STAGING IRISHNESS IN ETHEL COLBURN MAYNE'S "THE HAPPY DAY"

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This chapter will analyse the intersection of national and gendered stereotypes in Ethel Colburn Mayne's short story "The Happy Day" (1919). Describing a West of Ireland tour of a newly married English couple around the turn of the twentieth century, the story pokes fun at ideas of Irish national character that were current at the time. Underlying the story's gentle ridicule, however, is a more fundamental scrutiny of the deleterious power of preconceived images, because of the way they cloud perception, obstruct communication, and lead to a performative distortion of the self. The story is exemplary of Mayne's concern with the insidious nature of gender and national stereotyping throughout her oeuvre, but it also reflects and anticipates the slow shift in attitude to ideas of national character and gender identity in the modernist period.

With regard to national identity, Joep Leerssen has argued that the notion of national character was debated and historicised towards the end of the nineteenth century, but that "it was nevertheless still credited with an ontologically autonomous existence, as a 'real' thing pre-existing its articulation and persisting independently from it" ("Imagology" 21). Only after the Second World War, he continues, did scholars fully "abandon a belief in the 'realness' of national characters as explanatory models" (21). Nevertheless, even before that time, national images were subject to change. With regard to Irish identity, many scholars have observed that the nineteenth century witnessed a redefinition of the Irish national character: the "Stage Irishman" of Tudor times, an "uncivilised" character "tossed by primary, uncontrolled emotions, and either wicked or ridiculous, or both," gave way to a definition of Irishness in terms of "spontaneity, creativity, musical abilities and tenderness of feeling" (Leerssen, "Irish" 192). Writers of the Celtic Revival further substantiated that new interpretation of Irish national identity and the Irish tourist industry, which took off around the same time, started to market this national image as a great asset and export product.

Partly as a reaction against the commodification of national images in the final decades of the nineteenth century, literary authors began to treat these images with greater wariness. Leerssen thus notes an "ironic turn" in the modernist treatment of national character, with authors such as Henry James and Thomas Mann using nationality mockingly, "as part of that simplification of a complex, unknowable reality which gives characters a false sense of cognitive control" ("National Character" 74). Yet, even as these notions of national character are evoked ironically, "with a knowing wink from author to reader," Leerssen argues, they are also "perpetuated and given a new lease of life," for "[i]f they are used half-jokingly, they are also used half-

seriously” and thereby “perpetuate the currency of the stereotype they avoid taking seriously” (74-75).

This often uneasy mixture of irony and seriousness in the treatment of national character is also a defining characteristic of the fiction of Ethel Colburn Mayne (1865-1941), an Anglo-Irish woman writer who dissected images of national and gender identity throughout her versatile career. Since her work has been almost entirely forgotten, I will start my analysis with a brief overview of her life and work before turning to a close reading of “The Happy Day.” I will discuss the story’s engagement with the prevalent images of Irish national character in relation to both the establishment of an Irish tourist industry in the final decades of the nineteenth century and the constructions of Irish identity staged in the Celtic Literary Revival. In the final part, I will situate the story’s critique of national stereotypes in the larger context of Mayne’s sustained fictional engagement with the injurious consequences of typecasting, both for interpersonal relationship and for one’s personal sense of self. In its juxtaposition of images of Irishness and womanhood, I will argue, Mayne’s fiction anticipates the more pervasive critique of national and gendered identity in the second half of the twentieth century.

Ethel Colburn Mayne and National Character

Although Ethel Colburn Mayne is almost entirely forgotten now, she was a respected literary figure in early-twentieth-century London. The author of four novels and six short story collections, she also worked as a translator and published several works of biography and literary criticism, including celebrated biographies of Byron and Lady Byron.[1] She was close friends with Violet Hunt, Mary Butts, Ford Madox Ford, and other modernist writers, was involved in the founding of PEN, the international writers’ foundation, and was for many years on the judging panel for the Fémina prize (Waterman 197). Her literary career had started closer to her birthplace in Ireland, however. Mayne was born in Johnstown, Co. Kilkenny in 1865 as the second child in an Anglo-Irish family. Her father was an inspector in the Royal Irish Constabulary and the family followed him on his different postings until they settled in Cork where he was appointed resident magistrate. From her family home in Blackrock, Mayne started submitting short stories to London magazines in the 1890s.[2] The acceptance of one such story, “A Pen-and-Ink Effect,” by the high-profile literary magazine *The Yellow Book* in 1894 presented a break-through for Mayne. She was subsequently

1 The titles of her novels are *Jessie Vandeleur* (1902), *The Fourth Ship* (1909), *Gold Lace: A Study of Girlhood* (1903), and *One of Our Grandmothers* (1916). Her two-volume biography of Byron was published in 1912 and *The Life and Letters of Anne Isabella, Lady Noel Byron: From Unpublished Papers in the Possession of the Late Ralph, Earl of Lovelace* followed in 1929. For a more detailed biography see Waterman; Adams; and D’hoker, *Ethel Colburn Mayne: Selected Stories*.

2 For a more detailed discussion of the circumstances of Mayne’s life in her family home, Rockmahon, in Blackrock, see D’hoker, “Rockmahon.”

invited by its editor, Henry Harland, to take up the post of *The Yellow Book's* sub-editor in London (Samuels Lasner 18).

The experience would prove to be short-lived, but Mayne gained enough confidence, literary acquaintances, and understanding of the publishing world to embark on a literary career. Back in Ireland, she published her first collection of stories, *The Clearer Vision* with the London publisher Fisher Unwin in 1898. Her first novel, *Jessie Vandeleur* was published by Walter Allen in 1902. Both books betray the influence of *The Yellow Book*'s avant-garde poetics as well as the taboo-breaking New Woman fiction of the *fin de siècle* (see D'hoker, "Forgotten"). After her mother's death in 1902 and her father's retirement in 1904, Mayne moved to London, where her career took off in various directions. She remained unmarried but cared for her ageing father and invalid sister. Her literary output dwindled in the late 1930s and was brought to a final halt by the Second World War, as she died in 1941 following injuries sustained during the London Blitz.

As an Anglo-Irish girl growing up in various Irish garrison and naval towns, occupied by British troops, Mayne would have been highly conscious of the prevalent images of national character. In her stories and novels, she often draws on these images to mark the distinctions in class, religion, language, and culture between the Anglo-Irish gentry, their Irish servants, and their English relatives and visitors. Most of her characters are explicitly marked out as "English," "Anglo-Irish," or "Irish," even though she applies the latter two terms rather interchangeably to Ascendancy families. Some good examples of the way such images of national character are deployed with a characteristic ironic distance in Mayne's early work can be found in "The Red Umbrella," a story from Mayne's second collection, *Things That No One Tells* (1910). In the story, an "English" military man tells of his friendship with – and secret love for – an "Irish" girl.[3] While Nina is described as "passionate," "gay," and artistic, the narrator is called "blunt," "hard-headed, and hard-hearted," both by Nina and by her Irish artist friend who, he notes, "accounted for my brusqueries by some ready-made theory of the English character, the 'Army' character" (Mayne, *Things* 6, 7, 11). The red umbrella of the title, which Nina impulsively buys in a Dublin shop, serves her as a ready metaphor for the differences – in terms of both gender and national identity – between the narrator and herself. While the red silk signifies her fiery Irish soul and frivolous femininity, the "straight up and down" handle stands for the English male: "dull-immutable" if "convenient" (9). Although these national stereotypes are treated with some irony and the story subsequently shows them to be, at best, half true, the ease with which they are wielded by all characters nonetheless hints at their power and currency as explanatory models in the early twentieth century.

3 The girl, Nina Crichton, probably belongs to the Anglo-Irish gentry: the encounters take place at the Races, in Dublin, and, later on, in London. At the end of the story, she marries "into diplomacy" (34).

Touring Ireland

Even though Mayne had been living in London for over a decade by the time her major body of short fiction appeared in four collections, she continued to return imaginatively to the Irish places, characters, and problems of her youth.[4] Many of her "Irish" stories stage girls and young women who are struggling against gender norms, forbidding matriarchs, and depressing circumstances (D'hoker, "Daughters"). An exception to this mostly tragic treatment of Irish themes is the story "The Happy Day" from her fourth collection of stories, *Blindman* (1919). It is a funny, even satirical, story of an English couple who take their honeymoon in Ireland. Yet, underlying the comedy is an incisive attack on the poisonous power of national and, to a lesser extent, gendered and personal stereotypes as they cause misperception, misunderstanding, and unhappiness.

The central events of "The Happy Day" take place in Galway, where the English couple, Felicia and Lant (short for Lancelot), are visiting the town's main tourist attractions: the Spanish carvings, the horse fair, the Claddagh, and the seaside tourist tram. Yet, through Felicia's thoughts and memories, the larger context of their visit and their marriage is revealed. Thus, we learn that the newlyweds decided to visit Ireland on the recommendation of a friend:

> In London it was thought that now there was a chance for Irish Home Rule; so it were wise to see the land before it got contented and uninteresting. Felicia had an Irish friend in London, who amid the native ravings showed sometimes a gleam of commonsense. She, vitriolic about English politicians, said that Sinn Fein was at least achieving this – that Ireland would not be "funny" for the British any more. "You'd better go now, if you mean to go at all." (Mayne, *Blindman* 40-1)[5]

The political references set the story in the early twentieth century, when the different Home Rule bills were being debated in Westminster. Similarly, the couple's tour of some well-known tourist spots in the West of Ireland reflects the growing popularity of Ireland as a tourist destination for middle-class English tourists at the time.

In her historical survey, *Irish Tourism, 1880-1980*, Irene Furlong describes the establishment of an Irish tourist industry in the final decades of the nineteenth century, with Thomas Cook and sons drawing on the expanded railway network to offer package tours in Ireland and the energetic Frederick W. Crossley persuading restaurant and hotel owners, local politicians and the Irish government to invest in travel and accommodation and to advertise scenic attractions in magazines in England and beyond (Furlong 13-36). "Realising the importance of propaganda," Furlong notes, "Crossley established a publishing company and in June 1894 he began publication of a monthly journal, the *Irish Tourist*, with two specific aims: 'to make better known

4 These collections are *Come In* (1917), *Blindman* (1919), *Nine of Hearts* (1923), and *Inner Circle* (1925).

5 The page references are to the collection *Blindman*, but the story is also reprinted in D'hoker, *Ethel Colburn Mayne: Selected Stories* (123-35).

to the world Ireland's charm and beauty, and to attract multitudinous visitors'" (20). In 1895, Crossley was instrumental in founding the first "Irish Tourist Association," which became an important force in attracting more tourists to Ireland. Even though Crossley's efforts at developing a tourist industry for Ireland met with some protest from the Gaelic League, who "expressed concern that tourists would 'degrade the noble soul of the Irish peasant'," the League's own celebration of an authentic, Gaelic Ireland of unspoilt beauty and mysterious allure nevertheless served to reinforce the attractions of Ireland, especially the West, for English tourists (Zuelow xxi).

That the early twentieth-century vogue for all things Irish was inspired by the Irish Literary Revival and especially the plays which were a big hit in London theatres is also suggested in "The Happy Day." Felicia and Lant know the plays of Synge, Yeats, and Gregory and, like most of their friends, they went to see *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* not once, but several times. Indeed, throughout the story, Felicia refers to these plays as a prime source of information about the Irish national identity. As the narrator comments wryly,

> they had come with preconceived ideas, and one was that the women of all ages in the 'Irish' parts of Ireland had black rich hair, and blue or deep-grey eyes in pallid faces that were sad or scornful. 'Cathleen-ni-Houlihan:' that was the note; the beauty of the Irish Player's leading actresses had stressed it. London was cured of the Colleen – she was only fit for cinemas and post-cards; but there had to be a type, as with all foreign lands, so Dark Rosaleen was now enthroned in their imaginations. (37-38)

The literature of the Gaelic Revival, it is suggested, has replaced earlier national images with new ones: James Clarence Mangan's "Dark Rosaleen" and Yeats's *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* have replaced Dion Boucicault's *The Colleen Bawn* as sources for the typical Irishwoman, just as the buffoonish and drunken Irish Paddy has been replaced by Synge's noble peasants (Hirsh). Similarly, dissimulation is no longer seen as a discerning Irish trait. Rather, Felicia and Lant know "from Shaw and Synge and Birmingham" that "candour […] was truly national" (41).

Equipped with these literary ideas and national stereotypes, the newlyweds visit Ireland and they do not like it. This verdict, especially Felicity's, as she is the main focaliser, is repeated like a refrain throughout the story: "They weren't liking Ireland"; "So they could hardly like Ireland"; "It was not entirely surprising that they didn't much like Ireland"; "She was trying to like it, for her sense of justice was her strong point" but "It was no good pretending she liked Ireland" (40, 42, 43, 52). The reason is not simply that Ireland does not live up to the couple's "preconceived ideas" that were so ironically introduced in the beginning. On several occasions, in fact, they find these notions confirmed. For instance, the opening line of the story reads: "The town was dirty, stately, comic, and morose – quite Irish, they said" (37). Later on, the beautiful hooded cloaks they had been told about are said to be "really, all they had expected" (45). Similarly, the stereotype that "the Irish had a different standard of cleanliness from the British" is corroborated by the dirty plates and encrusted jugs and basins at their fishing hotel (41). Still, on other occasions the couple finds that Irish reality does

not confirm their expectations. Instead of either the dark Rosaleen or the auburn Colleen, they find “nearly all the little girls [to be] blonde” (37). Moreover, rather than finding the Irish quaint and amusing, as the plays have led them to expect, they find that the Irish consider the tourists a source of mirth:

> it was strange to find, in the torn tragic land, that “English” meant “amusing.” Mockery seemed lurking somewhere; it would have been more comfortable to be looked on as the representatives of tyranny, for then they could have shown their graces, how unlike they were to fevered fancies of the conquerors. But against amusement, joined to the renowned good-manners, they felt helpless, not at all like conquerors. (43)

It is primarily Felicia’s helplessness in the face of Ireland, it seems, that causes her dislike. By at times confirming, at times negating stereotypes, Ireland and the Irish elude her attempts at categorisation. She fails to read the place and the people and is bewildered by what she calls the “right wrongnesses,” the way characteristics that fit the clichés are juxtaposed to – and hence undermined by – incidents that do not fit at all (49).

Reading with a Key

The visit takes a turn for the better, however, when, bored by Galway and on their way to Salt Hill, Felicia and Lant meet a woman who, with her splendid cloak, scarlet petticoat and patterned shawl seems the incarnation of “Cathleen-ni-Houlihan.” The encounter feels like a revelation to the couple: “they felt they had seen Ireland at last” (46). Lant suggests they return to Galway: “‘We’re […] going back to see it *now*.’ Felicia understood him. ‘Now’ they had the key; they’d look at Galway with a fuller understanding. Though they should not again see her, every street would be informed by her” (47). The cloaked woman, she feels, has given them the key to read Ireland and define its national identity. Yet, this key also fails them. Back in Galway, Felicia goes into a shop to buy handkerchiefs and finds herself once again baffled by the odd mixture of “right wrongnesses.” While the shop is “straggling” and “shabby,” as expected, with a “bare floor” and “turfy”-smelling peasant girls, it also has such unexpectedly modern and cosmopolitan features as a “walker,” high prices and “a cash-system of ball-boxes that run round and clatter down” (50). Wandering the Galway streets, Felicia makes one final, desperate bid at interpretation, exclaiming “‘Lant, it’s like Rome’ […] ‘Upon my word, it is. The squalor and stateliness, and the rank alleys and raking blackness!’” (51). But Lant disagrees and the pair decides to leave Ireland and go to the – presumably less confusing – continent.

As will have become clear from the examples, the events as well as the ironic narrative tone of the story serve to mock the English tourists, with their preconceived notions of Ireland and the Irish. This would be no more than a funny, satirical story, were it not for the text’s additional interest in the relationship of Felicia and Lant. Indeed, the couple’s visit to Galway is also the prism through which the story illuminates the larger dynamics of their marriage. Felicia, as her name suggests, has high hopes for a perfect harmony between them: “she was thinking of endless love, an

endless sense of one another" (54). Yet, throughout the day she is anxiously trying to read her husband and gauge his mood. The key she has for understanding her husband is revealed early on in the story:

> He sounded cross. […] If he was cross, she mustn't be. The day seemed setting in for failure; crossness on both sides would be the last stupidity! She'd know if Lant was cross so soon as he said anything that had long words in it. If he didn't finish the long words, but left their ends to float like a spider's threads in his companion's mind, it would be proof that he was not cross. She had marked this as a symptom of good-temper since the earliest days of his love-making. (39)

Lant's habit becomes a second refrain in "The Happy Day," as Felicia's attempts to read and understand Ireland come to be juxtaposed to her attempts to understand her husband. When, at the end of their Galway visit, they decide to leave the baffling island altogether, Felicia is nevertheless "cheered [by] the sense of sharing disappointment":

> "Shall we make off?" said Lant, as if he knew what she was thinking.
> "Yes, for goodness' sake!" cried she.
> "I mean, altogether," Lant went on. "Right out of the daft country."
> He had finished "altogether:" he was getting cross! He hated Ireland as much as she did; that was something. (52-53)

Felicia's sense of mutual understanding and marital accord receives a tragic twist, however, in a little coda at the end of the story. At a dinner party three years later, Felicia participates in a discussion of the notion of "the happy day," a day during which, in retrospect, everything felt right. Felicia asks her husband what that happy day was for him. She is already enumerating all the Southern European places they visited after leaving Ireland, but Lant turns them down:

> "Oh no," said Lant at last, quite audibly. "Not Nemi."
> "Which then?" asked Felicia. But it was no matter; any day would do.
> "The day in Gal . . ." said Lant, and clasped his hand more closely on her arm.
> "The day in Galway!" gasped Felicia.
> "Yes – that day in Gal . . ." he said again, though not as if he'd heard her.
> "But I hated it," she muttered, feeling stunned and sick.
> Lant didn't hear that either; she was glad of it directly. For he mused aloud.
> "I don't know why, and I don't want to. That's my Day. It came togeth . . . noth . . . was left out." He drew her nearer. But she still felt sick. (55-56)

To Felicia, it is as if the world – and her marriage – collapses, as she realises she had been wrong about her husband and he did not share her dislike for Ireland at all. Much like she failed to read Ireland, she also failed to read her husband. In both cases, the keys or preconceived notions that were guiding her proved faulty and led her astray.

Nevertheless, the story does not merely poke fun at an anxious English woman, who desperately clings to simple stereotypes to read the world. For the other characters, too, are shown to perceive the world through preconceived ideas. The Irish, we have seen, find the English "amusing" and eagerly exploit their naivety. Lant similarly approaches his wife through typecasting. Through Felicia's flashbacks we learn that

from the start of their courting, Lant had decided that "she was of the type for whom felicity looms in the offing" and that her "sort of thing" is the ability to sum up situations in a clever and original way: "she had been surprised and pleased, because she did not know she *had* a 'sort of thing,' […] But every time that she was told she had, it pleased her freshly" (39). On several occasions throughout the story, then, Felicia can be seen to play up to Lant's typecasting of her: she searches for ingenious phrases to describe Ireland or the Irish, angling for Lant's approval. In this performative staging of the self, Felicia resembles the Irish actors she saw in a London performance of *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*, as they were also "looking out to see if the effects were savoured" (52). While this is something she disliked at the time – their "being so detestably self-conscious" –, it is clearly a failing she is guilty of herself.

Performing Irishness, Performing Femininity

Through this multi-layered short story, Mayne questions not just the stereotypes about Ireland dominant at the time; she also scrutinises the very practice of typecasting as a pervasive way of dealing with the world. Felicia's misreadings of her husband and of Ireland are clearly linked to the shortcomings of the reading keys she clings to: they occlude her perception of Ireland and cause misunderstanding in her relationship with Lant. At the same time, her genuine panic and helplessness when her notions fail her also demonstrate that she, like everyone else, cannot do without them. While Mayne thus recognises the explanatory power of preconceived images and types, she warns of their harmful effects in a way that seems quite advanced for her time. Particularly prescient, in fact, is her awareness of the performative dimension of such preconceptions as they invite one to stage the stereotypes one is identified with.

This becomes particularly apparent when Mayne's investigation of stereotypes, and their effect on the reading and staging of identity in "The Happy Day," is placed within the larger context of her oeuvre. We have already seen how national images obstruct true understanding between the characters in "The Red Umbrella" and how the narrator even plays up to the dull, sensible Englishman he is taken for or "display[s] sardonically the denseness which [he knows is] expected of the army" (*Things* 11). The same self-conscious performance can be found in "Desertsurges," where an English middle-aged man flirting with a naïve young Irish girl is said to have "found the part ready" and to have "played it well, telling himself that it bored him – but it did not bore him" (*Things* 48-9). If, in these stories, the characters staging certain stereotypes are men, throughout Mayne's short stories women are far more often conscious of this performative dimension of, especially gendered, identity. Indeed, Mayne's critique of the insidious effect of national images in "The Happy Day" gains a larger resonance when juxtaposed to the critique of gendered stereotypes that is even more central to her fiction.

Especially in Mayne's early novels and story collections, the female characters can be seen to struggle with the images and norms of conventional femininity. In this, her

work clearly participates in the New Woman fiction of the *fin de siècle* which sought to replace the Victorian understanding of womanhood in terms of submissive, self-sacrificial and sheltered domesticity by a more active and passionate interpretation of female nature (Pykett 137ff.; Ledger). Still, as with the debates about national character around the same time, these early feminist writers continued to refer to womanhood or womanly identity as realities with great explanatory power and terms like 'type,' 'essence,' 'nature' were used with considerable seriousness in their fiction. Evidence of the currency of these ideas can be found in "Herb of Grace," the opening story of *The Clearer Vision*. The protagonist is a clever and artistic young girl, who finds her "cleverness" sneered upon as "queer" and her professed dislike of children scoffed at (18). A "maternal instinct," she knows, is supposed to be an essential part of the female identity: "you know, a woman without that!," one of the characters remarks (64). In the face of this gendered stereotype, Adela struggles to prove that she can be a 'true' woman without maternal instinct. Hence, she puts forward the theory "of opposed types – the 'mother,' 'the wife' in womanhood" (18). In order to prove herself of the latter, passionate and romantic, type, she impulsively accepts an offer of marriage, even though her husband-to-be expects her to give up her writing as he wants her to be "a woman; not a 'lady novelist'," as if the two cannot be reconciled (53). In an ironic final twist, however, Adela discovers that with the writing she has given up her own true passion, while her feelings for the man are maternal at best.

The self-conscious approach to gendered stereotypes in this story is very similar to the half-serious, half-ironic way in which national stereotypes are treated in "The Happy Day." Yet Mayne again goes further than both ironic mockery and feminist reappropriation when she draws attention to the insidious effect of preconceived ideas on the reading and staging of identity. Even though Adela rebels against the traditional feminine stereotypes, they nevertheless mould her behaviour and lead her into an unhappy marriage. Stories such as "Lucille," "Honoria Byron," "The Lost Leader" and "Madeline Annesley," on the other hand, serve to show how the female character's personality is always more complex than the prevalent gendered "types" suggest.[6] In these stories, a baffled first-person narrator tries – and invariably fails – to square a woman's behaviour with what the traditional images of femininity lead him to expect. In stories like "On the Programme" and "The End of It," further, a male perspective alternates with a female one to reveal the misunderstanding to which these gendered stereotypes give rise. In the latter story, the woman is also very conscious of the fact that she is acting out feminine stereotypes by behaving and flirting in a certain way. One part of her thinks this is fun: "she would laugh and pretend that she thought it rather impertinent […] and then she would dress in a simulated 'hurry' […]. It was such fun, all this pretending, – these airs and graces, these sudden, premeditated fits of absence of mind, these deprecations, these humilities" (*Clearer* 85).

6 "Lucille," "The Lost Leader," "The End of It," and "On the Programme" are stories from *The Clearer Vision*; "Honoria Byron," and "Madeline Annesley" are from *Things That No One Tells.*

Yet, another part of her worries about the misunderstanding to which this performance will give rise.

When read within the context of Mayne’s larger oeuvre, in short, the critique of national images and clichés in “The Happy Day” can be understood as but one aspect of her more sustained scrutiny of the way preconceived ideas about gender, nationality or character lead to a blinkered and one-dimensional perception that distorts a far more complex reality. Mayne’s own experiences as an Anglo-Irish girl growing up in late-Victorian Ireland and setting out on a writing career in the midst of national and feminist ferment in London no doubt aided her in seeing the parallels between the images of Irishness and womanhood with which whole populations were being classified and contained. Mayne’s sharp understanding of the cognitive function of such preconceived images would find confirmation some years later in Walter Lippmann’s ground-breaking study, *Public Opinion* (1922), which would lead to a more critical scrutiny of national stereotypes after the Second World War (see Beller 4). Yet, as we have seen, Mayne goes further even than Lippmann in recognising the negative impact of these biases on personal identity as they become internalised and start to determine one’s being and behaviour. If her awareness of the performative dimension of gender identity thus points forward to the performance theory of Joan Rivière and the queer theory of Judith Butler, her depiction of staging Irishness in “The Happy Day” arguably anticipates the more pervasive critical scrutiny of Irish national identity in the final decades of the twentieth century.

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