

# Active Speech

Critical Perspectives on Teresa Deevy

Edited by  
Úna Kealy and Kate McCarthy





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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).

## 6. ‘I Must Just Make an Opening Elsewhere’: Teresa Deevy’s Involvement with Studio Theatre Practice, 1934–1958<sup>1</sup>

Úna Kealy and Kate McCarthy

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An established narrative of Teresa Deevy’s career is that, after six productions of her plays at the Abbey during the 1930s, her three-act play *Wife to James Whelan* was ‘rejected’ for an Abbey production in 1942, an event that, thereafter, significantly reduced her ambition as a dramatist for the theatre, directing her towards writing and adapting existing work for radio.<sup>2</sup> This chapter argues that Deevy was interested

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- 1 The authors acknowledge the contribution and support of Deirdre Power and the Power family in providing access to the Cheasty Archive in advance of its conservation by Maynooth University; SETU Research Connexions and the School of Humanities for funding support; and colleagues who attended the Women in Irish Writing in the 1930s conference in the University of Almería in 2023. We acknowledge the support of the Letters from the Margins project team in 2015: Helen Byrne, Ricky Croke, Orla Foley, Lorna Grant, Jean Kealy, Dayna Killen, Aisling O’Meara, Frances Ryan, Niamh Ryan, Mary Smart, Shelley Troupe, and Annette Wyse. The project was further supported by David Fallon, Aisling O’Byrne, Norberta O’Gorman, and Lorna Grant who took part in the Letters from the Margins WIT Summer Research Project in 2019. The quotation in the title is taken from an undated letter fragment sent by Teresa Deevy to Florence Hackett, catalogued within the Hackett Archive alongside two other pages of a separate and complete letter itemised as number ‘33’ within the Florence Hackett Archive, Trinity College Dublin, Ms. 10722. The authors also acknowledge the editorial advice of the anonymous reviewers of the *Active Speech* manuscript.
  - 2 Caoilfhionn Ní Bheacháin, ‘The Seeds Beneath the Snow’: Resignation and Resistance in Teresa Deevy’s *Wife to James Whelan*, in *Irish Women Writers: New Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Elke D’hoker, Raphaël Ingelbien, and Hedwig Schwall (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), pp. 91–109; Eibhear Walshe, ‘Ineffable Longings’, in *Selected Plays of Irish Playwright Teresa Deevy, 1894–1963*, ed. by Eibhear Walshe (Lewiston: Edward Mellen Press, 2003), pp. 9–10.

and enthusiastic in radio drama as a medium for her work as early as the mid-1930s. We argue that, although Deevy was disappointed at what she correctly perceived of as the loss of the Abbey mainstage as a production venue for her work post 1940, she was not uncritical of the Abbey's managerial and production practices during the 1930s and 1940s. Rather than being a final terminus within her career, we argue that the 1940s was a decade when Deevy pursued radio *and* theatre productions of her work with energetic ambition. In order to establish the importance and relevance of Deevy's interest and involvement in studio theatre practice in Dublin in the 1940s and 1950s, we contextualise and chart the evolution of that milieu in the early decades of the twentieth century. We then consider how, in the mid-1930s, Deevy sought theatre productions of her work outside the Abbey in Dublin, London, Waterford, and New York, and radio productions of her work in Ireland and Britain. Building on recent analysis of Deevy's correspondence<sup>3</sup> and Irish studio theatre practice during the 1950s,<sup>4</sup> we analyse excerpts from letters, conserved

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- 3 Kate McCarthy and Úna Kealy, 'Writing from the Margins: Re-framing Teresa Deevy's Archive and Her Correspondence with James Cheasty c.1952–1962', *Irish University Review*, 52.2 (2022), 322–340. As documents composed by Hackett and Cheasty are absent from the Deevy, Cheasty, and Hackett archives, analysis here considers only documents authored by Deevy.
- 4 Christopher Fitz-Simon, *The Boys* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1994); Gus Smith and Des Hickey, *John B: The Real Keane* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1992); Gerard Whelan with Carolyn Swift, *Spiked: Church-State Intrigue and The Rose Tattoo* (Dublin: New Island, 2002); Christopher Morash, *A History of Irish Theatre 1601–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Ciara O'Farrell, *Louis D'Alton and the Abbey Theatre* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004); Ian Walsh, *Experimental Theatre After W.B. Yeats* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2012); Siobhán O'Gorman, 'Scenographic Interactions: 1950's Ireland and Dublin's Pike Theatre', *Irish Theatre International*, 3.1 (2014), 25–42; Siobhán O'Gorman, "'Hers and His": Carolyn Swift, Alan Simpson, and Collective Creation at Dublin's Pike Theatre', in *Women, Collective Creation, and Devised Performance: The Rise of Women Theatre Artists in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*, ed. by Kathryn Mederos Syssoyeva and Scott Proudfit (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 129–144; Lionel Pilkington, 'The Little Theatres of the 1950s', in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish Theatre*, ed. by Nicholas Grene and Chris Morash (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 286–303; Christopher Collins, 'Other Theatres', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Irish Theatre and Performance*, ed. by Eamonn Jordan and Eric Weitz (London: Palgrave, 2018), pp. 221–232; Ondřej Pilný, Ruud van den Beuken, and Ian R. Walsh (eds), *Cultural Convergence: The Dublin Gate Theatre, 1929–1960* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021); Chris Morash, "'Somehow It Is Not The Same": Irish Theatre and Tradition', in *Irish Literature in Transition, 1940–1980*, ed. by Eve Patten (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 134–149; Paige Reynolds, 'Theatrical Ireland: New Routes from the Abbey Theatre to the Gate Theatre', in *Irish Literature in Transition*,

in/by Trinity College Dublin and Maynooth University, written by Teresa Deevy to her friends and fellow playwrights Florence Hackett and James Cheasty. This correspondence powerfully evidences that Deevy worked hard during the 1940s and 1950s, and with some success, to make stage productions of her work outside the Abbey a reality. The chapter concludes that, while Deevy is primarily recalled as an Abbey dramatist—albeit one who was ousted—and that she did write 'mainly, and successfully, for radio' during the 1940s, her interest, ambition, and involvement in theatre practice extended throughout her career.<sup>5</sup> Research into Deevy's radio dramas and broadcast performances demands separate and detailed scholarship and is not attempted here.<sup>6</sup> Rather, our analysis considers Deevy's ambition for her theatre work outside the Abbey Theatre and expands scholarship outwards from select institutions and literary texts, which are, in the main, the focus of Irish theatre scholarship of that period.

## Development of Studio Theatre Practice in Ireland

Studio theatres were inspired by the late 1800s and early 1900s European tradition of art house theatre that promoted creative experimentation in an attempt, as James Joyce put it, to 'protest against the sterility and falsehood of the modern stage'.<sup>7</sup> The phenomenon of the little, pocket, or studio theatre was international and was characterised by innovation that challenged conventions of genre, performance style, and dramaturgy: theatremakers were encouraged to experiment and innovate for audiences who expected and welcomed artistic risk-taking and accepted material compromises. The 'Foreword' to the first issue of *Theatre Arts Monthly*, published in America, outlines the mission of

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1880–1940, ed. by Marjorie Elizabeth Howes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 55–72; Maura Laverty, *The Plays of Maura Laverty: Liffey Lane, Tolka Row, A Tree in the Crescent*, ed. by Cathy Leeney and Deirdre McFeely (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2023).

- 5 John Jordan, 'Teresa Deevy: An Introduction', *Irish University Review*, 1.8 (1956), 13–26 (p. 13).
- 6 Some of this work has been initiated by Emily Bloom. Emily Bloom, 'Looking In: Teresa Deevy, Deafness, and Radio', *Modernism/Modernity*, 30.2 (2023), 279–299.
- 7 James Joyce (1901), 'The Day of the Rabblement', in *Handbook of the Irish Revival: An Anthology of Irish Cultural and Political Writings 1891–1922*, ed. by Declan Kiberd and P.J. Mathews (Dublin: Abbey Theatre Press, 2015), pp. 164–165 (p. 164).

the magazine as an attempt 'to help conserve and develop creative [sic] impulse in the American theatre', describing the little theatre movement as artist-centric and committed to 'establishing its own experimental playhouses, and small but appreciative audiences'.<sup>8</sup>

Studio, little, or pocket theatres, sometimes configured as dramatic societies, became a feature of the Irish theatre landscape in the late 1800s offering Irish artists and audiences alternative theatrical experiences to contemporaneous popular, large-scale, commercially-driven productions.<sup>9</sup> Like European and American studio theatre practice, studio theatres in Ireland curated artistic programmes inspired by, and borrowing from, avant-garde theatre practice, producing work that was political, experimental, unknown or, as yet, unproduced in Ireland. Operating as private members' clubs, studio theatres and dramatic societies evaded the need for theatre licences by including club membership within the ticket price. Studio theatre club tickets could be purchased either from production venues (typically spaces or rooms in community, disused, or derelict spaces), or from local businesses. The Irish Literary Theatre, the Ormond Dramatic Society, Inghinidhe na hÉireann, the National Theatre Society, the Irish Language Theatre of Ireland, and the Irish National Theatre Society can be regarded as key organisations that contributed significantly to early studio theatre activity in Ireland.<sup>10</sup> Máire Nic Shiubhlaigh positions the National Theatre Society as one of 'a number' of emerging small theatre groups in Ireland and England, while Annie Horniman describes the Abbey as 'the first of the many "little theatres" which are sprinkled all over the world'.<sup>11</sup>

The 'matter of money' to produce work was a perennial problem for

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8 'Foreword', *Theatre Arts Magazine*, 1 (1916), 11.

9 Christopher Fitz-Simon, *The Irish Theatre* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1983); Morash, *A History of Irish Theatre*.

10 Inghinidhe na hÉireann is included in this list due to the tableaux vivants it created, which directly contributed to the aesthetic of scenography and performance within the Ormond Dramatic and the National Theatre Societies.

11 Máire Nic Shiubhlaigh, 'The Irish National Theatre Society', extracted from *The Splendid Years: Recollections of Máire Nic Shiubhlaigh; as Told to Edward Kenny* (Dublin: James Duffy, 1955), p. 43, and republished in *The Abbey Theatre: Interviews and Recollections*, ed. by Edward H. Mikhail (London: Macmillan Press, 1988), pp. 40–48 (p. 29); Annie E.F. Horniman, 'The Origin of the Abbey Theatre', originally published in *John O'London's Weekly*, 20 August 1932, p. 741 and republished in *The Abbey Theatre*, pp. 28–30 (p. 29).

studio theatre clubs and societies.<sup>12</sup> Studio theatres did not necessarily pay company members or, if remuneration was available, earnings unrelated to theatre practice were required to supplement that income and to pay for production materials. Acknowledging that finance, and sometimes, expertise were not always available to newly formed groups, Alice Milligan advised stage managers in amateur drama societies and clubs that 'Simplicity of make will be found to be quite compatible with artistic beauty, and stage magnificence can be attained without extravagance'.<sup>13</sup> Descriptions of the premiere of *Kathleen Ni Houlihan* on a tiny stage with unsteady cottage walls suggest production standards that might have appeared 'unprofessional', but a potent combination of energy, ambition, and resourcefulness ensured that reduced finances and cramped performance spaces did not compromise ambition or artistic integrity.<sup>14</sup> Despite warped flats and ill-fitting curtains, studio theatre clubs were recognised by those within the profession as important in terms of providing emerging playwrights and audiences with alternatives to productions that were motivated primarily by commercial success.<sup>15</sup>

As the 1910s progressed, studio theatre companies became synonymous with experimental theatre practice. Founded in 1918 by Lennox Robinson with the support of W.B. Yeats, and described as 'a shadow network' of the Abbey, the Dublin Drama League used the Abbey stage on Sunday and Monday evenings to offer a programme of new and recent European drama.<sup>16</sup> In the 1920s, Désirée Bannard Cogley founded the Studio Arts Club; Mary Manning founded the company, Anomalies; John Lodwick established a stage society; the Dublin Jewish Dramatic Society was founded, and Eveline Kirkwood Hackett and Lyle Donaghy also staged studio theatre productions.<sup>17</sup> These studio clubs, groups,

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12 Frank Fay (1901), 'The Irish Literary Theatre', in *Handbook of the Irish Revival*, p. 166.

13 Alice Milligan (1904), 'Staging and Costume in Irish Drama', *Ireland's Own*, 30 March 1904, in *Handbook of the Irish Revival*, pp. 160–161 (p. 161).

14 Morash, *A History of Irish Theatre*, p. 123; Nic Shiubhlaigh, *The Splendid Years*, p. 41.

15 Winifred Letts, 'My First Abbey Play', condensed from an original publication in *Irish Writing* (Cork), 16 (September 1951), 43–46 (pp. 35–39).

16 Nora Moroney, 'The Women Behind the Abbey: Dolly Robinson and Irish Theatrical Networks', *English Studies*, 104.6 (2023), 1037–1054 (p. 1042).

17 Elaine Sisson suggests that the Studio Arts Club was founded in either 1924 or 1925. Elaine Sisson, 'Experiment and the Free State: Mrs Cogley's Cabaret and the Founding of the Gate Theatre 1924–1930', in *The Gate Theatre: Inspiration and Craft*,

societies, and individuals—which were not allied or in agreement in terms of artistic output or priority—created an infrastructure of artists, producers, and audiences that contributed to a dynamic cultural and artistic ‘cross-pollination’ within Dublin theatre practice.<sup>18</sup> The concept of the Abbey Experimental Theatre (AET) (which became the Peacock) emerged in the 1920s, but it was not until 1937 ‘that the idea took formal shape’ with Ria Mooney’s students at the helm.<sup>19</sup> Described by Ernest Blythe as ‘a little theatre which would be used for the production of works of young dramatists’, the AET provided an ‘experimental [...] testing ground for new ideas’.<sup>20</sup> The founding of the Gate Theatre in 1928, by Hilton Edwards and Micheál mac Liammóir with support from Bannard Cogley and Gearóid Ó Lochlainn, and of the Dublin Little Theatre Guild, co-founded by Liam O’Leary, Seán O’Meadhra, and Patrick Fitzsimons, establishes the first two decades of the twentieth century as a particularly fruitful time in Irish studio theatre practice.<sup>21</sup> However, as Lionel Pilkington and Siobhán O’Gorman suggest, because these groups frequently banded and disbanded, merged and separated, and because documents are not always archived or are dispersed across multiple private and public collections, the history of individual studio theatre groups, clubs, and societies is challenging to determine, delineate, and chart.<sup>22</sup>

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ed. by David Clare, Des Lally, and Patrick Lonergan (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2018), pp. 11–27. For more on Jewish theatre practice see Irina Rupp Malone, ‘Synge, An-Sky, and the Irish Jewish Revival’, *The Irish Review*, 48 (2014), pp. 17–27 and Barry Montgomery, ‘Jewish Drama on the Irish Stage: The Socio-Political and Cultural Milieu of the Dublin Jewish Amateur Operatic Society (1908–1910) and the Dublin Jewish Dramatic Society (1924–1954)’, *Studi Irlandesi. A Journal of Irish Studies*, 10.10 (2020), 133–152.

- 18 Mary Trotter, *Modern Irish Theatre* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), p. 98.  
 19 Ciara O’Dowd, *Wild-Looking but Fine: Abbey Theatre Actresses of the 1930s* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2024), p. 67.  
 20 ‘Dáil Éireann Debate—Wednesday, 6 Jul 1927’, *5th Dáil*, 20.6 (1927), Orduithe an Lae. Orders of the Day. Vote 21—Miscellaneous Expenses, <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1927-07-06/16/>; Robert Welch, *The Abbey Theatre 1899–1999: Form and Pressure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 101.  
 21 Sisson, ‘Experiment and the Free State’; Fitz-Simon, *The Boys*; Micheál Ó hAodha, *Theatre in Ireland* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974). We use the spelling ‘mac Liammóir’ following Leeney and McFeely’s use of this spelling at the request of the executors of mac Liammóir’s estate (see Leeney and McFeely (eds), *The Plays of Maura Laverty*, p. 6).  
 22 Pilkington, ‘Little Theatres’; O’Gorman, ‘Scenographic Interactions’.

## New Directions for Deevy in the 1930s

The Abbey 'adopted' six Dublin Drama League productions in the 1920s, staging them as Abbey productions in what Clarke and Ferrar maintain were 'fruits of the League's seeds that blossomed for a brief moment and wilted as the Abbey speedily rejected innovation'.<sup>23</sup> Arguably, Ninette de Valois' work at the Abbey, the production of O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars*, and Denis Johnston's production of *King Lear* go some way to contradicting that assertion, as such productions evidence notable moments of artistic risk-taking at the Abbey during the 1920s. Nevertheless, as Lauren Arrington and Pilkington argue, a complex mesh of multifarious influences diminished artistic innovation and experimentation on the main Abbey stage as the 1930s approached.<sup>24</sup> Deevy's first play, *Reapers*, was produced by the Abbey in 1930; thereafter, the Abbey produced *A Disciple* in 1931, *Temporal Powers* in 1932, *The King of Spain's Daughter* in 1935, and *Katie Roche* and *The Wild Goose* in 1936. There was a hiatus of twelve years before another new play by Deevy was premiered there when, in 1948, *Light Falling* was produced on the Peacock stage. The Abbey found, in what Johnston describes as 'kitchen comedies', a dramaturgical formula and realist aesthetic that was relatively economical to produce and adequately commercially successful but which, by the mid-1930s, had become somewhat stale.<sup>25</sup> In an undated letter to Hackett, Deevy wrote, 'There is a theatre group calling itself The Abbey Experimental Theatre—or A.E.T—which is looking for short plays—one actors'.<sup>26</sup> The comment attests to the fact that Deevy was interested in how nuances in performance and experimentation in theatre convention might be applied to short plays, such as those she had either already created, or would create, thus positioning her during this period as a playwright open to theatrical

23 Brenna Katz Clarke and Harold Ferrar, *The Dublin Drama League, 1918–41*, The Irish Theatre Series 9, ed. by Robert Hogan, James Kilroy, and Liam Miller (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1979), p. 19.

24 Lauren Arrington, *W.B. Yeats, The Abbey Theatre, Censorship, and the Irish State: Adding the Half-Pence to the Pence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Pilkington, 'Little Theatres'.

25 Denis Johnston, *Orders and Desecrations: The Life of the Playwright Denis Johnston*, ed. by Rory Johnston (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1992), p. 50.

26 Dublin, Eavan Boland Library (EBL), Florence Hackett Collection, Teresa Deevy to Florence Hackett, undated, MS 10722, item 20.

innovation and experimentation.

Replying to Hackett in January 1935, Deevy articulates what seems to have been a shared sense of crisis in relation to the Abbey, 'Yes, don't things seem hopeless about the Abbey'.<sup>27</sup> Her next paragraph continues, 'Something will have to be done about the theatre in Ireland. It's appalling'.<sup>28</sup> While it is unclear as to whether Deevy is making reference to theatre, in general, or the Abbey, in particular, it seems that her concern relates to the quality of acting within the Abbey; she suggests that Abbey players rotate, residency-style, with 'tip-top' actors in the London-Irish Players, because the Abbey company has 'become "localised"'.<sup>29</sup> This comment may suggest that either Dublin-based actors were restricted in their range, and/or deliberately focused their skills on a narrow set of performance conventions. Alternatively, or additionally, the comment may suggest that the introduction of new actors from London would benefit the Dublin theatre scene. In the same letter, Deevy writes, 'it seems to me that any scheme that does not prioritise first-rate players is out of the question'<sup>30</sup>—an unsurprising prioritisation of acting excellence given the detailed stage directions, subtext, gesture, and movement in her own dramatic work.

By the mid-1930s, Deevy was actively engaged in seeking productions of her work outside the Abbey and, indeed, outside of Ireland. In 1934 Deevy advises Hackett to send a script to the Irish Players in London who 'sometimes want a short play'<sup>31</sup> and, in a letter sent soon thereafter, she mentions that Ernest Wilton, a producer with connections to 'the New York Theatre Guild and also in London', might produce *The King of Spain's Daughter*.<sup>32</sup> It seems that in early 1935, the Abbey had not yet

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27 Dublin, Eavan Boland Library (EBL), Florence Hackett Collection, Teresa Deevy to Florence Hackett, 31 January 1935(?) [sic], MS 10722, item 5.

28 EBL, MS 10722, item 5.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid. For more on Deevy's detailed attention to blocking, see 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, <https://doi.org/10.24162/EI2020-9406>

31 Dublin, Eavan Boland Library (EBL), Florence Hackett Collection, Teresa Deevy to Florence Hackett 12 November 1934(?) [sic], MS 10722, item 3.

32 Dublin, Eavan Boland Library (EBL), Florence Hackett Collection, Teresa Deevy to Florence Hackett, 27 September (1935), MS 10722, item 9. Wilton did not produce *The King of Spain's Daughter* but, in that same letter, Deevy mentions that he was particularly interested in producing 'ballets, and Shakespearian plays', a seemingly

accepted *The King of Spain's Daughter*, but Deevy was already seeking its publication. She confesses her desire to 'get it tidied up, with less stage directions', revealing her strong inclination to imagine and curate actors' bodies, writing, 'I think I always have too many stage directions'.<sup>33</sup> Deevy did 'tidy up' *The King of Spain's Daughter* and *Theatre Arts Monthly* agreed to publish it later that year.<sup>34</sup> The *Dublin Magazine* followed suit scheduling a publication in 1936. Deevy was 'awfully pleased', but longed for a production: 'I wish it would be produced before being published'.<sup>35</sup> She did not have long to wait: the Abbey produced *The King of Spain's Daughter* in April 1935. It was not, however, the production for which she had hoped. She wrote in dispirited tones to Hackett of 'wretched' audience numbers and that the programme stated the play was set on a 'summer's day' when 'the whole play had turned, for me, on the April day atmosphere. I missed the gay air that, to my mind, was essential'.<sup>36</sup> Deevy was not alone in her contention that the Abbey was not attuned to subtleties within her work: one critic wrote of the Abbey production of the play (that was remounted the following year) that 'Its subtlety is too much for the Abbey, and the staging was the last word in bathos'—remarks that suggest that the nuanced social and ideological critique within Deevy's work was not realised.<sup>37</sup>

In the context of less-than-ideal productions of her work at the Abbey,

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inconsequential comment, but one which might suggest the timeframe of *Possession*, Deevy's ballet interpreting the story of *The Táin*.

- 33 Dublin, Eavan Boland Library (EBL), Florence Hackett Collection, Teresa Deevy to Florence Hackett, 11 October (1935?) [sic], MS 10722, item 10. The full quotation reads: 'I think I always have too many stage directions, and that is what makes my work so untidy and amateurish', suggesting that she did not see this tendency as a strength.
- 34 Teresa Deevy, 'The King of Spain's Daughter', *Theatre Arts Monthly*, June 1935, 459–466.
- 35 Dublin, Eavan Boland Library (EBL), Florence Hackett Collection, Teresa Deevy to Florence Hackett, [1935] 1936 (?) [sic], MS 10722, item 12.
- 36 Dublin, Eavan Boland Library (EBL), Florence Hackett Collection, Teresa Deevy to Florence Hackett, 8 May 1935, MS 10722, item 8. Scholars have considered how the Abbey's 1935 premiere of *The King of Spain's Daughter* may have impacted contemporary critics' interpretation of the play's conclusion. See Lisa Fitzpatrick, 'Taking Their Own Road: The Female Protagonists in Three Plays by Irish Women', in *Women in Irish Drama: A Century of Authorship and Representation*, ed. by Melissa Sihra (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 69–86 and Kealy, 'Resisting Power and Direction'.
- 37 Seán Ó Meadhra, *Ireland Today*, 1.4 (1936), p. 63, in Fitzpatrick, 'Taking Their Own Road', p. 72.

Deevy may have held out hope that she might find other, more sensitive, interpreters of her work. She may have already been taking note of the formation of the Waterford Dramatic Society in 1935 and of Longford Productions formed in 1936. Deevy's next play, *Katie Roche*, was produced by the Abbey and, possibly because the Abbey directors were 'Inspired, perhaps even alarmed [...] by the Gate's now unassailable superiority in the visual and technical aspects of stage presentation', Hugh Hunt directed and Tanya Moiseiwitsch designed the production.<sup>38</sup> Deevy, who attended rehearsals, records how the production team had worked to realise her vision of the play, writing to Hackett that: 'they were all so eager to have it just as I wanted it'.<sup>39</sup> The production was a success and Deevy began to seek productions in the little theatre network in London writing to Hackett that:

[...] the London Times gave an excellent criticism with the result that I got several applications from Agents in London wanting to handle the play. I have now given it in charge to one of them—a McGolding Bright who has, I believe, a great name. He is hoping to get it produced in London!<sup>40</sup>

In fact, Hunt was also keen to produce *Katie Roche* in London and Deevy's hopes were realised—*Katie Roche* was staged there and, later, in America.

Concurrently, Deevy's interest in radio drama was piqued, possibly by Hackett whose dramatic work had been produced for radio and/or by the fact that Deevy's friends and family were avid radio drama listeners. Deevy vicariously experienced and reacted to radio dramas by either attending recordings of radio dramas, or watching her friends and family listening to broadcasts. Describing her family's reaction to the broadcast of a radio play written by Hackett, she writes, 'It was splendid—at least if I can judge by the family reactions'.<sup>41</sup> In another letter, Deevy writes, 'Nance, Nell and Phyllis listened last night—and I watched their amusement. Then Nell told me the story of it'.<sup>42</sup> In any

38 Fitz-Simon, *The Boys*, p. 97. The Abbey first produced *Katie Roche* on 16 March 1936.

39 Dublin, Eavan Boland Library (EBL), Florence Hackett Collection, Teresa Deevy to Florence Hackett, 5 April 1936, MS 10722, item 15.

40 Ibid.

41 EBL, MS 10722, item 23.

42 Dublin, Eavan Boland Library (EBL), Florence Hackett Collection, Teresa Deevy to Florence Hackett, 2 February 1939(?) [sic], MS 10722, item 24. While this evidence of Deevy's experience of radio broadcasts exists, we have not found an account of

case, Deevy submitted *The Wild Goose* to the BBC as a possibility for radio production. It was accepted, prompting Deevy to attend a radio production in Belfast to better understand the conventions of the medium. In a letter to Hackett she confesses:

When going up I felt doubtful as to whether I could ever be really enthusiastic over writing for radio—now that's settled. I loved the place—and their way of production. [...] There is nothing formal about them—a really theatre atmosphere—everyone friendly and casual. [...] I was fascinated watching it all.<sup>43</sup>

In the radio studios in Belfast, and at home watching family and friends listen to radio drama, Deevy discovered a medium and an environment in which she and her work were welcome. Her decision to investigate radio drama production may also have been motivated by an organisational culture in the Abbey that was injurious to women. Tricia O'Beirne argues there existed in the Abbey a culture of discrimination against women artists and that a 'determinedly patriarchal' *modus operandi* operated within the managerial hierarchy that resulted in artists being unofficially sanctioned if they would not accept direction or reprimand.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, Deevy was aware, informed by Frank O'Connor, that Yeats did not admire her work. In an undated letter to Hackett she reflects,

Yeats does not care at all for my plays. Not very encouraging, but it is better to know. [O'Connor] said that is the reason my work was not brought on more at the Abbey.<sup>45</sup>

Deevy does not mention whether she and O'Connor discussed her refusal to allow the Abbey directors 'rewrite [her plays] for her', but the fact that she did refuse to submit to this suggests her confidence in the integrity of her writing and her artistic voice.<sup>46</sup> Perhaps Deevy sought

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whether, or how, she experienced the BBC television broadcasts of *The King of Spain's Daughter* and *In Search of Valour*, both of which were directed by Denis Johnston in 1939.

43 EBL, MS 10722, item 23.

44 Tricia O'Beirne, "'In a Position to Be Treated Roughly'", *New Hibernia Review/Iris Éireannach Nua*, 22.1 (2018), 120–134 (p. 131).

45 Dublin, Eavan Boland Library (EBL), Florence Hackett Collection, Teresa Deevy to Florence Hackett, undated, MS 10722, item 13. We acknowledge the help of Aisling Lockhart of Trinity College Dublin Libraries for confirming that this letter fragment is undated.

46 Frank O'Connor, *The Backward Look: A Survey of Irish Literature* (London: MacMillan,

alternative producers and outlets for her work rather than choosing to continue to rely on favour from an organisation managed by those who did not favour her work and who had no compunction in treating her less equally than her male counterparts.

### Deevy's Involvement with Studio Theatre Practice in the 1940s and 1950s

As the 1930s ended, Deevy's work had been published, broadcast on radio, toured regionally in Ireland and to London and America, and the Abbey had optioned *Holiday House* for production.<sup>47</sup> With her career prospects promising much, and an expanded network of professional and personal contacts in Dublin and London, Deevy took the next step to progress her career. With her sister, Nell, Deevy settled in a 'little house in Dublin', initially house-sitting for Lennox and Dolly Robinson before settling in Waterloo Road.<sup>48</sup> However, the 1940s was unexpectedly disappointing. As Morash notes, the Abbey production of *Holiday House* did not materialise and the directors were not forthcoming as to the reason why.<sup>49</sup> In a letter to Hackett in 1940, Deevy writes that her next play is not progressing as she would like, 'I had hoped to finish my new play long ago, but it came to a standstill [...] I have great plans

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1967), p. 179.

- 47 Martina Ann O'Doherty, 'Deevy: A Bibliography', *Irish University Review*, 25.1 (1995), 163–170. O'Doherty suggests that Deevy's work was televised during the 1930s, but Phyllis Ryan recalls recording Deevy's work for television 'when the war was over'—a comment that, given that Ryan was born in 1920, suggests the recording took place post 1945. Phyllis Ryan, *The Company I Kept* (Dublin: Town House, 1996), p. 108. *Katie Roche* was presented at the Torch Theatre in Knightsbridge, London in 1938. See DRI, The Teresa Deevy Archive, 'Irish Comedy in Knightsbridge: Production by the Torch Theatre'. In a letter to Hackett, Deevy mentions an Abbey regional tour that visited Waterford city to stage a production of *The King of Spain's Daughter*. See Dublin, Eavan Boland Library (EBL), Florence Hackett Collection, Teresa Deevy to Florence Hackett, 2 February 1939, MS 10722, item 27. O'Doherty also records that this production toured to Cork.
- 48 Dublin, Eavan Boland Library (EBL), Florence Hackett Collection, Teresa Deevy to Florence Hackett, 1937, MS 10722, item 18. From her correspondence with Hackett, it seems that Deevy and her sister, Nell, moved to 16 Waterloo Road c. 1941. Deevy moved to 20 Clyde Road in 1955.
- 49 Christopher Morash, 'Teresa Deevy: Seeing the World', in *Teresa Deevy Reclaimed*, 2 vols, ed. by Jonathan Bank, John P. Harrington, and Christopher Morash (New York: Mint Theater, 2011 and 2017), II, ix–xx (pp. xi–xii).

for [it].<sup>50</sup> While she was reworking it, Ernest Blythe became managing director of the Abbey initiating what Brian Fallon describes as an Abbey programming policy 'associated indelibly with kitchen farce, unspeakably bad Gaelic pantomimes, compulsory Irish and insensitive bureaucracy'.<sup>51</sup> As has been frequently documented, when Deevy did eventually finish her play—*Wife to James Whelan*—and submitted it to the Abbey in 1941 it was rejected, leading her to conclude that the Abbey had 'no further use' for her plays.<sup>52</sup> As managing director of the Abbey, and signatory of the letter rejecting *Wife to James Whelan*, Blythe's name is synonymous with this moment within Deevy's career but, as Melissa Sihra and O'Beirne contend, Blythe may simply have continued the 'plodding artistic policies' and communicated a prevailing conservative ethos that was 'highly restrictive artistically'.<sup>53</sup> O'Beirne cogently argues that the misogynistic and 'megalomaniacal tendencies' of Fredrick Higgins, who disliked what he referred to as Deevy's 'dull' work, contributed to diminishing Deevy's relationship with the Abbey.<sup>54</sup>

However, far from being a pessimistic acceptance of defeat and rejection, Deevy's attitude to Blythe's letter rejecting *Wife to James Whelan* is stoical, if not optimistic. Deevy immediately asserts that she will look for an alternative producer, writing, 'I am trying to get [*Wife to James Whelan*] done elsewhere it is very much an "Abbey" play so I feel rather handicapped'.<sup>55</sup> Her shaken confidence materialises in her interchanging use of the past and present tense, 'I feel the play was good, and felt very confident of it', but her contestation of Blythe's assertion that 'the characters were too like Katie Roche' evidences her confidence in its value; she argues: 'No one else could see the resemblance', contending

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50 Dublin, Eavan Boland Library (EBL), Florence Hackett Collection, Teresa Deevy to Florence Hackett, 1940, MS 10722, item 28.

51 Brian Fallon, *An Age of Innocence, Irish Culture 1930–1960* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1998), p. 134. The 1940s was also a time when numbers of amateur dramatic societies increased nationally. See Morash, *A History of Irish Theatre*.

52 Dublin, Eavan Boland Library (EBL), Florence Hackett Collection, Teresa Deevy to Florence Hackett, undated, MS 10722, item 33.

53 Ibid.; O'Beirne, "'In a Position to Be Treated Roughly'", p. 134; Sihra, *Women in Irish Drama*, 87–96.

54 O'Beirne, "'In a Position to Be Treated Roughly'", p. 130; F.R. Higgins in *ibid.*, p. 130. O'Beirne singles out Higgins as particularly villainous in his sexism, misogyny, and duplicity.

55 Dublin, Eavan Boland Library (EBL), Florence Hackett Collection, Teresa Deevy to Florence Hackett, MS 10722, item 33.

that Abbey actors, Cyril Cusack in particular, shared her opinion of its worth. Regret at being 'finished' with the Abbey sits alongside a dogged determination to find another producer:

I suppose every play by an author has a certain resemblance—the author's viewpoint—but that was all. However, I must just make an opening elsewhere, and it may be a good thing to be finished with the Abbey. Yet I love the Abbey, & their actors are fine.<sup>56</sup>

These sentiments, contained in an undated letter fragment, express Deevy's disappointment, but also her commitment to pursue alternative production opportunities.

Alternative producers in Dublin were potentially plentiful as Irish studio theatre practice continued as an important and dynamic phenomenon through the 1940s and 1950s. A new incarnation of Desirée Bannard Cogley's Studio Club emerged in the early 1940s with Cogley's son, Fergus, taking on substantial production work. Concurrently, Richards-Walsh Productions was co-founded by Shelah Richards and Michael Walsh. The extent of studio theatre production is demonstrated in Eoin O'Brien's summary of dramatic commentary written by A.J. Leventhal for publication in the *Dublin Magazine* during the 1940s and 1950s, which includes reviews of productions by an astonishing number of studio and theatre clubs including: the Players Theatre; Dublin University Players; Austin Clarke's Lyric Theatre Company; Earlsfort Players; the Abbey Experimental Theatre (which Leventhal first refers to as the Peacock in 1950); Longford Productions; the Dublin Marionette Group; University College Dublin Dramatic Society; Dublin University Modern Language Society; '37' Theatre Club; the Fortune Society; Pilgrim Productions; the Pike Theatre Club; the Arts Theatre; the Dublin Globe Theatre; and Cyril Cusack Productions.<sup>57</sup> Absent from this list, but contributing to theatre production in Dublin during this era were: the Dublin Dance Theatre Club; Erina Brady's Irish School of Dance Art;

56 EBL, MS 10722, item 33.

57 Eoin O'Brien, 'II. Dramatic Commentary: *The Dublin Magazine, 1943–1958*', in A. J. Leventhal 1896–1979: *Dublin Scholar, Wit and Man of Letters* (Dublin: The Con Leventhal Scholarship Committee, 1984). A letter written by Leventhal to Deevy in 1930 (dated 22 March) is contained within the Teresa Deevy Archive in Maynooth. See DRI, The Teresa Deevy Archive, 'Letter from C.J. Leventhal', PP/6/6(1), <https://doi.org/10.7486/DRI.95944c09k>

the Dublin Verse Speaking Society; and amateur theatre companies such as the Bernadette Players.<sup>58</sup>

Deevy approached the Players Theatre, founded in 1944 'by a few disaffected members' of the Abbey—an unsurprising choice given her admiration for the acting skills of Abbey actors.<sup>59</sup> Writing enthusiastically to Hackett, Deevy asserts:

At the opening meeting of The Players Theatre I gave your name as one who might be interested. [...] I think they will really do good stuff. [...] I am sending my 'rejected Abbey' am, [sic] hoping they may like it! I have been working hard re-writing it.<sup>60</sup>

The Players *were* interested in *Wife to James Whelan* (which Deevy had renamed and submitted under the title *All on a Sunny Day*). Unfortunately, while they awarded the play a prize of £50 in 1945, they did not produce it. In 1944, Deevy wrote to Hackett that 'broadcasting is what I am thinking of',<sup>61</sup> and in 1946 the BBC broadcast a radio production of *Wife to James Whelan* with Radio Éireann later broadcasting an abridged version of the same play. Deevy attended Longford Productions' staging of G.B. Shaw's *In Good King Charles's Golden Days* and Molière's *The School for Wives*, admiring the company's production values.<sup>62</sup> At this time, she remarks that she has 'not been to the Abbey for ages'.<sup>63</sup> She may not have felt particularly welcome there given that, in the previous year in 1947, *The Irish Press* published her complaint at the Abbey's rejection of B.G. MacCarthy's *The Raven of Wicklow* in which Deevy railed: 'Are we not all to blame if we fail to protest when our National Theatre gives yet another proof of the downward path it is choosing'.<sup>64</sup> Despite Deevy's public denunciation of the Abbey, Ria Mooney produced *Light Falling* at

58 Deirdre Mulrooney, *Irish Moves: An Illustrated History of Dance and Physical Theatre in Ireland* (Dublin: The Liffey Press, 2006); Pilkington, 'Little Theatres'.

59 Jonathan Bank, 'Introduction', in *Teresa Deevy Reclaimed*, I, 105–107 (p. 105).

60 Dublin, Eavan Boland Library (EBL), Florence Hackett Collection, Teresa Deevy to Florence Hackett, 28 February 1945 (?) [sic], MS 10722, item 39.

61 Dublin, Eavan Boland Library (EBL), Florence Hackett Collection, Teresa Deevy to Florence Hackett, Saturday 1944, MS 10722, item 36.

62 Dublin, Eavan Boland Library (EBL), Florence Hackett Collection, Teresa Deevy to Florence Hackett, undated, MS 10722, item 35 (in which Deevy mistitles Shaw's play) and item 40.

63 EBL, MS 10722, item 40.

64 Teresa Deevy, 'New Historical Play', *Irish Press*, 15 February 1947, p. 9. We gratefully acknowledge Aaron Kent for bringing this letter to our attention.

the Peacock in 1948 the same year that Deevy sent *Wife to James Whelan* to Christine and Edward Longford. Longford Productions could not produce *Wife to James Whelan* as they did not have a 'suitable cast'.<sup>65</sup> The decade closed with some success for Deevy, however, as, in 1949, Josephine Albericci produced Deevy's *In Search of Valour* (originally staged by the Abbey as *A Disciple* in 1931) for the Dublin School of Acting. These radio and theatre productions constitute positive staging points in the jagged trajectory of Deevy's career during 1940s.

Deevy continued to seek theatre productions of her work within the studio theatre scene, which remained vibrant throughout the 1950s, and also sought productions of her work within the 'thriving amateur movement'.<sup>66</sup> Fallon offers a truncated list of landmark events demonstrating the vibrancy of cultural, social, and political life in the 1950s which, he argues, opposed 'the last great counter-offensive of the old guard and the obscurantists, whose days in almost every area were outnumbered'.<sup>67</sup> In 1951, Nora Lever and Barry Cassin co-founded the '37' Club; American actor-producer Jack Aronson staged work in Dublin and London; Carolyn Swift and Alan Simpson co-founded The Pike Theatre in 1953; Godfrey Quigley, Denis Brennan, and Michael O'Herlihy formed the Dublin Globe Theatre in 1954; and, in 1957, Phyllis Ryan formed Orion Productions.<sup>68</sup> Also, in the 1950s, Albericci, having left the Abbey School of Acting, founded Pilgrim Productions, sometimes also collaborating with Stanley Ilsley and Leo McCabe, managers of the Gaiety and co-founders of Ilsley-McCabe Productions. In the days before Christmas 1953, Deevy mentions that she had attended the Abbey productions (produced at the Queen's Theatre) of *This Other Eden* and *The Devil a Saint Would Be* by Louis D'Alton and G.B.

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65 Dublin, Eavan Boland Library (EBL), Florence Hackett Collection, Teresa Deevy to Florence Hackett, 17 December 1948, MS 10722, item 45.

66 Ó hAodha, *Theatre in Ireland*, p. 136.

67 Fallon, *Age of Innocence*, p. 258.

68 During 1953 and 1954, Aronson produced Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, Arthur Miller's *All My Sons*, August Strindberg's *Miss Julie* (entitled *Lady Julie*), and evenings of scenes from William Shakespeare, Oscar Wilde, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Aronson achieved international fame with his one-man show, *Moby Dick*, which toured extensively throughout the United States in the late 1970s. Lawrence van Gelder, 'Moby Dick, a Test of Actor's Versatility', *New York Times*, 7 January 1979; Ryan, *The Company I Kept*; Dublin, National Library of Ireland (NLI), 'Description', Records of the Lantern Theatre 1957-1975, <https://catalogue.nli.ie/Collection/vtls000229597>

Shaw's *Saint Joan*, but that she had 'not been to "37"'.<sup>69</sup> This she quickly remedied, becoming a member of the club (referring to it as 'the Barry Cassin Theatre') and enthusiastically welcoming it as 'new life in the stage world', describing the quality of the acting in an 'expressionistic' production of Maurice Meldon's *Aisling* as 'very good'.<sup>70</sup>

In 1954, Nell Deevy, who 'had been [Teresa's] ears [...] for many years', died; an event Phyllis Ryan describes as Teresa Deevy's 'great tragedy'.<sup>71</sup> In a letter acknowledging condolences on Nell's death, Deevy wrote, 'I do not find it easy to write about her. We were so very close to one another I am desolate now. But that is to be faced,—and she would not have us sad'.<sup>72</sup> Showing that same resilience as she had in the early 1940s, when disappointed at the loss of the Abbey as producer for her work, Deevy continued to work and attend studio theatre productions—without Nell by her side—including those at the Studio Theatre, appreciating the production values and the 'intelligent' audiences who frequented them.<sup>73</sup> In 1954, Deevy writes that she is 'Glad to see the Behan play is well attended', a reference to Brendan Behan's *The Quare Fellow* produced at the Pike Theatre.<sup>74</sup> In 1955, finding the flat in Waterloo Road 'too lonely' without Nell, Deevy moved to 20 Clyde Road.<sup>75</sup>

In 1956, the same year that *Wife to James Whelan* was produced by the Studio Theatre, Josephine and Patrick Funge and Liam Miller founded the Lantern Theatre. While production values had improved since the early decades of the twentieth century, audience numbers for studio theatre productions remained small; attending a production of James Cheasty's *The Lost Years* at the Studio, Deevy notes the 'very poor audience—about 12 or 15 people the night I was there—'.<sup>76</sup> She

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69 Maynooth, Russell Library (RL), Teresa Deevy to James Cheasty, 22 December 1953. The Deevy-Cheasty correspondence was deposited at the Russell Library in 2023. The James Cheasty Archive is available for consultation in the Russell Library under the reference code PP43.

70 Maynooth, Russell Library (RL), Teresa Deevy to James Cheasty, 21 January [year unknown]; Maynooth, Russell Library (RL), Teresa Deevy to James Cheasty, 24 April 1953.

71 Ryan, *The Company I Kept*, p. 108.

72 Maynooth, Russell Library (RL), Teresa Deevy to Ellen Cheasty, 10 March 1954.

73 Maynooth, Russell Library (RL), Teresa Deevy to James Cheasty, 3 June 1957.

74 Maynooth, Russell Library (RL), Teresa Deevy to James Cheasty, 22 October 1954.

75 Dublin, National Library of Ireland (NLI), John Jordan Papers 1945-1988, Teresa Deevy to John Jordan, 13 October 1955, MS 35,072.

76 Maynooth, Russell Library (RL), Teresa Deevy to James Cheasty, 3 June 1957.

mentions, by name, theatre critics who attended Studio Theatre productions and references published theatre reviews suggesting these productions received careful, critical consideration and that a Studio Theatre production was a cultural event of import. Good news came unexpectedly for Deevy in 1957 when she received word from:

'Madame' [Cogley] telling me that Studio is putting on my one-act play 'In the Cellar of my Friend' next Sat (31<sup>st</sup>) and Sunday (Sept 1<sup>st</sup>)—I had forgotten she had a script! Must have it for the last 12 mths. She says now the play is 'a gem.'—It has not been done on stage, nor broadcast.<sup>77</sup>

As argued elsewhere, this restores a production history of *In the Cellar of My Friend* that was, until recently, lost.<sup>78</sup>

Concurrently, Deevy was also investigating production opportunities offered by regional studio theatre companies which sometimes employed Dublin-based practitioners. Waterford Dramatic Society, for example, employed Godfrey Quigley, Tomás Mac Anna, Don O'Connell, Nora Lever, Barry Cassin, and Shelah Richards.<sup>79</sup> Other Waterford-based theatre companies, such as the Smith School of Acting, founded in 1955 by Jo Moylan, and the Waterford Drama Circle, formed in the late 1950s, point to a lively, regional studio theatre scene. The formation and productions of these regional drama clubs and studio theatres were of interest to Deevy: in a postcard to Cheasty, she writes, 'Got tickets from Drama Circle—thank you—Want to be subscriber this year too'.<sup>80</sup> Recognising that clubs such as the Drama Circle offered production opportunities for her work, Deevy sent the Drama Circle *Supreme Dominion* in 1957. The play was rejected, but was produced the following year as part of Luke Wadding Centenary celebrations.<sup>81</sup> Thus, the 1950s

77 Maynooth, Russell Library (RL), Teresa Deevy to James Cheasty, 28 June 1957.

78 McCarthy and Kealy, 'Writing from the Margins'.

79 *Waterford Dramatic Society 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Production, The Passing of Morgan Carey: A New Play by James Cheasty, Souvenir Programme* (Waterford: Waterford Dramatic Society, 1995), p. 8. The Drama Circle in Waterford produced Cheasty's *A Stranger Came* in February 1957, while the Smith School of Acting, also in Waterford, produced Cheasty's *The Calamaun* in 1961. The importance of these regional productions is evident in the fact that *The Calamaun* was taken up by Illsey-McCabe productions, retitled *Francey*, and produced at the Olympia in 1962 featuring Leo McCabe in the title role. Another indicator of the importance of regional theatres in the Irish theatre landscape was Blythe's visit to Waterford in 1964 to open, with Anna Manahan, Waterford Dramatic Society Theatre Club in Henrietta Street.

80 Maynooth, Russell Library (RL), Teresa Deevy to James Cheasty, 6 February 1958.

81 Maynooth, Russell Library (RL), Teresa Deevy to James Cheasty, 31 October 1957;

was a decade when Deevy worked hard, and with some success, to find production opportunities for her work outside the Abbey.

## Conclusion

Primarily, Deevy has been long associated with the Abbey, but her relationship and interaction with theatre practice and theatre practitioners is more complex and varied. During her lifetime, nine premieres of Deevy's theatre work were staged—five on the main Abbey stage and four on the stages of studio and theatre clubs.<sup>82</sup> By her own admission, Deevy wrote plays particularly suited to the company and performance style of the Abbey players, a company she esteemed but, from the 1930s through the 1950s, the Abbey was dominated by those who either disliked, or could not perceive the value of, her work—a fact of which she was well aware. Added to this, during the late 1930s and early 1940s, influential supporters of her work, including Hugh Hunt, Frank O'Connor, and Denis Johnston, departed the Abbey, some considerably acrimoniously, leaving her short of powerful allies. Deevy needed to find one or more alternative venues and/or producers for her work and the studio theatre scene presented opportunities. Demonstrating a consistent artistic integrity, tenacity, and an indomitable entrepreneurial spirit, Deevy actively sought out studio theatre producers for her work as early as the mid-1930s. It was partly by necessity, but also partly by her own design, that Deevy's career as a dramatist for theatre reoriented from the Abbey in the 1940s and 1950s towards studio theatre practice which was, in those decades, particularly vibrant and flourishing at a time when distinctions between professional, studio, and amateur drama often blurred. Details from Deevy's correspondence, collated and synthesised with scholarship of studio theatre practice during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, reveal her as engaged, throughout her career, with agents, literary magazines, artists, and producers of theatre, radio, and television drama. Alongside her work for radio in the 1940s and 1950s, Deevy energetically sought studio theatre productions of her work within a community of theatre practitioners that had impressed and interested her since the mid-1930s. Deevy's criticism of the

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Maynooth, Russell Library (RL), Teresa Deevy to James Cheasty, 3 June 1957.

82 We count the Abbey Experimental Theatre stage as a studio space here.

Abbey Theatre during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s in concert with her attendance at studio theatre productions, her frequent references to personalities, audiences, and the critical reception of those productions evidence a playwright confidently articulate of her own artistic and creative paradigm, tenacious in her ambition for her theatre work right up to the end of her life, and consistently entrepreneurial in creating opportunities for her work regionally, nationally, and internationally.

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