Hedda Friberg-Harnesk, *Reading John Banville through Jean Baudrillard*

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intitulé « (Un)sentimental Timekeeping », p. 65-74) ayant appartenu à la mère d'Arthur dans les dernières années de sa vie, passées dans une maison de retraite en Irlande du Nord, tandis que son fils faisait les allers-retours depuis l'Écosse en ferry, lui évoque une capsule temporelle qui aurait emmagasiné les derniers jours de sa mère, sa présence et son absence. Cette pendule sert à l'essayiste de *vanitas*, et lui rappelle l'inexorabilité de la mort et la nécessité de ne pas perdre de temps, « *as much an aide-mémoire for finitude as a practical chronometer* » (p. 72; voir également, concernant le motif isotopique du *memento mori*, « *Death and the Maiden* », p. 130 et « *The Archaeology of Days* », p. 176).

À la lecture de ces « colibris métaphoriques », pour reprendre l'expression d'Arthur, on est parfois tenté de lui reprocher une certaine tendance à l'exagération, ou de prendre les choses par le petit bout de la lorgnette, ce qu'il nie d'ailleurs : « *I've tried to resist the theatrics of exaggeration; tried not to make mountains out of molehills* » (p. 62). L'écriture est parfois précieuse, tant elle vise à l'exactitude et à la minutie du détail, voire à la limite de la pédanterie, tant elle est savante dans ses moindres expressions. Mais, petit à petit, l'œil du lecteur s'habitue à ce constant changement d'échelle entre microcosme et macrocosme, et finit par se délecter du raffinement de l'écriture de l'essayiste, qui prend le temps d'analyser les phénomènes du réel qui nous entoure, dans toute leur infinie diversité. Dans son épilogue intitulé « *Thirty-Six Ways of Looking at an Essay* » (p. 237-242), d'après les *Cent vues du mont Fuji* d'Hokusai, Arthur décrit les modalités qui selon lui caractérisent le genre de l'essai. Nous n'en retiendrons ici que la première : « *An essay richly complicates the commonplace, revealing mazes of meaning coiled within the mundane* » (p. 238).

Marion NAUGRETTE-FOURNIER

Hedda Friberg-Harnesk, *Reading John Banville through Jean Baudrillard*, Amherst – New York, Cambria Press, 2018, 222 p.

Hedda Friberg-Harnesk sheds new light on the fiction of John Banville thanks to an original theoretical frame: her perceptive use of Baudrillard's orders of simulacra engages the reader in a stimulating critical conversation with the unstable and uncertain worlds and beings of Banvillean fiction. She explores nine of John Banville's works published between 1997 and 2015, seven novels (*The Untouchable*, *Eclipse*, *Shroud*, *The Sea*, *The Infinities*, *Ancient Light*, and *The Blue Guitar*) and two plays (*God's Gift* and *Love in the Wars*), favouring his later works over earlier literary productions, finding there a more acute, more accomplished sense of the "simulation of an absent reality" (p. 7), which to Baudrillard characterises our capitalist society. The author's eloquent, thought-provoking study grants the reader a deeper insight into Banville's bewitching "territory of mercurial instability" (p. 1).

The book includes an introduction, eight chapters exploring one or several of Banville's works, and a concluding chapter articulating a poetics of creative simulation. The author first delineates "Baudrillardian ideas on simulation and the orders of simulacra" (p. 8) and convincingly presents the latter as legitimate and original analytical tools. Indeed, to readers of Banvillean fiction, Baudrillard's description of images as objects progressively distancing themselves from their original models, from pre-Renaissance symbolic representation to distortion of reality (first order), from artful dissimulation (second order) to outright cancellation of reality (third order), cannot fail to evoke processes at play in a fiction where "meaning is shrouded, shifting, or lacking, and appearances deceive" (p. 1). Other concepts by Nietzsche (eternal recurrence, for one), a major influence on Baudrillard, or Bataille (excesses of the festival), are presented as secondary analytical approaches. The chapters explore Banville's works chronologically, with *rapprochements* between the novels featuring the same issues at focus (memory in *The Untouchable* and *The Sea*), the same masks and masking strategies (Alexander Cleave and Alex Vander in *Eclipse*, *Shroud* and *Ancient Light*), or the same genre (*God's Gift* and *Love in the Wars*).

The application of Baudrillardian concepts to known literary concerns in Banville's fiction (uncertainty, instability, duplicity, the counterfeit) proves particularly enlightening: the threat of a "cancellation by the double" (p. 93) seems pervasive in Banville's fiction, locating it on the frontier between Baudrillard's second and third orders of simulacra. Reality and truth are threatened by cancellation through the shifting "play[s] of masks" (p. 42) in *The Untouchable*, or the acts of "dys-remember[ance]" (p. 46) in *The Sea*; similarly, the self is threatened by cancellation through the Nietzschean "delight in simulation" (p. 56) defining the actors in *Eclipse*, *Shroud*, and *Ancient Light*, and through the mischievous gods "copy[ing] appearances and steal[ing] identities" (p. 96) in *God's Gift* or *The Infinities*. Baudrillard's idea of the "holographic double" serves an engaging analysis of the elusive feminine character Cass, revealing humans' vain desire to seize the real, and his notions of life-in-death and blurred demarcations between the human and the non-human in the age of simulacra illuminate a compelling reading of *The Infinities*. Banville's second play, *Love in the Wars*, interestingly stands out as firm ground in Banville's usually mercurial fictive territories: the author locates it outside Baudrillard's orders of simulacra, as befits its postulated affiliation to a pre-Renaissance, symbolic order characterised by "death, sacrifice, and the rule", where the random, "a primary source of the radical uncertainty of the contemporary world" (p. 127) so dear to Banvillean fiction, has no say.

The eighth chapter explores *The Blue Guitar* in the light of Baudrillard's notion that in the age of simulacra, "[we are] consigned to an infinite replay" (p. 173): the recurrences and reiterations in characters (actors, clowns, vacant selves) or settings (houses, rooms) that link Banville's work inter- and intra-textually, might be viewed as signs of a post-real age of simulacra where similar elements, or rather imperfect copies, creatively interact, evidencing a Baudrillardian precession of appearances. The author posits in a thought-provoking concluding chapter that this propensity of the Banvillean narrator to "turn his uniquely registering eye to the materials passing

by in this loop of infinite replay and [reuse] them in an act of creative recycling” (p. 187), rather than indulging in self-pity on the brink of nothingness, should be considered a “strategy for managing the void” (p. 186). This brilliant book, which itself involves creative reiterations, casts light on Banville’s mature treatment of exquisitely recycled literary concerns in his more recent fiction, urging the reader to delve further into his work and again admire its beautifully crafted simulacra.

Julie LECAS

Conor McNamara, *War and Revolution in the West of Ireland: Galway, 1913-1922*, Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2018, 243 p.

The history, and historiography, of the Irish revolutionary period is inevitably dominated by events in Dublin and Munster. While this is understandable, an overfocus on these two obscures the situation in the other parts of the country. Given that the revolution was driven by an assortment of factors which varied from place to place, regional analysis offers the best way to examine it. Conor McNamara’s book follows the template set by David Fitzpatrick and Marie Coleman and attempts to rebalance the picture by focusing on a specific area, examining both the causes and course of the revolution there. The result is something of a hybrid, bringing together an analysis of long-term underlying trends with the events within the relatively short timeframe of the Rising and war of independence itself.

Galway was a microcosm of how local and national factors combined to drive the revolution in Ireland. McNamara devotes a great deal of time to the land issue in Galway, where agrarian agitation fuelled violence long before 1919. The county is depicted as a conservative, poor and divided society, in which people’s lives were dominated by the struggle to survive, and one in which life in the Irish-speaking West was very different from the affluent East. A large number of families attempted to eke out a living on small plots of between one and five acres, meaning that land hunger was widespread and drove intimidation, attacks on animals, arson, assaults and murder against large farmers, landlords, agents and graziers. This context is important because Galway was invariably classified as being a “disturbed” county by the police but, as McNamara suggests, there was good reason for Galway farmers to be dissatisfied. The outbreak of war in 1914 and the Irish Parliamentary Party’s support split the Volunteers across the county as well as the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), with clubs in the south of the county joining the short-lived National GAA from 1915 to 1918. Deep fissures also existed between rural and urban Galway, which was reflected in the spread of attacks on British forces between 1919 and 1921, which were “resolutely rural”. The IRA did not have much support in either Galway city or the larger towns, illustrated by the fact that military officers remained part of the social scene