Active Speech

Critical Perspectives on Teresa Deevy

Edited by
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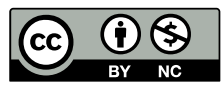

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 Suzanne Savage and Lianne Quigley performing in Teresa Deevy's *Possession* which was created and directed by Amanda Coogan in collaboration with Lianne Quigley, Alvean Jones, Linda Buckley, Dublin Theatre of the Deaf, and Cork Deaf Community Choir. 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).

7. 'It Is Myself I Seen in Her': Points of Departure in Teresa Deevy's *The King of Spain's Daughter* (1935)

Willy Maley

Careless Talk Costs Little

Assessing the drama of J.M. Synge and Seán O'Casey, Raymond Williams spoke of the 'pressing poverty' behind 'that endless fantasy of Irish talk'.[1] In other words, talk is cheap. You get a lot of overcompensating active speech in a Teresa Deevy play, or 'poet's talking', as Pegeen Mike calls it in Synge's *Playboy*.[2] Exorbitant utterance is characteristic of Deevy's women. They do not depend on men to deliver them from poverty through poetry. Nor is talkativeness tied to powerlessness in quite the way Williams suggests.

The conjunction between poetic speech and poverty of opportunity is one Deevy dwells on. She plays with an Irish tradition of the servant who refuses to be servile. Eighteenth-century philosopher George Berkeley bemoaned the impudence of a servant girl: 'In my own Family a Kitchen-wench refused to carry out Cinders, because she was

1 Raymond Williams, *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 137 and p. 153. Williams overlooks women playwrights.

2 'And what is it I have, Christy Mahon, to make me fitting entertainment for the like of you that has such poet's talking, and such bravery of heart?' J.M. Synge, *The Playboy of the Western World and Other Plays*, ed. by Ann Saddlemyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 137. Deevy's Annie Kinsella, like her other heroines, isn't waiting on a man for bravery and poetry. She has it in herself.

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descended from an old *Irish* stock'. Berkeley remarks of this effrontery: 'Never was there a more monstrous Conjunction than that of Pride with Beggary; and yet this Prodigy is seen every Day in almost every Part of this Kingdom'.[3] Here the philosopher of immaterialism sounds remarkably like the founder of cultural materialism.

Robust verbal resistance to authority characterises Deevy's female protagonists. As well as endless talk they deliver formidable backtalk. bell hooks speaks about the force of talking back:

> In the world of southern black community I grew up in 'back talk' and 'talking back' meant speaking as an equal to an authority figure. It meant daring to disagree and sometimes it just meant having an opinion.[4]

Speaking of her own community, in contrast to more privileged white women, hooks insists that:

> our struggle has not been to emerge from silence into speech but to change the nature and direction of our speech. To make a speech that compels listeners, one that is heard. Our speech, 'the right speech of womanhood', was often the soliloquy, the talking into thin air, the talking to ears that do not hear you—the talk that is simply not listened to.[5]

Without erasing race as a structuring aspect of hooks' argument, mindful of a tradition of comparing Irish and African American dramatic forms, I want to suggest that the Irish context also offers examples of active and engaged backtalk.[6]

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3 George Berkeley, *A Word to the Wise: Or, the Bishop of Cloyne's Exhortation to the Roman Catholic Clergy of Ireland* (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1749), p. 4.

4 bell hooks, 'Talking Back', *Discourse: Journal for Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture*, 8 (1986–1987), 123–128 (p. 123). For a compelling discussion of the need to talk back by Irish playwright and Traveller Rosaleen McDonagh, see 'Talking Back', in *(Re)searching Women: Feminist Research Methodologies in the Social Sciences in Ireland*, ed. by Anne Byrne and Ronit Lentin (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 2000), pp. 237–246.

5 hooks, 'Talking Back', p. 124. As a child, hooks was rebuked for 'crazy talk, crazy speech' (p. 125).

6 See Megan Sullivan, 'Folk Plays, Home Girls, and Back Talk: Georgia Douglas Johnson and Women of the Harlem Renaissance', *CLA Journal*, 38.4 (1995), 404–419 (p. 404).

Missing the Boat—and the Point

In *Ulysses*, James Joyce has 'Old Gummy Granny' present herself as 'Ireland's sweetheart, the king of Spain's daughter'.[7] Later, Stephen tells Bloom that Kitty O'Shea is 'The king of Spain's daughter'.[8] Neither allusion appears favourable. Here I want to pursue another Joycean connection. In a podcast on *Dubliners* in January 2013, Sebastian Barry said: 'I chose "Eveline" [...] because, 40 years later, I am still not over it. [...] The scene at the dockside. I am still inclined to cry out the same thing I cried out the first time I read it, aged 17: "Get on the bloody boat, Eveline"'.[9] Thanks to the work of Katy Mullin and others we now know Eveline was wise to resist going aboard, as she could have been pressed into service of a particularly demeaning kind by Frank, her sailor suitor.[10] As Mullin argues, Joyce's fusion of 'antiemigration fiction with [...] the white slave cautionary tale' serves 'to complicate his heroine's renunciation of' her apparent escape route.[11] Joyce recognises intersecting aspects of life experience particular to women that lead directly to a specific form of paralysis engendered by repetition. The paragraph in Joyce's story, beginning with the line 'Home! She looked

7 'Circe', *Ulysses*, 15.4585.

8 'Eumaeus', *Ulysses*, 16.1414.

9 Sebastian Barry, 'Sebastian Barry Reads "Eveline" by James Joyce', podcast, *The Guardian*, 2 January 2013, http://www.theguardian.com/books/audio/2013/jan/02/sebastian-barry-james-joyce-eveline. Of course, Barry's youthful wish that Eveline 'get on the bloody boat' does not simply miss the point that for Eveline to do so was risky (even though he might have missed that point as a seventeen-year-old), but acknowledges and regrets the feeling of sorrow and missed opportunity that multiple forces combine to create a particular net that traps Eveline. Barry's own approach as a writer and editor has been to push the boat out against the current, venturing beyond 'inherited boundaries'. See *The Inherited Boundaries: Younger Poets of the Republic of Ireland*, ed. by Sebastian Barry (Mountrath: Dolmen Press, 1986).

10 See Katherine Mullin, 'Don't Cry for Me, Argentina: "Eveline" and the Seductions of Emigration Propaganda', in *Semicolonial Joyce*, ed. by Derek Attridge and Marjorie Howes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 172–200.

11 Ibid., p. 193. There was a white slave trade at home as well as abroad, as Anthony Roche notes in discussing Deevy's *Katie Roche*: 'Katie's experience of the nuns would derive from the long-prevalent practice in Ireland of farming out illegitimate young women to work as unpaid labour in convents. [...] The stigma of illegitimacy can be erased in only a few instances: entering a convent she imagines to be one of them'. Anthony Roche, 'Woman on the Threshold: J. M. Synge's *The Shadow of the Glen*, Teresa Deevy's *Katie Roche* and Marina Carr's *The Mai*', *Irish University Review*, 25.1 (1995), 143–162 (p. 154).

round the room, reviewing all its familiar objects which she had dusted once a week for so many years, wondering where on earth all the dust came from', suggests the curiosity-dulling impact of endlessly repetitive domestic duties echoed by Deevy's Katie Roche in the lines, 'The bread and the butter and to fill the jug…' and later articulated by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* when she writes: 'Few tasks are more like the torture of Sisyphus than housework, with its endless repetition: the clean becomes soiled, the soiled is made clean, over and over, day after day'.[12] Arguably, not only is Eveline paralysed by her sense of duty towards her parents (living and dead) and the children for whom she cares, but her paralysis (Joyce uses the words 'passive' and 'helpless') is compounded by her awareness that, should she leave for Buenos Ayres, she might, as a woman, face a worse fate than she might in Ireland.[13] In the final moments of Joyce's story Eveline, 'set[s] her white face' and stares with expressionless eyes, becoming statuesque; a plaster saint in whose body the paralysing forces of social expectations and domestic duties are reified. This compounded paralysis results in Eveline not simply being petrified on the quay, but also doomed to inarticulacy. She is silent; incapable of back talk, capable only of a single paralinguistic utterance—'a cry of anguish'—which is never heard but immediately lost 'amid the seas'.[14]

In a comparative and intersectional essay exploring class, race, and gender in relation to domestic service, Danielle Phillips-Cunningham observes: 'Of all the ethnic and racial groups of women who migrated to northeastern cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Irish immigrant, southern Black, and Afro Caribbean women were most likely to be concentrated in domestic service'.[15] The spectre of servitude

12 James Joyce, 'Eveline', in *The Essential James Joyce*, ed. by Harry Levin (St Albans: Granada, 1977), pp. 40–44 (p. 41); Teresa Deevy, 'Katie Roche', in *Teresa Deevy Reclaimed*, 2 vols, ed. by Jonathan Bank, John P. Harrington, and Christopher Morash (New York: Mint Theater, 2011 and 2017), I, 58; Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London: Random House, Vintage Classics, 1997), p. 470. I cite the recent Mint edition of *Katie Roche* here, but the 1939 edition has an ellipsis after 'butter' and pauses are always pertinent in Deevy's work. See Teresa Deevy, *Three Plays: Katie Roche, The King of Spain's Daughter, The Wild Goose* (London: Macmillan, 1939), p. 10.

13 Joyce, 'Eveline', p. 44.

14 Ibid. I owe this and the previous point to Úna Kealy.

15 Danielle Phillips-Cunningham, 'Slaving Irish "Ladies" and Black "Towers of Strength in the Labor World": Race and Women's Resistance in Domestic Service', *Women's History Review*, 30.2 (2021), 190–207. In this context one wonders

loomed at home as well as abroad.[16] A remarkable essay published in 1929 by Signe Toksvig sheds light on 'Eveline' and on Deevy, whom Toksvig knew, with whom she corresponded, and to whom she showed work-in-progress.[17] Toksvig tells of 'a walk on a soft day in a southern Irish county' and an encounter with three sisters of her maid Moll:

> I looked at Katie [...] dressed in rags, and with little naked blue-grey feet in the cold deep mud. Katie was very dirty. Katie was a sight. [...] But my thoughts took a juster turn. When this little Katie grew up and became some other housekeeper's problem, would they really see her? No, no more than I was doing, although I knew all the facts. But the facts, so tangibly dramatized, of my own troubles had put the others out of my mind. Katie-in-the-mud, however, knocked them back in again. And the answer is: Why wouldn't they go to America, and why wouldn't they be 'raw' when they get there![18]

The word 'raw' refers back to Toksvig's friends talking of getting 'a raw Irish girl' as a servant.[19] As Marie Clarke observes, young women in rural Ireland had little choice but to join the servant class:

> Unqualified rural girls had few chances of employment outside the domestic and agricultural sectors [...] where the labour market was very strongly gender segregated. They had little choice as to whether or not they went into domestic service [...] viewed as more stigmatising than work carried out by male farm labourers.[20]

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if Eveline's 'white face' denotes more than her pallor and panic.

16 As Beckett's Mrs. Rooney says: 'It is suicide to be abroad. But [...] what is it to be at home? A lingering dissolution'. Samuel Beckett, *All That Fall* (1956), in *Collected Shorter Plays* (London: Faber, 1984), p. 15.

17 See Signe Toksvig, 'Why Girls Leave Ireland', *The Survey*, 1 August 1929, pp. 483–486 and 509. See also Signe Toksvig, 'A Visit to Lady Gregory', *The North American Review*, 214.789 (1921), 190–200 (p. 190): 'Here and there [...] the madder-red of a Galway petticoat gleamed in a small yellow cornfield, and girls let their sickles fall to look at us'. On Toksvig's literary relations with Deevy see Lis Pihl, '"A Muzzle Made in Ireland": Irish Censorship and Signe Toksvig', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 88.352 (1999), 448–457 (p. 453). On Toksvig as a writer forced by Irish censorship to return home to Denmark, see Sandra McAvoy, 'All about Eve: Signe Toksvig and the Intimate Lives of Irish Women, 1926–1937', *The Irish Review*, 42 (2010), 43–57.

18 Toksvig, 'Why Girls Leave Ireland', p. 483.

19 Molly 'is the type who aims for America [...] it has dawned on me now what my friends meant when they said with such queer expressions that they had got '"a raw Irish girl"'. Toksvig, 'Why Girls Leave Ireland', p. 483.

20 Marie Clarke, 'Education for the Country Girls: Vocational Education in Rural Ireland 1930–1960', *History of Education* (2021), 1–16 (p. 6).

Emigration was one alternative to domestic servitude, thought to be encouraged by education: 'Some were of the view that vocational schools encouraged young girls to emigrate'.[21] Key to the predicament of young women was the cultural isolation they faced: 'Girls in rural Ireland were not in a position to live independently and did not have the same access to popular culture as their urban peers'.[22] This last point is worth pondering. There were no limits to the dreams of leaving or fantasies of escape that rural women entertained, and the question of 'popular culture' is complicated by the fact that such culture could materialise in the remotest of places, like the all-female production of *Coriolanus* Ellie Irwin witnessed in one of Deevy's earliest dramas.[23]

In Joyce's 'Eveline' the romantic adventurer is male. Eveline is speechless throughout, never uttering a solitary syllable. She makes herself heard just once, her exit line: 'Amid the seas she sent a cry of anguish'.[24] The ending of 'Eveline' is much debated. Deevy's drama possesses the same degree of poetic depth and deserves the same assiduous attention. Úna Kealy's essay on *The King of Spain's Daughter*, a brilliant example of the kind of subtle and theoretically informed criticism Deevy demands, invites us to think more deeply about the play's ending.[25] Eveline Hill was a domestic drudge with a brutal father who dreamt of getting away. Like Joyce—and yet not like Joyce—Deevy approached her would-be escapees unsentimentally.

From Christy Mahon to Roddy Mann

The King of Spain's Daughter opens with Annie Kinsella, an adventurous young woman of twenty with a great imagination, giving a long kiss to Roddy Mann, while resisting the advances of Jim Harris, her would-be suitor, and the threats of her father that he'll sign her over to the factory for five years if she does not settle down and behave herself. Jim is a

21 Ibid., p. 7.
22 Ibid., p. 6.
23 See 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.
24 Joyce, *The Essential James Joyce*, p. 44.
25 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.

saver, and one of the things Jim wants to save is Annie *as she is*, not as a reluctant gift from her father. She's as she is, Jim says, a dreamer and a desirer of other men, because 'she must; she's made that way, she can't help it'.[26] Jim is painted in flattering tones in the play's opening, standing up for Annie in her absence against both her father and Mrs Marks, the neighbour. Annie's philandering, as her father calls it, is in stark contrast to Jim's apparent steadfast love. When Mrs Marks urges him to give up on Annie, Jim retorts: 'Give up me life, is it?'.[27] But when Annie appears with Roddy Mann in tow, we see another side of Jim—jealous, petty, and willing to stand by while Annie is beaten by her father. And there's something else. In an early exchange with Mrs Marks, Jim is advised against pursuing Annie because 'her head is full of folly and her heart is full of wile'.[28] Mrs Marks appeals to his sense of domestic responsibility—'You have two good sisters, can't you settle with them, or get a sensible girl'—which Jim dismisses as 'a lot of old talk'.[29]

Jim's 'two good sisters' come back into the play, mentioned by name, when Annie reluctantly agrees to marry him and Jim says distractedly, 'I'll tell them look out for a place so: they can get a room in the town'. 'Tell who?', asks Annie: 'Molly and Dot. 'Tis I have the house: they knew they'd have to go'. Annie's response demonstrates her ability to see beyond herself:

> Annie: Well, then, they needn't. Let them stop where they are. What would I do without a woman to talk to?
>
> Jim: I want you to myself.
>
> Annie: I never heard the like! A good 'man' he'd make to begin by turnin' his two sisters on the road! And they after mindin' the place since his mother died.[30]

The disagreement escalates when Jim takes Annie's reaction as a marriage deal-breaker:

26 Teresa Deevy, 'The King of Spain's Daughter', in *Teresa Deevy Reclaimed*, II, 17–26 (p. 18).
27 Ibid., p. 19.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., p. 23.

Jim: Will you go back on me so?

Annie: Leave Molly and Dot stay where they are.

Jim: I will not.

Annie: What great harm would they do?

Jim: They'd be in it—spoilin' the world.

Annie: Spoilin' the world! I think you're crazy.

Jim: When we shut the house door I'll have no one in it but you and me.[31]

Jim begins to sound worryingly familiar to Annie, so much so that she says, 'I think I'll stop with my father'.[32] Gerardine Meaney makes precisely this point: 'Jim, who offers to throw his sisters out of his house to facilitate the marriage, seems more like her father than initial appearances had suggested'.[33] Molly and Dot are even more disadvantaged than Eveline in that they are completely silenced. They are not given an opportunity to 'talk back' or even, like Eveline, cry out in anguish at being cast out of their house. The exchange between Annie and Jim above exposes how the shelter provided by an Irish home was provisional for women whose male relations could, upon a whim, remove or restrict that shelter. Molly and Dot's 'room in the town'[34] could be but a stopgap until either or both leave Ireland to become the 'raw' domestic servants described so vividly in Signe Toksvig's account previously quoted. Jim's true colours come out: the same prison grey as those of the bride's dress that Annie splashed with rainbow romance.

Jim points out that with her father comes the factory, so Annie suggests she might run away, to which Jim counters: 'He'd go after you: he'd have you crippled'.[35] This is the point at which Jim pulls out the savings account notebook and mentions the twenty pounds he has

31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Gerardine Meaney, 'The Sons of Cuchulainn: Violence, the Family, and the Irish Canon', *Éire-Ireland*, 41.1/2 (2006), 242–261 (p. 254).
34 Deevy, 'The King of Spain's Daughter', p. 23.
35 Ibid.

scraped together over four years, money for him and Annie, but money too that Molly and Dot, minding the house, could have done with. If Jim is a saver rather than a saviour, and mean with it, then Molly and Dot are two of the unseen, unheard characters in Deevy's drama, mentioned by name, spoken of by Jim, and spoken for—in sisterhood and solidarity—by Annie.

Joanna Luft points out that while readers of Joyce's 'Eveline' have assumed that 'the two young children [...] left to her charge' are her siblings, the text makes clear that 'her brothers and sisters were all grown up', leading Luft to observe: 'The absence of an immediate familial tie between Eveline and her charges reduces her obligation to remain in Dublin, yet they are certainly part of the "home" that her mother enjoins her to keep together'.[36] Luft's observation of the notion of a reduced obligation is problematic. Family ties are complex. In Deevy's play, Annie rebukes Jim for being prepared to abandon his sisters in taking on Annie as his new exclusive family. Annie's compassion is not fuelled by 'an immediate family tie', yet she is ready to break off her prospective tie to Jim due to his cold-heartedness towards Molly and Dot. Unlike Eveline, Annie is not taken by—in the broadest sense—a single man. She is taken by the bride with the dress of many colours, just as Ellie Irwin was not enamoured of any man but beguiled by another girl, Charlotta Burke, playing a man using only her voice, performing active speech out of costume.[37] Annie feels an affinity and the need for female friendship at Jim's suggestion that he'll turn his sisters out of the house when he marries her, but it transpires that she fears the factory more than she fears settling down.

Synge's shadow is always in the background of Deevy's deft storytelling. Gerardine Meaney regards *The King of Spain's Daughter* as

36 Joanna Luft, 'Reader Awareness: Form and Ambiguity in James Joyce's "Eveline"', *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 35.2 (2009), 48–51 (p. 48).

37 'Annie has made for herself out of this bride's departure by water a symbol of passage into happiness, and since it is no more than a symbol, she may, like all poets, be annoyed when taxed with discrepancy in her account of the symbol's colour-properties. The bride is variously dressed, according to Annie, in "flamin' red from top to toe," in "shimmerin' green from head to foot," and "in pale, pale gold." [...] We learn that in fact the bride was dressed in grey, and that there is some suspicion about her husband's motives in marrying her". John Jordan, 'Teresa Deevy: An Introduction', *Irish University Review*, 1.8 (1956), 13–26 (p. 18). See Teresa Deevy, 'In Search of Valour', in *Teresa Deevy Reclaimed*, II, 3–13.

an 'occluded parody of *The Playboy of the Western World*'.[38] The echoes of Synge's *Playboy* are as intriguing as those of Joyce's 'Eveline', but the matchup of Annie as Pegeen Mike, Roddy Mann as Christy Mahon, and Jim Harris as Shaun Keogh is complicated by the fact that Annie is the playgirl and she doesn't lose her only playboy, for behind Roddy is another beau, Jack Bolger, unseen and unimportant to Annie but pulled out of the hat by others as proof of her unreliability. As Jim says, 'We're all the wan! You have no heart'.[39] 'We're all the wan!' All men are the same, that's Jim's fear, fleshed out when he morphs into a replica of Annie's father, hoist by his own patriarchal petard.

The King of Spain's Daughter opens with a stage direction that locates Annie in a grassy space between a sign saying 'No Traffic' and another saying 'Road Closed'.[40] Later, Annie laments: 'Where would I ever find a way out of here?'[41] It looks like there's no way out, except for the fields beyond, or the river where the by turns envied and pitied new bride sets sail. The title of Deevy's play comes from a poem by Padraic Colum entitled 'A Drover' (1922).[42] At one point Annie recites a verse softly to herself, and Jim barks back: 'I'm sick of that thing! Who's the King of Spain's daughter?' Annie answers: 'It is myself I seen in her—sailin' out into the sun, and to adventure'.[43] At the play's end,

38 Meaney, 'Sons of Cuchulainn', p. 253.
39 Deevy, 'The King of Spain's Daughter', p. 22
40 Ibid., p. 17.
41 Ibid., p. 24
42 'Study for a moment the third verse in "The Drover": Then the wet, winding roads,/ Brown bogs with black water;/ And my thoughts on white ships/ And the King of Spain's daughter. It is redolent of Gaelic tradition, suggestiveness, indefiniteness, colouring and alliteration. [...] Thomas MacDonough has reminded us, to isolate the phrase "King of Spain's daughter" from tradition would render it almost meaningless'. James F. Cassidy, 'The Poetry of Padraic Colum. II', *The Irish Monthly*, 49.587 (1921), 314–318 (p. 314). See also Edward Sapir, 'The King of Spain's Daughter and the Diver', *Poetry*, 16.4 (1920), 179–182, in which a siren lures a sailor to his death. Behind these verses lies 'The Little Nut Tree', a nursery rhyme supposedly about Katherine of Aragon's arrival at the court of Henry VII in 1501 to marry Prince Arthur, viewed as alluding to how a Spanish alliance promised access to the spice trade. See Emrys Chew, *Arming the Periphery: The Arms Trade in the Indian Ocean during the Age of Global Empire* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 101–102. See also Pam Jarvis, 'Not Just "Once" Upon a Time', *Genealogy*, 3.44 (2019), 1–14 (pp. 7–8), https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy3030044 and, for some serious poetic detective work, see Patrick Gillespie, 'I Had a Little Nut Tree...', *PoemShape*, 4 June 2012.
43 Deevy, 'The King of Spain's Daughter', p. 22.

Annie reacts to the suggestion that Jim is a good boy and she should be a good girl by saying: 'He put by two shillin's every week for two hundred weeks. I think he is a man that—supposin' he was jealous—might cut your throat'.[44] The stage direction reads: '(*Quiet, exultant, she goes*)', leaving Mrs Marks, the neighbour, to lament 'The Lord preserve us! That she'd find joy in such a thought!'[45] Úna Kealy has addressed this ending with considerable clarity and integrity of purpose.[46] Is it all talk, or active speech? Annie can usefully be set alongside Joyce's Eveline, as someone whose dreams of leaving are dashed—but how far and to what effect?

According to Cathy Leeney, 'reasons for the extraordinarily low marriage rate in Ireland in the nineteen twenties and nineteen thirties' included the 'legacy of the famine' as well as 'primogeniture, fear of poverty involved in having a large family, lack of means and of employment, and the likelihood of emigration', while for women '[…] marriage usually meant loss of financial independence, and emotional and physical vulnerability to the will of their husbands'.[47] Speaking of Deevy's drama, Leeney observes:

> Annie Kinsella imagines marriage as a rite of passage into adventure. This vision of her transforming imagination is necessary in enabling her to survive the reality of matrimony—the loss of herself. Her instinctive understanding of this danger is the very stuff of the play.[48]

For one of her biographers: 'A central preoccupation in much of Deevy's drama is the condition of high-spirited, imaginative young women in rural Ireland, who are forced to reject romantic aspirations in the face of an unglamorous, unchanging reality'.[49] An early review of the published version of the play concluded with a familiar misogynist trope: '*The King of Spain's Daughter* is the one-act taming (perhaps) of one of Miss Deevy's temperamental shrews'.[50] Is Annie tamed? Stephen Murray says

44 Ibid., p. 26.
45 Ibid.
46 Kealy, 'Resisting Power and Direction', pp. 186–188.
47 Cathy Leeney, 'Themes of Ritual and Myth in Three Plays by Teresa Deevy', *Irish University Review*, 25.1 (1995), 88–116 (p. 90).
48 Ibid., p. 91.
49 Frances Clarke, 'Deevy, Teresa (1894–1963)', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, 2009.
50 J.J.H., 'Review of *Three Plays by Teresa Deevy, Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*', 29.113 (1940), 156–158 (p. 157).

of *The King of Spain's Daughter* that 'the central theme is that marriage is a disappointment but that by numbing one's sensibilities, one can put up with it'.[51] Is Annie numb at the end? Or, conversely, perversely, is she still romancing, still fantasising passionately about a different life? It's been argued that Annie 'wishes for a romantic epic life and this dreaming is scorned by the other characters'.[52]

The lamentation of Synge's Pegeen—'Oh my grief. I've lost him surely. I've lost the only playboy of the western world'—is supplanted in Deevy's play by Annie's exultation: 'I think he is a man that—supposin' he was jealous—might cut your throat', a statement that echoes the reception of Christy Mahon rather than his departure.[53] This is where we came in with Synge, for when Pegeen hears of Christy's propensity for violence she says, 'if I'd that lad in the house, I wouldn't be fearing the loosed khaki cut-throats, or the walking dead'.[54] Annie dreams of a dramatic departure from the life she leads—from her father, the factory, and an emotionally frugal husband—even if it means a dramatic death. Gerardine Meaney puts it nicely and icily when she remarks drily: 'Instead of pretending to be a murderer, Annie Kinsella can ultimately hope only to be interestingly murdered'.[55] But is her final wish for a man who would cut her throat through jealousy part of Annie's dream?

I began with Eveline at the gangway clinging to the guardrail. Did she stay or did she go? What should she have done? We still do not know. The jury is out on Annie too. Is she in the end another victim of male violence wishing fatalistically for more, or an imaginative and independent-minded woman looking out for other women, and talking back to men? Drama at its most dynamic encourages diversity of interpretation.

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51 Stephen Murray, 'The One-Act Plays of Teresa Deevy', *Irish University Review*, 25.1 (1995), 126–132 (p. 127).

52 Caoilfhionn Ní Bheacháin, 'Sexuality, Marriage and Women's Life Narratives in Teresa Deevy's *A Disciple* (1931), *The King of Spain's Daughter* (1935) and *Katie Roche* (1936)', *Estudios Irlandeses*, 7 (2012), 79–91 (p. 86).

53 Synge, *The Playboy of the Western World*, p. 146; Deevy, 'The King of Spain's Daughter', p. 26.

54 Synge, *The Playboy of the Western World*, p. 107; 'loosed khaki cut-throats' is a reference to the British Army veterans of the Boer War (1899–1902).

55 Meaney, 'The Sons of Cuchulainn', p. 255.

Speech Acts

The power of speech that Joyce denies Eveline is what marks Annie out as unconstrained. The simple act of talking back is speech at its most active:

> Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side, a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life, and new growth possible. It is that act of speech, of 'talking back' that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of moving from object to subject, that is the liberated voice.[56]

As Úna Kealy and Kate McCarthy contend: 'Annie refuses to be silenced and she alone, within the world of the play, demonstrates the capacity to imagine something more vibrant than the grey life on offer'.[57] Mary Louise Pratt observes that certain strands of speech-act theory consider deviant language that is playful rather than productive, including 'some forms of expression primarily associated with women, such as gossip, small talk, or euphemism; and other forms like circumlocution, indirectness, or deliberate ambiguity, that are associated with communication across hierarchy and across lines of conflict'.[58] Pratt calls for:

> a theory of linguistic representation which acknowledges that representative discourse is always engaged in both fitting words to world and fitting world to words; that language and linguistic institutions in part construct or constitute the world for people in speech communities, rather than merely depicting it. Representative discourses, fictional or nonfictional, must be treated as simultaneously world-creating, world-describing, and world-changing undertakings.[59]

56 hooks, 'Talking Back', p. 128.

57 Úna Kealy and Kate McCarthy, 'Shape Shifting the Silence: An Analysis of *Talk Real Fine, Just Like a Lady* by Amanda Coogan in Collaboration with Dublin Theatre of the Deaf, an Appropriation of Teresa Deevy's *The King of Spain's Daughter*', in *The Golden Thread: Irish Women Playwrights, 1716–2016*, 2 vols, ed. by David Clare, Fiona McDonagh, and Justine Nakase (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2021), I, 197–210 (p. 205).

58 Mary Louise Pratt, 'Ideology and Speech-Act Theory', *Poetics Today*, 7.1 (1986) 59–72 (p. 69).

59 Ibid., p. 71.

For Raymond Williams, verbal excess in Irish drama is a sign of material lack, a stand-in or understudy for the main protagonist of economic power. But the belittlement of backtalk undervalues the efficacy of such speech. For hooks and Pratt, words are world-changing and talking back is worldmaking. Fusing defiance and deviance, Deevy's aim is not to parody the empty talk of the powerless but to show that speech acts, speech performs, speech liberates.

Robert F. Panara, a Deaf poet who adapted plays for Deaf actors and audiences and was a key figure behind the National Theater of the Deaf (NTD) established in Waterford, Connecticut in 1967, famously asked:

> And what of tomorrow?—and the future? Shall we live to see a deaf writer emerge from the shadow of obscurity and assume the stature of a Robert Frost or an Ernest Hemingway or a Tennessee Williams?[60]

Deevy is a writer of such stature. One aim of the NTD was the provision of 'adequate apprenticeship to Deaf directors, writers, and technicians'.[61] Writers like Panara and Deevy who were deafened in their youth—Deevy from Ménière's disease, Panara from spinal meningitis—acted as door-openers for others. As a woman writer, Deevy is a trailblazer of particular note, exemplary in her understanding of the power of fantasy and the transformative nature of impassioned speech. Deevy has not had the criticism she deserves. Despite acknowledging that 'Deevy's female protagonists […] occupy the dominant, rather than subordinate, position in terms of the Activity/Passivity opposition', Shaun Richards still regards her plays as characterised by 'conservatism in both form and theme'.[62] Likewise, Christopher Murray sees in Deevy's work a

60 Robert F. Panara, 'The Deaf Writer in America from Colonial Times to 1970: PART II', *American Annals of the Deaf*, 115.7 (1970), 673–679 (p. 679). I capitalise the 'd' here in accordance with the positive values within the Deaf community and Deaf culture associated with varying levels of audiological hearing. The NTD capitalise Deaf (https://ntd.org/) and so, it seems appropriate to capitalize the D in the phrase 'Deaf actors' when making reference to NTD. For more on d/Deaf see the entry on 'Deaf, deaf', in the Centre for Integration and Improvement of Journalism, *The Diversity Style Guide* (2024), and the entry for 'Deaf' in The National Centre for Disability and Journalism, Arizona State University, *Disability Language Guide* (2021).

61 David Hays, 'The National Theatre of the Deaf: Present and Future', *American Annals of the Deaf*, 112.4 (1967), 590–592 (p. 590).

62 Shaun Richards, '"Suffocated in the Green Flag": The Drama of Teresa Deevy and 1930s Ireland', *Literature & History*, 4.1 (1995), 65–80 (p. 71, p. 77).

'pragmatic accommodation with Irish social conditions', in keeping with a compliant tradition: 'The stifled voice is at once the condition and the distinction of women's drama in Ireland'.[63] Stifling and suffocation are arguably actions of gatekeepers, including reading committees, producers, critics, and publishers, rather than women playwrights. Silent voices turn out to be silenced voices.[64]

The insight and sophistication of Deevy's social criticism and the parallels and contrasts between Joyce's Eveline and her character of Annie Kinsella serve to underline her significance as a writer who gives active speech to her women protagonists at moments of crisis—remembrance, recognition or resignation, the latter always overlaid by defiance. Like Gretta in another of Joyce's stories, 'standing near the top of the first flight, in the shadow [...] leaning on the banisters, listening', Eveline is 'a symbol of something'.[65] While Gretta stands stock still listening to Mr D'Arcy singing 'The Lass of Aughrim', Eveline's ear catches the boat's 'long mournful whistle into the mist' and '[a] bell clanged upon her heart', a clang which echoes as a 'knell' in Annie Kinsella's soul when Jim talks about marriage and settling down.[66] The stillness and speechlessness of Joyce's female characters at these tipping points, seen through the eyes of their male partners, is at variance with the enduring desire for adventure articulated by Deevy's heroines. What Annie admires most, and finds in Jim's notebook, is perseverance, resilience, determination. These are the qualities she holds dear. Her relentless quest for passionate engagement, even if it manifests as jealousy and danger, deviates from Eveline's—and Gretta's—passivity. Annie ends the play reading and musing, showing she can wring romance from a savings book. Deevy's defiant heroines are not a symbol of something; they are something.

63 Christopher Murray, 'Introduction: The Stifled Voice', *Irish University Review*, 25.1 (1995), 1–10 (p. 9, p. 10).

64 See Kathleen Quinn, 'Silent Voices', *Theatre Ireland*, 30 (1993), 9–11: 'The voices of women dramatists will be silent no more' (p. 11).

65 Joyce, 'The Dead', in *The Essential James Joyce*, p. 163.

66 Joyce, 'Eveline', p. 44; Deevy, 'The King of Spain's Daughter', p. 24.

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