representation of the two 'big houses' that are owned by people with the same surname. Further, the *Evening Herald* notes that the character 'Ted, a budding patriot [i.e., a member of the IRA (the Irish Republican Army)]' who 'thinks the best way to stop it [the sale of the family mill] is to get some of his pals of the gun game to kidnap the family solicitor. His ruse is frustrated by the arrival of a posse of Saorstat soldiers [sic]'.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps, then, [*The*] *Reapers* is a delicate critique of a nation at war with itself. That the play was presented on the same evening as W.B. Yeats and Lady Gregory's *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*, a staple of Irish nationalist theatre in which a young man leaves his family to fight for Ireland's freedom, provides a unique contrast to this reading of [*The*] *Reapers*. Shaun Richards notes that women writers working in post-Independent Ireland were limited by their circumstances, but 'capable of providing significant insights into the social realities and restrictions which determined both the writers and their characters'.<sup>16</sup>

14 Maynooth, Russell Library (RL), The Teresa Deevy Archive, 'The Reapers', production programme, PP/6/42.

15 DRI, The Teresa Deevy Archive, "'The Reapers": Work of New Woman Dramatist at the Abbey', PP/6/178(5), <https://doi.org/10.7486/DRI.95944b635>. A handwritten annotation notes the publication as the *Evening Herald*.

16 Shaun Richards, "'Suffocated in the Green Flag": The Drama of Teresa Deevy and 1930s Ireland', *Literature and History*, 4.1 (1995), 65–80 (p. 65). Thanks to Shaun Richards for providing me with a copy of his article.

Although it is not possible to support this argument without specific textual evidence, Deevy's subsequent work, such as *The King of Spain's Daughter* (1935) and *Katie Roche* (1936), which Richards interrogates, present discreet assessments of women's position in post-independent Ireland, indicating the playwright's ability to use the theatre as a place from which to reevaluate contemporary issues.

## The Performance

Detailed descriptions of set, lighting, or costume designs for [*The*] *Reapers* are not known to exist except for one grainy newsprint pre-production photograph. Researchers have no prompt copy of the script, which might contain clues indicating actors' blocking or other production information such as cues for light and sound. Neither box office reports—determining the size of the audience and related income—nor correspondence regarding Deevy's contract or payment is available for analysis.<sup>17</sup> There is, however, some evidence in the reviews and pre-production material that assists in recouping a little about the production. At least two reviews reveal some evidence regarding set and costume for [*The*] *Reapers*. The *Irish Times* remarks that '[p]eople go in and out a delightfully-set French window, some dressed for tennis, and at least one like a caricature of one of the Misses Bennett, from Jane Austen's novel [*Pride and Prejudice*]'.<sup>18</sup> *Dublin Opinion* adds that:

There was...a nice-looking boy in flannels, and there was a tennis-racket, and a modern girl and a fine setting of the sitting-room of a country house. That was a very good effect the producer got with those large sunlit glass doors.<sup>19</sup>

These statements certainly support Jordan's and Fox's claims that the play gives a picture of middle-class families who had leisure time to play tennis near a 'big house'. On 17 March 1930, the day before the play's premiere, the *Irish Independent* published a rehearsal photograph of the character Ted Doherty's arrest by Saorstát Éireann soldiers in the

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17 See Kealy, 'Resisting Power and Direction', pp. 186–88, as an example of the importance of information found in stage management scripts to providing a well-rounded analysis.

18 DRI, PP/6/178(3).

19 DRI, PP/6/178(4).

sitting room of one of the 'big houses'.<sup>20</sup> Although the reproduction of the photograph is grainy and the French doors are not readily apparent, the photo suggests a sitting room with paintings on the walls and a fireplace similar to those found in what Jordan calls 'Catholic "big houses"'.<sup>21</sup> The juxtaposition of a woman character who the *Irish Times* remarks was dressed 'like a caricature of one of the Misses Bennett from Jane Austen's novel' with another woman character that another review described as 'the flapper daughter', perhaps suggests a disconnection between older and younger generations, or in keeping with Deevy's penchant for discreet criticism of contemporary Ireland, between an Ireland repressed under Britain's governance contrasted with a new Irish Free State.<sup>22</sup> The seemingly middle-class set and costuming may also point to those who influenced Deevy as a writer.

## The Influences

As Deevy was a new Abbey playwright and [*The*] *Reapers* was a premiere, it is inevitable that the critical reception attempts to tease out the influences on her writing, particularly since [*The*] *Reapers* is not typical of Abbey productions of the late 1920s and early 1930s as it depicts a prosperous middle-class, Catholic 'big house' rather than a peasant's thatched cottage. Well-known critic A.J. (Con) Leventhal saw the play and remarked in a letter to Deevy: 'If there was error in the play then it erred on the side of reality.... You gave us an honest to God [illegible, but possibly 'downright'] picture of Irish futility'.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that the *Irish Times* identified Deevy as 'a student of Tchechov [sic]', while a critic from the *Waterford News and Star* saw the play as 'an attempt to adapt the Tchekov [sic] method to a study of Irish life', identifying comparisons between [*The*] *Reapers* and *The Cherry Orchard*, while another critic found 'the same type of dialogue as one finds in [Chekhov's] *The Three Sisters*'.<sup>24</sup> Disrupting

20 'New Abbey Play', *Irish Independent*, 17 March 1930, p. 3.

21 Jordan, 'Teresa Deevy', p. 14.

22 DRI, PP/6/178(3); DRI, PP/6/178(5). The review has a handwritten annotation that the publication is the *Evening Herald*.

23 DRI, The Teresa Deevy Archive, C.J. Leventhal to Teresa Deevy, 22 March 1930, PP/6/6(1-2) (p. 2).

24 DRI, PP/6/178(3); DRI, The Teresa Deevy Archive, 'Waterford Lady's First Play', *Waterford News and Star*, 21 March 1930, PP/6/178(87), <https://doi.org/10.7486/>

the Chekhovian observations, the *Dublin Magazine* observed that Deevy 'exploited quite unconsciously in the last act Moliere's comedy-trick of a repeated phrase'.<sup>25</sup>

While this evidence supports the assertion that Deevy's work was directly influenced by Anton Chekhov, it is more likely that [*The Reapers*] responds to George Bernard Shaw's *Heartbreak House*.<sup>26</sup> Both Eibhear Walshe and Sahal note that, when Deevy attended the theatre in London to help her practice lip-reading, she saw plays by Shaw and Chekhov.<sup>27</sup> Although most critics who mention inspiration specifically note Chekhov's influence on Deevy's dramaturgy, R.M. Fox's overview of Deevy's work supports Shaw as a major influence on Deevy's work:

In London—where she went for treatment—she studied lip-reading which, incidentally, she does not find so easy to practice in Ireland. She saw many plays there. She read Bernard Shaw's description of his *Heartbreak House* as a play of English life in the Russian manner. She wondered then if she could write plays of Irish life in the Irish manner, for she did not care about the vapid productions which cluttered the London stage with their silly triangle situations and sex themes.<sup>28</sup>

The full title of Shaw's 1919 play is *Heartbreak House, A Fantasia in the Russian Manner on English Themes*. The 'Russian manner' of the title refers to Shaw's adaptation of Chekhov's style, which, when taking Fox's observations into account, suggests that Deevy was more interested in adapting—and perhaps subverting—Chekhov's work in an Irish context to which the critic from the *Waterford News and Star* alludes above.<sup>29</sup> If a copy of Deevy's play is ever re-discovered, a comparative analysis of *Heartbreak House* and [*The Reapers*] would greatly advance Deevy scholarship particularly with regard to Deevy's early work.

Of even more importance, perhaps, is the end of Fox's paragraph above, which notes: 'In Ireland, [Deevy] thought, women are concerned with the running of business and farms. They face all kinds of problems.

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DRI.95944b71v; DRI, The Teresa Deevy Archive, Wiswayo, 'The Reapers: A Play in Three Acts', *The Irish Sketch*, 1 April 1930, <https://doi.org/10.7486/DRI.95944b724>

25 Lane, 'The Dramatic Art of Teresa Deevy', p. 35.

26 George Bernard Shaw, *Heartbreak House: A Fantasia in the Russian Manner on English Themes* (London: Constable, 1919).

27 Eibhear Walsh, 'Ineffable Longings: The Dramas of Teresa Deevy', in *Selected Plays of Irish Playwright Teresa Deevy, 1894-1963*, ed. by Eibhear Walshe (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003), pp. 1-16 (p. 5); Sahal, *Sixty Years*, p. 134.

28 NLI, MS 40,377/2, p. 11.

29 DRI, PP/6/178(87).

Why can't all this be put on stage?'.<sup>30</sup> This information helps us pinpoint Deevy's theatrical experiences in London as the motivator for her work—not only as a playwright, but, as a playwright committed to representing onstage the concerns of Irish women. Indeed, if a copy of the script is ever found, an analysis of the play's women characters could illuminate the role of them in 'the running of [the] business' of the mill, particularly the sale of it, which the reviews indicate is at the heart of the play's conflict.

Yeats observes that [*The*] *Reapers* is 'very much indebted' to Lennox Robinson's *The White Blackbird* (1925) and notes that 'a young author must imitate somebody and it is better for him [sic] to imitate you than some other writier [sic] further away'; Yeats also declares: 'I don't see any Chekov [sic], except perhaps just the idea of futility and the hating to sell'.<sup>31</sup> A short synopsis of Robinson's play on *Playography Ireland* notes that 'William, the eldest son in the Naynoe household was left everything by his late father. He therefore has financial control over his mother, stepfather and step siblings, who detest him for meddling in their lives'.<sup>32</sup> Control—financial and otherwise—is certainly a theme that recurs in Deevy's oeuvre. Returning to the microcosm/macrocosm aspect of Deevy's play addressed earlier, a draft or final copy of the script would advance an analysis of both Deevy's and Robinson's plays to help us determine how, if at all, they interrogate power struggles on local, national, and—perhaps—international levels.

## The Programme

There is also an additional fragment of source material that can augment this Theatre Studies Investigation of Deevy's [*The*] *Reapers*: the Abbey Theatre's production programme. Can any conclusions be drawn regarding the Abbey actors that were cast in both *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* and [*The*] *Reapers*? For example, how might Arthur Shields's work as an actor in both plays *and* his work as the Abbey's Assistant Producer

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30 NLL, PP/6/178(87), p. 11.

31 ML, MS 091 1/5, p. 2. With the dearth of women playwrights at this time, it is little wonder Yeats referred to the author as 'him'. Yeats's assumption may also suggest Robinson gave him a draft of the play without the author's name attached.

32 'The White Blackbird', *Playography Ireland*.

and Stage Manager impact upon an interpretation of [*The*] *Reapers*, and what do his multiple roles and responsibilities suggest about the Abbey Theatre's production process? At what point of the evening were the selections of Beethoven, Wagner, and J.F. Larchet performed—during *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*, [*The*] *Reapers*, or the 'interval of twelve minutes' between the plays—and did the music reflect, resonate, or detract from the conflicts or concerns of the play?<sup>33</sup>

## The Inconclusive Conclusion

Overall, the fragmentary nature of available information related to [*The*] *Reapers* raises more questions than it answers about the play and the Abbey Theatre's production of it. In particular, the absence of the final script—or even slivers of drafts—impedes rigorous analysis of the play. Even so, the small traces of evidence, the breadcrumbs, that are left behind provide us with enough information to make mini-arguments about aspects of the play, the production, Deevy's influences, and provide a number of avenues for future study.

## Coda, September 2023

New evidence discovered between the time of writing and the time of final editing in autumn 2023 gives readers the opportunity to see academic discourse in action as these breadcrumbs refine some of the mini-arguments discussed above. In November 2022, Raidió Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ) aired *Tribute: The Teresa Deevy Story*, a documentary in which performance artist Amanda Coogan traces Deevy's artistic journey as part of Coogan's own creative endeavour to stage a version of Deevy's unproduced ballet, *Possession*.<sup>34</sup> Two pieces of evidence in RTÉ's programme help progress this chapter's scholarship on [*The*] *Reapers*: (1) a quote from the original typescript of an autobiographical note Deevy wrote for inclusion in the American publication *Catholic*

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33 RL, PP/6/42.

34 *Tribute: The Teresa Deevy Story* was produced by Bernadine Carraher for Mind the Gap Films for RTÉ, directed by Claire Dix, shot by Andrew Cummins, and edited by Cara Holmes. Claire Dix, *Tribute: The Teresa Deevy Story*, online documentary, RTÉ Player, 10 November 2022.

*Authors: Contemporary Biographical Sketches*,<sup>35</sup> and (2) an additional pre-production photo of [*The*] *Reapers* with a handwritten annotation stating that it was published in the *Evening Herald* on 17 March 1930. (It was, in fact, published in the 18 March edition.)<sup>36</sup> These sources allow us to draw some conclusions about the mini-arguments presented above, particularly the questions about the play's title and Deevy's influences.

The autobiographical note puts an end to the question of the play's title: '*Reapers*, I had called my piece'.<sup>37</sup> This definitive title underscores the mini-argument above that the play examines the macrocosm of the country in the early days of the post-Irish Civil War period, a point I will return to shortly.

Deevy also cements the thought that Shaw's work was her inspiration—if not for *Reapers*, for a precursory draft of it:

One night returning from the theatre I felt very strongly the urge to put the sort of life we live in Ireland into a play. The piece, we had just seen, depicted English life, and I felt how very different these are from the people I know. About this time one of the plays I read was *Heartbreak House*. Shaw had called it a fantasy in the Russian manner about English themes, and I said proudly to myself my play will be 'a fantasy in the Russian manner on Irish themes'. But there was a long way to go. I returned to Ireland—this was in 1919, and Ireland faced the Terror. My play was pushed to the background [...].<sup>38</sup>

The Terror, undoubtedly, references the Irish War of Independence and the Irish Civil War mentioned above and, possibly, the guerrilla warfare tactics used during them including ambushes, assassinations, arson—and kidnappings. Set on the precipice of the First World War, *Heartbreak House* shows, according to Shaw, 'cultured, leisured Europe before the war' underscoring the occupants' obliviousness to the tragedy awaiting the country.<sup>39</sup> Set in the immediate aftermath of two back-to-back wars, *Reapers* brings the conflict *into* the home with the presumed IRA member Ted, his kidnapping attempt, and the arrival of the Saorstát

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35 Matthew Hoehn, 'Teresa Deevy 1894—', in *Catholic Authors: Contemporary Biographical Sketches*, ed. by Matthew Hoehn (Newark, NJ: St Mary's Abbey, 1952), pp. 121–122 (p. 121).

36 Dix, *Tribute*, timestamp: 9:30.

37 Hoehn, 'Teresa Deevy', p. 121.

38 Dix, *Tribute*, timestamp: 6:41.

39 Shaw, *Heartbreak House*.

Éireann soldiers, which was depicted in the photo mentioned above. These events, combined with the sale of the family-owned mill, and the possibility of two feuding families, showcase Deevy's inclination for providing critical insight into contemporary Irish life.

The second piece of evidence, the *Evening Herald's* pre-production photograph, is different from, and of much better quality than, the *Irish Independent's* photo. Showing four characters—two women and two men—startled as one man draws a gun on the other, it presumably represents the moment when Ted attempts kidnapping the family solicitor. The *Irish Independent* photo includes the edge of the stage's apron, giving us some clues about the space. Although there is still no sign of the French doors mentioned in the reviews, the wood-panelled walls, adorned with two large paintings, highlight the middle-class setting. The set is cramped with the table surrounded by at least three chairs, an armchair, and the four actors. So, was the stage very small, or was it split into two separate performance areas depicting a room in each of the houses? We also see some of the footlights used to light the stage, which appear to contribute to the gunman's shadow, enhancing the ominous incident.

Reverting to Deevy's autobiographical note gives us her perspective on some of the reviews of her first professional production, which:

[...] declared that the play showed 'promise'—Promise! No word could have seemed more deadly to me!....This had seemed to me the outcome of my life's work, and they talked of 'promise'! It took some time to realize that this was the start of a journey, not the road's end, as I had thought.<sup>40</sup>

She goes on to express her gratitude to her mentor Lennox Robinson and 'others to whose wise words, whether spoken to me, or written, I owe much', and ends by paraphrasing a J.M. Synge quote she found inspiring: '[D]rama, to be worth the name, must nourish imagination'.<sup>41</sup> Likewise, Deevy's work has nourished our imaginations as we tease out the fragmented history of her play *Reapers* through this TSI.

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40 Hoehn, 'Teresa Deevy', p. 122.

41 Ibid.

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