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“War was freedom, freedom from futures”: Brian Moore, Lucy Caldwell and the Belfast Blitz Bildungsroman

“We have survived, then, she thinks, but for what?”
(Lucy Caldwell, *These Days*)

On Monday 7th April 1941, German forces bombed the Belfast docks and shipyards to the east of the city. These bombs decimated the Harland and Wolff factory, killed thirteen people, and injured a further eighty-one.¹ The city and people of Belfast were woefully underprepared: “almost no one in authority believed that Belfast was in any danger” and, as a result, the “Northern Ireland government [...] failed to make adequate preparations”.² They were so caught off guard that the air raid sirens didn’t even ring out until after the first bombs had already hit the ground.³ Although the new Northern statelet—barely out of its teens—had technically been at war with Germany since the outbreak in 1939, and there had been a scattering of bombs dropped over the past year or so across the island, this was Belfast’s first sustained experience of total war.⁴ Worse was to come. On Easter Tuesday, 15th April 1941, Belfast was hit again by German bombers. This raid was far more extensive than that of the previous Monday with the bombs largely falling in the residential northern part of the city. Over nine hundred people were killed.⁵ Two more raids were to follow in early May. Over the course of these four raids in Spring 1941 “at least 1,100 people died”, “as many as 220,000 fled from the city” and “53.5% of Belfast’s housing stock had been destroyed or damaged”.⁶ Until this point, the people of Belfast might have felt that they were living through a “phoney war” but the arrival of the Luftwaffe in the spring of 1941 meant “history had conferred the drama of war on this dull, dead town”.⁷

Prior to these bombing raids, this contemporary ambivalence or uncertainty about the Northern statelet’s involvement in this war was not entirely unexpected. The partition of the island in 1921 had led to the creation of an independent 26-county “Irish Free State” in 1922, later renamed “Éire” under Éamon de Valera’s 1937 Constitution of Ireland, and a six-county statelet of “Northern Ireland” which remained a part of the United Kingdom. As Stephen O’Neill argues in his contribution to this special issue, the process of partition was highly fraught and the new statelet deeply unpopular with a sizable percentage of the population. Already occupying a highly anomalous position as a constituent, if contested, part of the UK, the problems of partition were exacerbated by the outbreak of the Second World War. Where the twenty-six counties were officially neutral—“a policy that must be understood primarily as an expression of Irish sovereignty”—the UK was at war with Germany and the Axis Powers.⁸ What is more, Guy Woodward maintains, many nationalists and “Catholics felt uneasy at the prospect of becoming involved in what was often figured as an exclusively

British war effort, thereby implicitly accepting the legitimacy of partition". Such incongruities mean that the Northern "experience of the war cannot easily be incorporated into a British or Irish narrative of the Second World War", euphemistically known as the "Emergency" in the twenty-six counties.

This ambiguity and ambivalence around the Northern statelet naturally shaped both its experience of WWII and the afterlives of this conflict. As a disputed and debated space—is the statelet Irish, British, Northern Irish or a mixture of all three?—it is a territory that is hard to place within narrative traditions that rely so heavily on nation. Woodward claims that the North, "caught between [Ireland and Britain], has often been omitted from both" national narratives about the war. The Northern experience of war really was different from the rest of the UK; Philip Ollerenshaw claims, "the region never fully mobilised its resources to experience total war".⁹ There was no conscription, either military or general, perhaps because, as one character says in Brian Moore's novel, *The Emperor of Ice Cream*, "half the population [would have] take[n] to the hills at the first rumour of a conscription bill" (9). This irreverent remark speaks to how divided the North was (and continues to be), where national identities and allegiances are owed to different imagined communities. Moore's novel is hugely important to our understanding of the Blitz; an argument perhaps best supported by the fact that in their foundational historical scholarship on the conflict, Brian Barton and Robert Fisk resorted to quoting extensively from Moore's fictionalised account of the war. While Moore did have first-hand experience of the Blitz, his novel was published over 20 years after the event and, Patrick Hicks maintains, it is a "historically questionable re-telling of the Belfast Blitz".¹⁰ To make sense of the stories that are told, or not told, about the North's wartime experience, it is necessary to take a triangulated approach that considers the overlapping British, Irish and Northern contexts.

The Emperor of Ice-Cream is just one of a handful of texts that have examined the North's Second World war experience and the Blitz in particular. In addition to the novels about the Blitz discussed below, other prose texts to examine the war include Michael McLaverty's Blitz story, "Vigil" (1944), Bernard MacLaverty's short story "A Love Picture: Belfast 1941" (2021) and Joan Lingard's *The File on Fraulein Berg* (1980).¹¹ Woodward suggests that the North's cultural and historical memory of the war is "submerged, suspended, darkened".¹² The reasons for such collective reluctance to revisit this episode in Northern history are unclear but Moore's novel gives us some indication as to why. With England an ancient and hated foe for some of the Northern nationalist population, several characters in Moore's novel, including the protagonist's Father, Mr Burke, and a colleague, "Your Man" Mick Gallagher, hope for an Axis victory over the Allies. The British state was extremely concerned about potential links between Germany and the Irish Republican Army (IRA). Violent encounters between the English and Irish are still within living memory for

many of the characters in Moore's novel—the Black and Tans and the Troubles of the 1920s get a mention within the first few pages—with some characters subscribing to the adage, “England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity”. Both Gallagher and Mr Burke later regret such beliefs: at the novel's conclusion, Gallagher's family are missing, presumed dead after the air raids and Gavin implies that Gallagher may have been one of the “IRA sympathizers who flashed lights, hoping to guide the German bombers in” to Belfast (242). Indeed, on both sides of the border, Irish attitudes to the global conflict were conflicted and complex. While, Clair Wills insists, “it would have been impossible for Eire to be anything other than neutral”, there was an awareness of “the moral awkwardness of neutrality in the midst of total war when, even before the details of the Holocaust became widely known, it was obvious that the ethical balance lay unequivocally with the Allies”.¹³ This ambivalence about the global war effort affected Irish writerly responses to “the Emergency”, who tended to come at the experience obliquely too, through “contorted logic, awkward silences, and syntactical strangeness”.¹⁴ This literature records “the morally complex and sometimes traumatic exposure of an Irish sensibility to the violent politics of mid-twentieth-century Europe”.¹⁵

Given the comparative lack of literary material about the North's war, it is especially striking that novels that do examine the Belfast Blitz tend to be Bildungsromane: in addition to Moore's *The Emperor of Ice-Cream*, Mary Beckett's *Give Them Stones* (1987) devotes a few chapters to her protagonist's experiences of evacuation to the countryside as a teen; there is also S.Kirk Walsh's *The Elephant of Belfast* (2021); and Lucy Caldwell's *These Days* (2022), which is discussed at length in this essay.¹⁶ The “bildungsroman”, with its roots in eighteenth-century German texts, has “many names in English—“rite of passage novel”, “novel of education”, “novel of socialization”—but the phrase that best captures the genre's ethos is “novel of development””.¹⁷ Frequently tying an individual's “coming of age” into a national story, as elucidated further below, the European Bildungsroman is often “an entwined allegory of individual and social progress”.¹⁸ Intriguingly, the dominant historiographical narrative within contemporary scholarship argues that the war cemented partition and thereby bolstered the new Northern statelet: for JJ Lee, “neutrality reinforced partition”.¹⁹ This argument persists even as the granular cultural histories of lived experience adduced in recent work by Susie Deedigan, Stephen O'Neill and Clair Wills complicate this.²⁰

There is, then, clearly a sense that WWII constituted a change and a “coming of age”, of sorts, for the Northern statelet. In the Bildungsromane discussed below, Moore's protagonist, Gavin Burke, and Caldwell's protagonists, Emma and Audrey Bell, are all in late adolescence: more or less the same age as this new statelet. What is more, there is a strong sense of dramatic irony in the conflation of these two genres, the historical novel and the Bildungsroman, to explore a twinned moment of precipitous change for these adolescent

protagonists and the North.²¹ Indeed, both novels galvanise an intertextual language of change in their novels, drawn primarily from Irish poetry, to situate themselves within Irish literary history. In tracing this poetics of change towards this essay's conclusion, it is clear that change for Moore is violent but for Caldwell, it is figured as a generative process of restitution.

The novels are clearly different, but both do something decidedly queer with the Bildungsroman as an allegory of individual, social and, I would add, national progress. This use of "queer" here is invoked in the sense advocated for by Fintan Walsh and Patrick Mullen, who both argue for queer as a "capacious index for a range of non-normative sexualities, bodies, desires and subject positions typically housed within the LGBTQ umbrella".²² This capacious quality also enables us, Walsh maintains, to "track thoughts, feelings and actions that unsettle subjects from identity categories, and the social order that would otherwise fix them" because "queerness undermines presumptions of stability and certainty, and at its boldest aspires to alternative ways of being, doing, feeling and knowing".²³ Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley suggest "the term *queer* is intended to be spacious [...] in its more traditional sense, to indicate a deviation from the 'normal'".²⁴ Despite this, it is vital that, in engaging with the "queerness" of texts, we remain mindful that the term does not become overly elastic, lest we run the risk of dulling the term's analytical and political edge. Such caution is especially necessary with a novel like Moore's, which is significantly propelled forward by our protagonist's zealous pursuit of heterosexual sex (though such hyperbolic zeal may indeed be overcompensating for sexual anxieties).

Of particular relevance for our analysis of these bildungsromane is the critique by numerous queer theorists highlighting how deeply Western society is wedded to ideas about temporality constructed through heterosexual timelines: birth, childhood, adolescence, marriage, sexual reproduction, childrearing, middle age, old age and death. Elizabeth Freeman call this impulse "chrononormativity" and Lee Edelman labels the relentless, politically mandated imperative towards heterosexual union and procreation, "reproductive futurism".²⁵ Kathryn Bond Stockton explores what it means to "grow sideways": that is, to reject, invert or sidestep—to queer—these timelines associated with heterosexuality.²⁶ Such queer theories of time and temporality have been productively applied to the Bildungsroman—a narrative that conventionally tracks an individual's sexual development in time—by a variety of critics.²⁷ The heterosexual family and "reproductive futurism" have been insistently tied to national politics in Ireland, both north and south, unionist and nationalist. Kathryn Conrad notes the burden that "patriarchal heteronormativity" places upon women, in particular, to "reproduce for the cause" and ensure the "secure reproduction of [their ethnopolitical] communities" in the north.²⁸ In what follows below, I explore how

Caldwell and Moore queer what Mikhail Bakhtin calls “the national-historical time” of the Bildungsroman and what this might mean for our understanding of the North.²⁹

“Freedom from futures”: frozen youth or growing sideways in *The Emperor of Ice-Cream*

Written almost sixty years apart, Moore’s *The Emperor of Ice-Cream* and Caldwell’s *These Days* share much common ground despite their differences. Woodward maintains that Moore’s novel is Northern Ireland’s “urtext for the war” and Caldwell is clearly in dialogue with it.³⁰ They are both novels of late adolescence: Moore’s Gavin Burke is seventeen when the novel opens; Caldwell’s Audrey Bell is twenty-one and Emma Bell is nineteen. Although Moore’s novel gives us glimpses into the lives and thoughts of other characters, the bildungsroman element focuses purely on Gavin Burke. By contrast, Caldwell’s novel could be said to be a dual bildungsroman, focusing, primarily but not exclusively, on the lives of two sisters, Emma and Audrey. In its dual focus and exploration of female desire (including same-sex desire) we might argue that *These Days* is a nod to Kate O’Brien’s *The Land of Spices*, published in 1941, another novel that “compellingly explores the parallel growth” of a girl and an older woman.³¹ Both Blitz bildungsroman take their titles from poems; Moore, famously, from Wallace Stevens’s “The Emperor of Ice-Cream”, from *Harmonium* (1922), and Caldwell from Louis MacNeice’s “Selva Obscura”, from *Solstices* (1961), a few lines of which act as a preface for the novel. The two novels focus on Belfast during the early period of the Second World War; Moore is largely focused on Catholic north and west Belfast and Caldwell the Protestant east, although both novels traverse the city and engage with its varied inhabitants. Free indirect discourse plays an important role in the two novels, to give voice to the internal lives of characters and give a greater breadth, and depth, to the narrative. That said, we do not get any insight into the psychology of any women in *The Emperor of Ice-Cream* and Moore’s women characters are subject only to scorn or ridicule from Gavin. Moore’s Gavin and Caldwell’s Emma both work in the Air Raid Precautions (ARP). There are even some shared names: “Wee Bates” in Moore, which may have been a gesture towards Richard Dawson Bates, Home Affairs Minister in Belfast during the war, is perhaps echoed in “Wee Betty Binks” in Caldwell. There is also a Doreen Bates in Caldwell, based on the real woman whose diaries were republished in 2016 as *Diary of a Wartime Love Affair*.

Differences in tone aside, there are similarities too in the emotional landscapes of the novels. Both Moore and Caldwell register their protagonists’ disaffection with the rigid social mores of Belfast: a disaffection that breeds such “negative affects” that Sianne Ngai would call “ugly feelings”: boredom, irritation, apathy, paranoia and, in the case of Moore’s Gavin Burke, a wish for the total annihilation of Belfast.³² In the early pages of Moore’s novel,

Gavin admits “the war was an event which had produced in [him] a shameful secret excitement, a vision of the grown-ups’ world in ruins”.³³ Gavin’s destructive wishes are tied to both his disdainful views about Ireland (of which more below) and to his complicated feelings about personal failings—feelings that have been conditioned by his parents’ ideas about success. He reveals it “would not matter in that ruined world if Gavin Burke had failed his School Leaving Certificate”: the “records would be buried in the rubble” (11). Gavin hopes that the chaos he anticipates the war bringing will offer him “freedom, freedom from futures”; he will not be forced to capitulate to the demands of his parents because his “father’s world” will be demolished (11, 80). This acutely personal desire to bury his academic failings is subsequently, in grandiose terms, displaced on to the entire city. A visit up Cave Hill sees Gavin frustrated in his attempt to consummate his relationship with Sally and, after an acrimonious quarrel, Gavin turns his indignation towards Belfast. Watching some planes fly over him, he hopes they are bombers about to attack Belfast and Gavin waits in anticipation of “the explosions, the flames, the holocaust” (116).³⁴ When the Luftwaffe does eventually bomb Belfast, Gavin feels an “extraordinary elation, a tumult of joy” (202). He and his friend Freddy, a fellow ARP worker, list the buildings they hope will be destroyed: “St Michan’s [...] City Hall [...] Queen’s University [...] Harland and Wolff’s [...] the Orange Hall” (203). St Michan’s is a pseudonym for St Malachy’s College, a boys Catholic grammar school on the Antrim Road in north Belfast, of which Moore was an alumnus and returned to in his fiction, most notably in *The Feast of Luperca* (1957). Gavin’s destructive wishes for Belfast are total and decidedly non-sectarian, hoping that bastions of both Catholic nationalist and Protestant unionist culture will be obliterated.

The immature, machismo sentiments are tested by the horrors that Gavin will face when working through the Blitz and, although “everything had changed” by the end of the novel, Gavin’s wish for an apocalyptic erasure of Belfast still seems to have come true: “his father’s world was dead” (252). Anxieties about the future are, of course, a common feature of adolescence and its literary counterpart, the bildungsroman. The traditional nineteenth-century European bildungsroman followed a strict teleology, dictated by the timelines of heterosexuality, which traces the protagonist’s struggles before they reach the maturity of adulthood, reconcile themselves with society and usually find romantic resolution, if not marriage. In his seminal work on the nineteenth-century European bildungsroman, literary critic Franco Moretti argues that youth is the “essence” of modernity and that the youth of the bildungsroman’s protagonist is vital as a “sign of a work that seeks its meaning in the future rather than in the past”.³⁵ The uncomplicated equation of youth and embodied, optimistic futurity in traditional bildungsroman is severely tested by Moore’s novel. There is something especially violent about Gavin’s determined wish that the future should not exist; it is markedly different from simple apathy about his future prospects. Such an explicit rejection

of future-orientated temporality in novel that aligns so strongly in other ways with bildung narratives is striking.

The novel repeatedly makes reference to an adult “future” that Gavin should be planning for. But Gavin’s feelings about this “grown-up” future are highly ambivalent. Moore’s use of free indirect discourse gives readers an insight into Gavin’s insistence on a cavernous dichotomy between being a child and an adult. Other characters reinforce this dichotomy. One character, a young woman Gavin disastrously attempts to seduce, declares, “Don’t grow up. It’s bloody awful being grown-up” while another character dictates to Gavin that “a boy of your age should be thinking about the future” (54, 186). There are moments where it appears that Gavin has a keen desire to embrace the world of adulthood like when we see him “admiring the sight of himself” after hiring his “first dinner-jacket” for a school dance; a jacket that makes him look like “a grown-up stranger” (160). At other times, he chafes against the limitations imposed upon him by adults in a petulant, childlike way: “That was grown-ups, all over, who did they think they were—Gods?” (193). This ambivalence might be read as stereotypically adolescent, and it is, but the bombing of Belfast in the final chapter of the novel see Gavin undergo a particularly disturbing and violent encounter with the “grown-up” world.

Indeed, Gavin’s entry into adulthood unfolds in a manner that not just subverts but inverts many of the markers associated with a typical coming of age narrative. The bombing of the city is a horrifying experience that means that Gavin has to put his first aid training into practice. This is nothing compared to Gavin volunteering to take the first shift in a temporary morgue confining up the bodies, or body parts, of those who have been killed in the raids. Similarly gruesome but unflinching descriptions of the “dead [...] heaped, body on body” and “the stink of human excrement” are also found in numerous places in *These Days*, including when Emma goes to look for a corpse in the temporary morgue of St. George’s Market (Moore 233; Caldwell 151, 156). After his work sorting through bodies, Gavin feels “he had done the first really grown-up thing in his life” (237). This violent, traumatic evening also sees an extended intimate encounter with “the first naked body of an adult woman he had ever really seen” (234). But this is not a generative, joyful experience of sexual intimacy that marks his entry into the “grown-up” world of heterosexual reproduction; this “naked body” is a corpse. There is nothing erotic about this woman’s naked body: “in death, her bowels had loosened”, her “nipples sat on her skin like blind, brown eyes, and sick, [Gavin] gazed in fascination at the dark clump of pubic hair beneath her belly” (235). Gavin has spent much of the novel yearning to become sexually involved with his on-off girlfriend, Sally, and, in a conventional bildungsroman, we would expect to see this desire fulfilled and the couple paired off. Instead, Gavin’s experience with “the first naked body of an adult woman he had ever really seen” is with a corpse in a morgue and his harrowing experiences in the air raid

eliminate his feelings for Sally; “a new grown-up voice, said [...] You’re over her” (247). Rather than poised at the threshold of adult sexuality, ready for heterosexual reproduction, as we might expect to find a protagonist at the conclusion of a bildungsroman, Gavin’s transformative encounter is with death, not life.

Here it would be worth turning to the contemporary critical conversation surrounding the bildungsroman. The post(colonial) politics of Ireland have led some scholars to argue that Ireland was “not a society conducive to coming of age” and many bildungsroman echo this, “with the protagonist renouncing rather than integrating into Irish society”.³⁶ Again, this discussion of the postcolonial and “Irish society” must be caveated for our purposes. Where the twenty-six counties of Ireland that became the Free State in 1922 could be thought of as “postcolonial”—although this is a vexed discussion within Postcolonial Studies *and* Irish Studies—many would argue the six counties in the North are still under British colonial rule.³⁷ Jed Esty’s work on the Irish bildungsroman in the early twentieth-century makes an interesting point of comparison for us: early twentieth-century Ireland is a “colonial contact zone”.³⁸ Such zones, Esty writes, produced “antidevelopmental fictions” marked by “frozen youth.” Key Irish examples for Esty include James Joyce’s *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and Elizabeth Bowen’s *The Last September* (1929) set during the Irish War of Independence but published a few years after. Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus has to leave Ireland to achieve maturity and Joyce articulated this himself, too, arguing the “economic and intellectual conditions of [Ireland] do not permit the individual to develop”.³⁹ Moore was profoundly influenced by *Portrait*, writing, “for me and others of my generation [*Portrait*] became ‘our’ book, the quintessential Irish bildungsroman, set down brilliantly and unimprovably”.⁴⁰ Irish bildungsromane are shaped by narratives arrested development where endless adolescence embodies the “frozen present of imperial time” not an optimistic vision of hopeful futurity.⁴¹

Moore’s Gavin rejects the adult world of sex represented by his girlfriend and retreats to the remains of his father’s “condemned” house, so badly damaged by the bombing that it has been marked as unsafe. Upon entering this house, Gavin ruminates that “[c]ondemned, the house was his”, suggesting he can only inherit his family’s property in ruins (250). We might read the house as a symptom of the old world that needed to be broken—his “father’s world was dead”—for Gavin to come of age; such a break with the past could signal the new, future life awaiting him. Yet Gavin’s future seems not rich with possibility but scarred by death. The house had “died, its life had fled”; Gavin sees ghosts of the “dead” everywhere in the house, “mov[ing] in the shadows” (251). *The Emperor* might mirror a classic bildungsroman in that, by its conclusion, “everything had changed” and “things would never be the same again”, but there is certainly nothing to indicate the novel should be read as furthering the forward-focused, optimistic ethos of the traditional bildungsroman. Gavin may

finally be “grown-up” but he inherits a seemingly dead future and does so having refused the heterosexual paradigm.

Gavin’s violent coming of age, amidst death and having rejected his partner, is hard to place within the history of the bildungsroman. It is unusual by the conventions of traditional bildungsromane but *The Emperor of Ice-Cream* also subverts the narratives of “frozen youth” and arrested development which Esty reads as central to modernist narratives of “colonial contact zones”.⁴² While *The Emperor* is neither a nineteenth-century nor a modernist bildungsroman, these examples are discussed here to establish critical context and to illustrate how anomalous Moore’s novel is within its literary history. The critical conversation around the bildungsroman is important, too, because it makes clear that the form interacts with interlinked set of assumptions which underpin the “genre’s progressive ethos [as a] ‘novel of development’”, particularly as this relates to national narratives and future-driven teleologies.⁴³ The haunted ruins that Gavin inherits at the end of the novel unsettle the progressive impulses of classic bildungsromane but he has still, undoubtedly, “grown-up”: he is not trapped in endless adolescence. Gavin’s rejection of Sally, Catholicism and his parents’ world is integral to his coming of age, not an avoidance of it. We might read Gavin’s trajectory as a “deviation from the ‘normal’” but there is something especially queer in his keenly felt desire to obliterate the future. This is a significant deviation from the standard imagining of youth as *embodying* futurity—something that Edelman parses in *No Future*. Typically, Edelman explains, youth is depicted as a “charged investment in the rigid sameness of identity [...] central to the compulsory narrative of reproductive futurism”.⁴⁴ Edelman might read Gavin’s apocalyptic desires for “freedom from futures” as deeply queer: an attempt to unstitch himself not just from the cycles of heterosexual production but from time itself.

Both *The Emperor* and *These Days* are narratives set in Belfast, one of Esty’s “colonial contact zones”; and the embittered struggle over the North’s position in Ireland is experienced even more acutely within these novels due to the anomalous position of the statelet during WWII. However, while their protagonists, Gavin, Audrey and Emma, reject the trappings of their parents’ world and reject a future within normative social parameters, such realisations are a result of their new maturity and not a deferral of it. Rather than read these as narratives of arrested development, we ought instead to read these as fictions of *alternative* development. Where Esty’s “novels of colonial adolescence [...] resist or forestall the traditional plot of libidinal closure in the bildungsroman (heterosexual coupling and reproduction)” because—for want of a better phrase—they cannot grow up, the protagonists of Moore and Caldwell’s Belfast Blitz novels actively refuse such “traditional plot[s]”.⁴⁵ By the end of these Blitz bildungsromane, Gavin, Emma and Audrey have not grown up, they have grown “sideways”.⁴⁶

“I don’t think I’m thinking quite straight”: *These Days*, girlhood and queer women

Where reading Moore’s novel queerly involves a use of theory that “detach[es] queerness from sexual identity”, Caldwell’s novel is much more explicitly queer and in numerous ways.⁴⁷ *These Days*, like *The Emperor of Ice-Cream*, is a bildungsroman that swerves from the path of a classic coming of age narrative to something decidedly different. Caldwell’s dual bildungsroman focuses on the lives of two very young women and this difference is worth pausing over: girls and women are subject to distinct biopolitical and representational paradigms. Although Audrey and Emma are twenty-one and nineteen respectively, they are consistently referred to as “girls”; a slippery, non-specific term that is difficult to define despite a growing body of scholarship claiming girls and girlhood as a discrete area of interest. The consensus around “girlhood” is that it is a “process”: that of “a girl-becoming-a-woman”.⁴⁸ As a conceptual category, the idea of girlhood is frequently positioned as uniquely enabling because the girl does not fit neatly into the “manageable spaces of childhood and married womanhood”.⁴⁹ The biopolitical quality of girls, as bodies that will give birth to the (national) future, arguably give them even more metaphorical potency than boys as sites “around which narratives of sexuality get organised”.⁵⁰ In Ireland, McGovern notes, the very use of the term “girl” can “serve as a catch-all phrase denoting a female’s position in relation to the institution of marriage” and to narratives of sexuality, because it was used when a woman was unmarried. Angela Bourke highlights how, historically, girl simply “meant an unmarried female”.⁵¹ Off the page and outside of fiction, the bodies of actual teenage girls are “site[s] for anxiety” and “acutely subject to control”.⁵² Imaginative investment in girls, Susan Cahill insists, often becomes a way of exploring “particular anxieties about futurity”.⁵³

Although notably less bombastic than Gavin Burke, both Audrey and Emma Bell voice anxieties about their lives and futures in the earlier stages of the novel. Both wrestle with similar “ugly feelings” to Gavin and these are more revealing than simple late adolescent disaffection. Emma, in particular, suffers from a creeping dissatisfaction “about who [she is], and how [she] should be living [her] life”.⁵⁴ The first pages of Caldwell’s novel establish a deeply intimate sense of the emotional turmoil that Audrey is struggling with and, as with Moore’s Gavin, we are made aware of her restless unhappiness with her current life. Emma’s existential despair is thrown into relief by the first air raid; when faced with the potential destruction of her life “she thinks” about how “[t]here is nothing from this life that I’d save” (7). After realising that the raid is over, Emma asks herself, “[w]e have survived, then [...] but for what?” (12); a variation of the Gavin’s same pessimistic misgivings about the future. Emma’s existential uncertainty and confusion about her life is partly resolved or, at least, she begins to make sense of it, when it dawns on Emma that she has romantic feelings for her ARP boss, Sylvia. Their first sexual encounter proves to be entirely

transformative—“this is a point from which you will not be able to go back”—and instils in Emma “a giddy irrational sense of possibility: I can do, now, I can be, anything that I want to” (59, 76). Unlike Audrey’s enthusiastic but naïve anticipation of adult sexuality (she longs for a sexual relationship and imagines what it will be like “but she just feels foolish” when she does), Caldwell is frank in her articulation of Emma’s “ardent” sexuality (59). Emma’s queer awakening gives her, for the first time, an optimism for the future. Sylvia is tragically killed in the second air raid and, despite her agony and heartbreak, Emma’s sexual awakening has given her a sense of purpose, resolve and clarity. At the end of the novel, she declares that she will move out of the house and train to be a nurse. Despite the dangers of the war, she is ready for adulthood and will not “wait for [the war] to be over for [her] life to start” (270). Emma has achieved sexual maturity but knows that her attraction to women in a homophobic society means that she will struggle to “live [her] life normally”, no matter how much she “just want[s] a normal life” (271). Emma, like Gavin, has rejected heteronormativity in favour of forging her own path.

Like her sister Emma, and her literary forebear Gavin, Audrey’s transformative experience of the Blitz is shaped as much by the unusual circumstances that it facilitates, and the unconventional characters she meets, as by the violence of the war itself. In Moore’s novel, the war affords Gavin the opportunity to meet “Jews, left-wing ministers, pansies, poets, boozers [and] puppeteers” in the “grown-up world”; Gavin pejoratively calls this the “underside” of “normal, ordinary life” (101). Quite notably, Gavin does not meet any women who are queer or freely enjoy their sexuality. In antithesis, Caldwell’s novel introduces a same-sex relationship between Sylvia and Emma; a woman pursuing a long-time affair with a married man, Doreen (based on a real woman) and pregnant with his twins; a woman who is passionate about campaigning for women’s reproductive rights; and Audrey, who is filled with sexual longing for her fiancé even though her feelings do not progress into deep emotional attachment. Caldwell lingers on the sensations caused by this desire: kissing Robert makes Audrey “shiver” and her “breath quicken”, she finds the idea that they might possibly consummate their relationship “shockingly exciting” (85). Audrey is quick to police these urges, though, and she believes that Robert “would be appalled if [...] he had even an inkling” of how strongly she desires him (86). Despite Audrey’s visceral sexual desire for Richard, she does not love him and does not want to marry him. When she tries to envisage their shared life together after their wedding, she cannot see a future with him—“no matter how hard she tries to picture [it]”, it “is just a blank” (245). When Audrey talks to her friend Doreen, a woman who is both having an affair with a married man and also pregnant out of wedlock, she realises that she cannot marry someone just because it is socially expected of her.

These doubts lead Audrey to break off the engagement and to recognise that she does not have to conform to the narrow cultural and social norms that constrict women's lives. After the breakup, Audrey reflects that she does not think she's "thinking quite straight" but then immediately follows that up with, "[o]r maybe I am, now, and it's the rest of my life that I haven't been" (263). Caldwell's use of the word "straight" here is intriguing. Unlike her sister, Emma, Audrey does not have feelings towards any other women in this novel but she does admit to not "want[ing] a normal life": she doesn't "want to be married" and she doesn't "think that [she] want[s] children" (270). There would have been something queer, "in its more traditional sense", in Audrey's stated wish for this "deviation from the 'normal'"—especially in 1941.⁵⁵ According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the first recorded use of "straight" to mean heterosexual was in 1941; a neat (and, presumably, unconscious) coincidence for Caldwell's novel. By the novel's conclusion, both Emma and Audrey have rejected the harsh parameters of compulsory heterosexuality and the gendered assumptions that support this. These decisions are radical in the intensely patriarchal culture of Northern Ireland in the early 1940s, where little was to change with regards to women's rights in the coming decades. The Northern statelet did not legalise same-sex marriage nor decriminalise abortion until 2019; even then, these legislative changes were still only implemented by a direct intervention from the UK parliament in Westminster. Emma and Audrey's choices are powerful when we think of the teleology of Northern Ireland, where nationalism has so profoundly insisted on heterosexual reproductivity and reproductive futurity has been violently weaponised. Caldwell's novel ends on a note of joyful, cross-generational harmony but a reader with any knowledge of the North will anticipate the difficulties that Emma and Audrey will face in the years to come.

"changed at last": Belfast's Bildungsromane, national intertexts and Northern futures

When the Blitz came to Belfast, the contentious Northern statelet was still only twenty years old. The bildungsromane discussed here are novels of adolescence: of Gavin, Emma and Audrey, but also of Northern Ireland. The violence and trauma of partition is registered in passing in both novels but it is the horror of the Blitz which acts as the catalyst through which Gavin, Emma and Audrey must face adulthood. Turning in this final section to the intertextual language of change in both novels, it becomes evident that, in different ways, both of these novels are also a form of commentary on the North's own tumultuous youth. In tracing how both Caldwell and Moore harness and refer to an intimately connected network of Irish literature, including Caldwell's debts to Moore, it is clear that these novels grapple with national (failures) to come of age, too.

Although *The Emperor of Ice-Cream* takes its title from a Wallace Stevens poem it is, arguably, W.B. Yeats's work that has the most importance for Gavin. There are numerous

references to “The Second Coming” (1919) and, in particular, “Easter 1916” (finished 1916 but not formally published until 1920). The apocalyptic energy of “The Second Coming” is channelled by Gavin at multiple points in the text; early in the novel, Gavin declares “Yeats knew what nonsense it was, in this day and age, to talk of futures and jobs” because “the centre cannot hold” (11).⁵⁶ When Gavin sees planes fly over Cave Hill he hopes, in anticipation, that it is German bombers, “rough beasts [...] slouching towards Belfast to be born” and attack the city (116). Yeats’s ominous pessimism becomes a vital way through which Gavin can articulate his own destructive anxieties and Moore’s engagement with futurity, change and, in opposition, stasis, is almost exclusively mediated through Yeats’s “Easter 1916”. The peculiar power of the final lines of the poem’s first stanza, “All changed, changed utterly: / A terrible beauty is born”, are returned to repeatedly. These lines, and slight variations of them, ricochet insistently throughout the novel. Yeats’s poem about the failed Irish rebellion of Easter Week 1916 and the “vivid faces” of its leaders, “MacDonagh and MacBride / And Connolly and Pearse”, famously traces how Irish nationalism gripped each of these men until he “resigned his part / In the casual comedy” of everyday life, “transformed” by revolutionary zeal. The Rising was unpopular with the Irish public but when the British executed its leaders for treason, the desire for Irish independence hardened: the “terrible beauty” of Irish nationalism grew more potent. “Easter 1916” is, in important ways, an ambivalent poem. Yeats’s is critical of this newly hardened nationalism—“what if excess of love / Bewildered them till they died?”—but the resonant power of its “terrible beauty”, itself ambivalent, lends such nationalism a striking dignity. Writing about the appeal of this poem for Moore, Robert Green argues the poem “has an obvious relevance to Gavin’s intuition that Ulster in the early 1940s was also in the process of change”.⁵⁷ While this is undoubtedly true, the specific politics of this poem, and its relevance for Moore, are more complex. When the Rising happened, and Yeats wrote this poem, Ireland was still a constituent part of the United Kingdom and, as with the rest of the United Kingdom, at war with Germany and its allies. By the 1940s, Ireland had been partitioned with the new Northern statelet still a part of the United Kingdom and, once again, at war with Germany. The First World War had made clear the fraught relationship between Ireland and Britain, and galvanised nationalist efforts to gain independence; the Second World War highlighted the North’s anomalous position compared to the rest of Ireland.

Gavin’s decision to mediate his own vexed transition to adulthood, during a British war, through a poem so innately and intimately connected to questions of Ireland is vital to the novel’s politics. In his analysis of Moore’s use of poetry in the novel, Green suggests “Gavin’s every use of the verb ‘change’ indicates how deeply he has absorbed the images” in “Easter 1916”.⁵⁸ If we trace the instances when Moore uses this language of “change” in becomes apparent that Moore’s use of this verb is much more intentional than this; “change”

in *The Emperor of Ice-Cream* is both personal and national with Gavin's "coming of age" twinned with Ireland's. Approximately half-way through the novel, Gavin makes a trip to the Mater hospital, where Sally works, in an attempt to woo her back. The Mater is a Catholic institution and Gavin is taken to a small room like "a typical convent parlour" to wait for Sally (139). Gavin finds this room, and the national stasis it represents, deeply disturbing. He thinks, "Nothing had changed in this room since 1930. Nothing would change" with "the frozen ritual of Irish Catholicism perpetuating itself in *secula, seculorum*" (139, 140). Gavin actively disagrees with Yeats's poem here, quoting the final four lines and declaring that Ireland will never change, "Ireland free was Ireland dead. The terrible beauty was born aborted" (140). These are challenging lines and resist a definitive reading. It might be a reference to the repressive, Catholic Ireland of Éamon de Valera; equally, it might be a damning critique of the "terrible beauty" of Irish nationalism that enabled such a repressive culture. It could, instead, be a criticism of partition: the twenty-six counties of "Free Ireland [...] born aborted" with the loss of the six counties. This reading seems especially compelling when we remember that this "terrible beauty" is the Irish nationalism that attempted to establish impence for Ireland. By 1941, some, but not all, of Ireland was free (of British rule but facing its own internal oppressive strictures); an incomplete birth of a new nation. However we choose to interpret these lines, we can see again how Moore inverts the usually hopeful image of youth, associating it with death, not futurity, and the nation: "Ireland dead".

By the haunting final pages of the novel, a significant part of Belfast has been destroyed and Gavin's experiences of the Blitz have left both, in words Moore has borrowed from Yeats, "[c]hanged, changed utterly" (226). Some of Sally's final words to Gavin are to tell him he has "changed". The horrors of his deathly initiation into adulthood have altered him. When Gavin returns home to the ruins of his Father's house, he finds that the house, which had been "unchanged since his childhood, had changed at last" with the damage sustained during the bombing attack (250). This return once more to Yeats throughout these final sections is more than simple intertextual play—it is a direct imperative to situate the Belfast Blitz within the Irish national story. Yeats' "Easter 1916", Fran Brearton illuminates, is keenly "tied to the 'Irish story'" and, what is more, a particular point in the national story: its struggle for independence.⁵⁹ There is something hugely ambivalent in the final pages of this novel, then: a bildungsroman that ends with death not life; with a world where future has been equated with destruction; in a Belfast that has, for Moore's protagonist, been razed to the ground.

The title of Caldwell's *These Days* also comes from an Irish poem, MacNeice's "Selva Oscura", and her novel's intertextuality nods to both Moore and Yeats, explicitly and implicitly. The language of total change that Moore borrows from Yeats is present in Caldwell's novel as well, although less overtly so; her characters' first worry that

“everything’s going to change” and then subsequently recognise that “everything had to change at some point” (263, 271). This may be a deliberate nod to Moore’s (and Yeats’s) repeated use of “change” in various forms; the references in Caldwell’s novel are so numerous that such a suggestion is not improbable. There is also, perhaps, a knowing comment on Caldwell’s behalf when Audrey recounts reading “Eliot and Auden and MacNeice, Wallace Stevens, all those published in the recent Faber book”: more than one critic has pointed out that all the poems quoted by Gavin that punctuate *The Emperor* were published in the Faber Anthology of 1936 (50). Caldwell’s decision to use words from a poem for the title to her novel is itself an act of homage to Moore. “Selva Oscura” is also echoed in the title of Caldwell’s novel *Where They Were Missed* (2007).

These Days is very much a haunted text, too, and even the title encourages it to be read as such. “These Days” is not just, in its intertextuality, a form of literary spectrality but haunting is the subject of MacNeice’s poem, as its first line announces: “A house can be haunted by those who were never there / If there was where they were missed”. This might call to mind the phantoms that Gavin sees in his Father’s house, even as Gavin reminds himself the “house was not haunted” (249). The Bells’ house, in Caldwell’s novel, survives the Blitz intact but Emma and Audrey will be haunted by the traumas they have witnessed. In losing her lover, Emma will be ghosted by memories of Sylvia just like her Mother, Florence, has been ghosted by memories of her lover, Reynard, killed in the First World War. Emma laments the “weight of all the things [she] will never know [...] all that [they] could have, should have, would have done together” (176). The frequent reminiscences from Emma and Florence about their limited time with their lovers and what things might have been like if they had survived are the ghostly futures that MacNeice traces in his poem: “A life can be haunted by what it never was / If that were merely glimpsed”. An early review of Caldwell’s novel by Joseph O’Connor also highlights how *These Days* is “haunt[ed]’ by “image of subsequent violence in the same city, ghosts from Belfast’s future”.⁶⁰ Caldwell’s novel ends on a moment of calm but, in the shadows of this, there is a melancholy sense that the “girls” will face difficulties in the future for their choices, quite apart from the looming violence that will follow. O’Connor’s evocative image of “ghost from Belfast’s future” speaks to the complicated teleologies in these Belfast bildungsromane. For Gavin, future means destruction and there is horror haunting the futures of the Bell sisters.

Despite their youth, the futures of Gavin, Emma and Audrey are not straightforward; the “progressive ethos’ of the typical “novel of development’ reads differently in these Belfast novels.⁶¹ In bildungsromane that follow the conventions of the genre established in the nineteenth century, the protagonist’s coming of age echoes that of the modern nation state with their youthful vitality, and heterosexual prospects, embodying an optimism for their future. These Blitz bildungsromane turn to a highly traumatic moment within the history of

the Northern Irish statelet, and one that exacerbated tensions about the legitimacy of the state, to pose probing questions about national and individual identities. The Blitz posed a real moment of crisis for Belfast and the North, and this is mirrored in these queer, haunted narratives. Unlike other bildungsromane from “colonial contact zones” these are narratives from a city that both is and is not part of an imperial project; the uneven nature of the Northern experience of colonialism means that these young people do come of age: just not in the way we might expect.

Endnotes:

¹ Brian Barton, *The Blitz: Belfast in the War Years* (Belfast: Blackstaff, 1989), 90.

² Jonathan Bardon, “The Belfast Blitz, 1941”, *Ireland in World War Two: Diplomacy and Survival*, ed. Dermot Keogh and Mervyn O’Driscoll, (Cork: Mercier Press, 2004), 260, 261.

³ Jonathan Bardon, *A History of Ulster* (Belfast: Blackstaff, 1992), 564.

⁴ *Belfast Telegraph* 3 January 1941, 5; *The Times* 2 June 1941, 2. For more, see Patrick Hicks, “History and Masculinity in Brian Moore’s *The Emperor of Ice-Cream*”, *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 25. No 1/2 (1999).

⁵ Clair Wills, *That Neutral Island: A Cultural History of Ireland During the Second World War*, London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 213; Bardon, “The Belfast Blitz, 1941”, 266.

⁶ Brian Barton, “Northern Ireland: the impact of war 1939-45”, in *Ireland and the Second World War: Politics, Society and Remembrance*, ed. Brian Girvin and Geoffrey Roberts, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 52; Bardon, “The Belfast Blitz, 1941”, 268.

⁷ Brian Moore, *The Emperor of Ice-Cream*, (Turnpike books, 2021 [1965]), p.202. All subsequent references will be quoted in parentheses in the main body of the text.

⁸ Fearghal McGarry, “Independent Ireland” in *The Princeton history of modern Ireland*, ed. Richard Bourke & Ian McBride, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 109-140, 125.

⁹ Philip Ollerenshaw, “Neutrality and Belligerence: Ireland, 1939–1945”, in *The Cambridge History of Ireland, Volume 4: 1880 to the Present*, ed. Thomas Bartlett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 349-377, 350.

¹⁰ Hicks, “History and Masculinity”, 400.

¹¹ Michael McLaverty, "Vigil", *Northern Harvest: An Anthology of Ulster Writing*, ed. Robert Greacen. Belfast, 1944. 34-39; Bernard MacLaverty, "A Love Picture: Belfast 1941" in *Blank Pages and Other Stories* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2021); Joan Lingard, *The File on Fraulein Berg* (London: Julia Macrae Books, 1980). I am very grateful to Sinéad Moynihan for the McLaverty reference. There was also a minor but noteworthy body of Irish poetry which responded to the war directly. See Peter McKay, "Irish and Scottish Second World War Poetry", *Modern Irish and Scottish Poetry*, ed. Edna Longley, Peter McKay and Fran Brearton, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Richard Kirkland, "The Poetics of Partition: Poetry and Northern Ireland in the 1940s", in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish Poetry* ed. Fran Brearton and Alan Gillis, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 346-369.

¹² Guy Woodward, *Culture, Northern Ireland, and the Second World War*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 5.

¹³ Clair Wills, 'The Aesthetics of Irish Neutrality during the Second World War', *boundary 2*, 31. 1 (2004) pp. 119-145, 122; Eunan O'Halpin, "The Second World War and Ireland" in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish History* ed. Alvin Jackson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 711–725, 714.

¹⁴ Anna Teekell, *Emergency Writing: Irish Literature, Neutrality, and the Second World War*. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2018), 3.

¹⁵ Clair Wills, 'The Aesthetics of Irish Neutrality during the Second World War', *boundary 2*, 31. 1 (2004) pp. 119-145, 122.

¹⁶ The sections in *These Days* where the protagonists' younger brother is sent away to the countryside speak to the chapters in Mary Beckett's *Give Them Stones* where Martha is sent to her mother's cousins' house.

¹⁷ Jed Esty, "Nationhood, Adulthood, and the Ruptures of 'Bildung'"; Arresting Development in *The Mill on the Floss*, *Narrative 4*. No 2 (1996): 144.

¹⁸ Jed Esty, 'Virgins of Empire: *The Last September* and the Antidevelopmental Plot', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 53. 2 (2007): pp. 257-275, 259.

¹⁹ Joseph J. Lee, *Ireland, 1912-1985: Politics and Society*, (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1989), 270.

²⁰ See Susie Deedigan, "'Let the girl go home': Irish republicanism, gender and political imprisonment, 1939-1945" (PhD thesis, forthcoming from Queen's University Belfast 2023); Stephen O'Neill *Irish Culture and Partition, 1920-1955* (forthcoming: Liverpool University Press) and Wills, *That Neutral Island*.

²¹ I am grateful to Stephen O'Neill for this observation and suggestion.

²² Fintan Walsh, *Queer performance and contemporary Ireland: dissent and disorientation*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 2; Patrick R. Mullen, *The Poor Bugger's Tool: Irish Modernism, Queer Labor, and Postcolonial History* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

²³ Fintan Walsh, *Queer performance*, 2.

²⁴ Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley, "Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children" in *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children*, ed. Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), x. Italics original.

²⁵ Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 3; Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, N.C. : Duke University Press, 2004), 2.

²⁶ Kathryn Bond Stockton, "Growing Sideways, Or Versions of the Queer Child: The Ghost, The Homosexual, the Freudian, the Innocent, and the Interval of Animal", *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children*, ed. Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); "Growing sideways' is also insightfully adduced by Kelly J.S. McGovern, "'No Right to Be a Child": Irish Girlhood and Queer Time in Éilís Ní Dhuibhne's *The Dancers Dancing*", *Éire-Ireland* 44 No. 1&2 (2009).

²⁷ See McGovern, "'No Right to Be a Child"; Gregory Castle, 'Terrible queer creatures at the latter end of the world': Joyce's A Portrait and the Global Bildungsroman, Dublin James

- Joyce Journal 9 (2016):1-29; Jed Esty, *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- ²⁸ Kathryn A. Conrad, 'Women Troubles, Queer Troubles: Gender, Sexuality, and the Politics of Selfhood in the Construction of the Northern Irish State', in *Reclaiming Gender*, eds. M. Cohen and N. Curtin, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 53-68, 66.
- ²⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, "The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism: Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel", in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. trans. Vern W. McGee. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 10-59, 25.
- ³⁰ Woodward, *Culture, Northern Ireland*, 20. Caldwell has been vocal about her admiration for Moore and the importance of *Emperor* in particular. See <https://www.lucycaldwell.com/category/interviews/>.
- ³¹ James M. Cahalan, "Female and Male Perspectives on Growing Up Irish in Edna O'Brien, John McGahern and Brian Moore", *Colby Quarterly* 31. No. 1 (1995): 57.
- ³² Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, (London: Harvard University Press, 2005), 3.
- ³³ Brian Moore, *The Emperor of Ice-Cream*, (Turnpike books, 2021 [1965]), p.11. All subsequent quotations will be referenced in the main body of the text in parenthesis.
- ³⁴ The use of "Holocaust" here—a medieval word for a "sacrifice wholly consumed by fire", first used to describe the murderous treatment of the Jewish people under the Nazis in 1942, and widely adopted by historians in the 1950s—is worthy of note. Oxford English Dictionary online (<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/87793?rskey=O6Rhuo&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>).
- ³⁵ Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* (London: Verso, 2000), 5.
- ³⁶ Jane Elizabeth Dougherty, "Nuala O'Faolain and the Unwritten Irish Girlhood", *New Hibernia Review* 11. No. 2 (2007): 53.
- ³⁷ On the general debates on Ireland and colonialism, see *Stephen Howe, Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); *Was Ireland a Colony? Economics, Politics and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Ireland*, ed. Terrence McDonough (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2005); Colin Graham & Willy Maley "Introduction: Irish studies and postcolonial theory", *Irish Studies Review* 7:2 (1999): 149-152; David Lloyd, "Regarding Ireland in a post-colonial frame", *Cultural Studies* 15:1 (2001):12-32; *Ireland and Postcolonial Theory*, eds. Clare Carroll and Patricia King (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 16-45. On the north, see Bryonie Reid, "The Elephant in the Room: Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and Northern Ireland", *Historical Geography* 42 (2014): 229-241; F.C. McGrath, "Settler Nationalism: Ulster Unionism and Postcolonial Theory," *Irish Studies Review* 20.4 (2012): 463-485.
- ³⁸ Esty, *Unseasonable Youth*, 2.
- ³⁹ James Joyce "Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages", in *James Joyce: Occasional, Critical and Political Writing* ed. by Kevin Barry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 123.
- ⁴⁰ Brian Moore, "Old Father, Old Artificer", *Irish University Review* 12 No. 1 (1982): 14.
- ⁴¹ Jed Esty, "The Colonial Bildungsroman: *The Story of an African Farm* and the Ghost of Goethe", *Victorian Studies* 49. No 3 (2007): 415.
- ⁴² Esty, *Unseasonable Youth* 2.
- ⁴³ Esty, "Nationhood, Adulthood, and the Ruptures of "Bildung", 144.
- ⁴⁴ Edelman, *No Future* 21.
- ⁴⁵ Esty, *Unseasonable Youth* 22.
- ⁴⁶ Kathryn Bond Stockton, "Growing Sideways, Or Versions of the Queer Child: The Ghost, The Homosexual, the Freudian, the Innocent, and the Interval of Animal", *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children*, ed. Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); "Growing sideways' is also insightfully adduced by Kelly J.S. McGovern, "'No Right to Be a Child': Irish Girlhood and Queer Time in Éilís Ní Dhuibhne's *The Dancers Dancing*", *Éire-Ireland* 44 No. 1&2 (2009).
- ⁴⁷ Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York UP, 2005), 1.

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- ⁴⁸ Catherine Driscoll, *Girls: Feminine Adolescence in Popular Culture and Cultural Theory*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 1.
- ⁴⁹ Edel Lamb, "'Shall we playe the good girles': Playing Girls, Performing Girlhood on Early Modern Stages", *Renaissance Drama* 44. No. 1 (2016): 73. Susan Cahill, "Making Space for the Irish Girl: Rosa Mulholland and Irish Girls in Fiction at the Turn of the Century", in *Colonial Girlhood in Literature, Culture and History, 1840-1950*, edited by Kristine Moruzi and Michelle J. Smith. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 168.
- ⁵⁰ Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley, "Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children", xiii.
- ⁵¹ McGovern, "'No Right to Be a Child", 247. Angela Bourke, *Maeve Brennan: Homesick at the New Yorker*, (New York: Counterpoint, 2004), 16. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for this reference.
- ⁵² Caroline Magennis, *Northern Irish Writing After the Troubles: Bodies, Intimacies, Pleasures*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 142.
- ⁵³ Cahill, "Making Space for the Irish Girl", 168.
- ⁵⁴ Lucy Caldwell, *These Days* (London: Faber, 2022), p.5. All subsequent references will be quoted in parentheses in the main body of the text.
- ⁵⁵ Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley, "Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children", x. Italics original.
- ⁵⁶ W.B. Yeats, "The Second Coming", *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2000), 158.
- ⁵⁷ Robert Green, "The Function of Poetry in Moore's *The Emperor of Ice-Cream*", *Canadian Literature* 93 (1982): 164.
- ⁵⁸ Green, "The Function of Poetry", 165.
- ⁵⁹ Fran Brearton, "Yeats, Dates, and Kipling: 1912, 1914, 1916'. *Modernist Cultures* 13. No. 3 (2018): 307.
- ⁶⁰ Joseph O'Connor, "These Days by Lucy Caldwell review—a haunting novel of the Belfast blitz", *The Guardian*, Wednesday 2nd March 2022, available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2022/mar/02/these-days-lucy-caldwell-review-haunting-novel-belfast-blitz>
- ⁶¹ Esty, "Nationhood, Adulthood, and the Ruptures of "Bildung", 144.