

# Thomas Kilroy as a Brechtian: V-effects in His Adaptation of *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and in *Double Cross*

Hironao KOBAYASHI

## Abstract

This paper explores the way in which Thomas Kilroy uses Bertolt Brecht's V-effects (*Verfremdungseffekt*) in his adaptation of Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1996) and *Double Cross* (1986). In a 1984 article, Kilroy describes Brecht, Beckett, and Pirandello as modern dramatists who try to overturn the then dominant theatrical tendency of realism by highly sophisticated stylisation. Both plays discussed here can be seen as examples of Kilroy's application of Brechtian V-effects, which defamiliarises the ordinary rules of the theatre, makes things seem strange and, in the end, enables us to see the world differently. Characters in each play are acutely aware of their roles as fictional characters (in *Six Characters*) and historical figures (in *Double Cross*). The self-referential meta-theatricality of both works is heightened by using two theatrical techniques: video screens and addressing the audience. These techniques question the reality of the events happening both on the stage and in history. Through this comparative analysis, we can understand what Kilroy learned from Brecht in order to "create a public theatre," which has been a long-standing cultural issue in Ireland since the foundation of the Abbey Theatre, and to fulfill his early dreams as a writer.

## I. Introduction

In 1984, two years before *Double Cross* was first staged, Thomas Kilroy (1934-) contributed a paper called "Brecht, Beckett and Williams" to a newly-launched poetry magazine, *Sagetrieb*. In this article, Kilroy discusses the poet William Carlos Williams as a playwright in what seems to be a kind of self-justification, since Kilroy finds in Williams's three plays "[t]he distinction of modern drama ... [which] consistently attempts to accommodate these extremes ['naturalistic imitation' and 'extremes of artifice'], to hold them together, as it were, even within the one scene" (81-82), which he feels is also embodied in two modern playwrights, Bertolt Brecht and Samuel Beckett. Moreover, he mentions Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* in order to point out the similarity between this play and one of William's plays, *Many Loves*. In other words, Kilroy discusses Williams's plays in terms of the stylistic influence of these "modern" dramatists (Pirandello, Brecht, and Beck-

ett), as if suggesting that Kilroy's next play, *Double Cross*, would follow in their wake. Since then, Kilroy has commented on Brecht in his interviews more frequently than on other authors.

In this paper, I will re-examine the influence of Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) on Thomas Kilroy by analysing his *Double Cross* (1986) and his adaptation of Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1996). What these two plays have in common are two theatrical techniques: the use of screen projections and direct addresses to the audience. In *Double Cross*, two protagonists played by the same actor talk to each other through a screen projection and a radio, while in *Six Characters*, the characters from the screen appear suddenly on the stage. Moreover, in both plays, characters who are clearly conscious of their theatrical role as characters address the audience many times. The result of the use of these techniques is that the boundary between fiction and reality is demolished, one example of Brecht's "*Verfremdungseffekt*." Brecht writes that "[t]he aim of this technique, known as the alienation effect, was to make the spectator adopt an attitude of inquiry and criticism in his approach to the incident. The means were artistic" (136). In this regard at least, Kilroy can be seen as Brechtian, for each play is not only Kilroy's "acute commentary on contemporary Ireland [in the era of the Troubles in Northern Ireland]" (Mikami 1999: 19), but also "a platform for the life of the mind, of whatever persuasion, at a time when mindlessness threatens to engulf us all" (Kilroy 1986: 7). In these two plays, Kilroy casts doubt on the accepted reality of the events happening on stage and in history.

## II. Kilroy as a Brechtian

In an interview in 2004, after explaining the reason for undertaking the adaptation of Pirandello's play, Kilroy talked about the literary influence of Brecht on his plays:

DUBOST: You mentioned Pirandello; what about the influence of Brecht on your work?

KILROY: I came upon the whole Brechtian theatre in the sixties, at the time when the Ensemble made its first visit to London, and you had a whole spate of Brechtian style theatre in England at the time, and indeed, in Dublin. I absorbed a great deal of his theatre, and I think that a lot of it stayed with me, in particular the whole attempt *to create a public theatre*. (D 142-43; emphasis added)<sup>(1)</sup>.

Roughly speaking, in Ireland, the desire "to create a public theatre" has been a longstanding cultural issue, even after the foundation of the Abbey Theatre in 1904 led by Irish revivalists such as W.B. Yeats and Lady Gregory. From the very beginning of his creative career as a literary critic, Kilroy has placed emphasis on "the theatre as a community" and as "the art which thrives most on social readjustments and reassessments" (1959: 192)<sup>(2)</sup>. Therefore, the Field Day Theatre Company,

established in 1980 by playwright Brian Friel and actor Stephen Rea, seemed to Kilroy to be “the most important movement of its kind in Ireland since the beginning of this century [the time when the Celtic Revival flourished]” (Kilroy 1986: 7).

Then, which aspect of Brecht’s idea of the theatre attracted Kilroy? As Peter Brooker cautioned, “we need to understand how [Brecht’s ideas] emerged and changed in particular artistic and social circumstances, and see them, moreover, as belonging with clusters of related terms and concepts in what was a developing self-critical aesthetic and theatre practice” (209). Nevertheless, due to space limitation, this paper focuses on Brecht’s *Verfremdungseffekt*. This technical term has been variously translated into English as “alienation effect [device],” “defamiliarisation effect” and “distancing effect,” and the two Kilroy plays discussed here can be considered as examples of V-effects<sup>(3)</sup>. According to Brecht, “[a]lienating an event or character means first of all stripping the event of its self-evident, familiar, obvious quality and creating a sense of astonishment and curiosity about them” (Dickson 241).

My supposition is that Kilroy used the Brechtian theory of V-effects in writing *Double Cross*, and in his adaptation of *Six Characters*, he found in Pirandello, retrospectively, another distinguished practitioner of V-effects before Brecht, just as Brecht did in *Chinese Acting*. Besides, Brecht and Kilroy have in common a strong suspicion of the techniques of Realism. Looking back on that time, Kilroy said enthusiastically:

I would see my playwriting as not being very typical of the contemporary Irish theatre scene in the sense that the kind of prevailing style, or prevailing image of Irish playwriting is strongly realistic. It’s social, sociological, a theatre of contemporary realism, what we say in English, “in your face realism.” My work is, on the contrary, highly stylized, a kind of theatre of artifice, one which may use realistic elements, but which in effect, *asks its audience to suspend its sense of realism*... . Now, I’m not alone, working in this kind of non-realistic theatre. There are people like Tom MacIntyre and Frank McGuinness... (D 125; emphasis added)

The above-emphasised part clearly shows Kilroy’s understanding of Brecht’s V-effects. The ambitious Irish playwright, it seems, probably attempted to challenge the then dominant theatrical tendency of realism by his own “highly stylized” play. As we have seen, one of the things Kilroy must have learned from modern playwrights such as Brecht and Beckett was a way to pursue “the possibilities of the mixture of styles” (Kilroy 1984: 86), namely, to balance stylisation with naturalness. Indeed, it is unclear when Pirandello’s masterpiece began affecting Kilroy’s creativity in reality, but this essay will first deal with his adaptation of Pirandello before *Double Cross*.

### III. Defamiliarising the Theatricality of Realism: Kilroy's Adaptation of *Six Characters in Search of an Author*

*Six Characters in Search of an Author* was written in 1921, three years after the end of World War I, by Luigi Pirandello (1887-1936), and it is regarded by some critics as a precursor for both absurdist theatre and meta-theatre (Mortimer xi; Bennett 27). Curiously enough, in his adaptation of Pirandello, Kilroy alludes to Brecht:

- DIRECTOR The simpler the effect the better, audiences are extremely sophisticated nowadays, you know –
- ACTOR 2 This isn't Brecht!
- ACTOR 1 You see, theatre is based upon what the audience is made to believe –
- ACTRESS 1 We make the audience believe –
- ACTOR 1 Then everything, anything, becomes possible on stage –
- ACTRESS 1 A wonderful illusion, you see –
- FATHER (Cry) Illusion! Illusion! Please, mister, don't let them use that word. For us it is a terrible word, a kind of curse. (*P* 66)

Needless to say, no reference to Brecht is made in Pirandello's original work, yet it seems that Kilroy discovers techniques in Pirandello that are similar to Brecht's V-effects. This is because the theatre as "illusion" that the Father fears so terribly is nothing less than an evil play, in which "the audience is made to believe" what they want to believe. In other words, such "[a] wonderful illusion" imprisons (or paralyzes, if you like) the audience, alone and isolated, within the theatre, allowing them to accept the world as it is without a doubt. Once, Kilroy wrote: "art should offer modes of perception which may radically transform the way in which we see, hear and feel about the world around us" (1982: 179-80). Both by mentioning Brecht and by making the ACTORS and ACTRESSES deliver an opinion about the theatre totally opposite to that of his, Kilroy attempts to challenge the spectators, who are still bound by the contemporary tradition of theatre; Realism.

Actually, Pirandello's original play provocatively questions what is real in the theatre. *Six Characters in Search of an Author* begins with a rehearsal of his previous play. In this sense, the first scene can be looked upon as a kind of a play within a play, as many critics have pointed out. However, this is not an ordinary a play within a play as in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, because the peripeteia happens at the very beginning, with the appearance of the six characters searching for an author. These characters are clearly aware that they are characters in a fictional world. This self-referentiality is characteristic of the meta-theatricality of this play. What is interesting in the above

citation is that the Director regards them as “lunatics” and “[m]ad” (*P* 20), to which the Father objects politely, saying “No, mister. You were the one that called us lunatics. I was only talking about the acting, about theatricals” (*P* 21). This line is significant because first, as mentioned above, the Father is aware of his own part as a character in the play that is being rehearsed on the stage (a *play* within a play), but at the same time, his recognition has an uncanny echo for the audience watching this play (a play within a *play*). In fact, the Father talks to the Director, yet his words seem to be directed simultaneously to the audience. Listening to the conversation between the Father and the Director, the audience must feel the boundary between reality and theatrical fictionality gradually become blurred.

Second, the repeated references to madness remind us of one basic convention of traditional theatre – that what happens on stage is not real, but we can be made to believe that it is real and to sympathise with the characters in the play, sometimes more deeply than with real people in our lives. Yet, reconsidering afresh this theatrical convention, it is not self-evident—in a sense, it seems rather strange or “mad.” Although the Father says, “All I’m trying to do is get you to see that what is made up is often truer than the real thing” (*P* 20), this is the illusory effect of theatricality. We would rather ask ourselves what is real in the theatre, what makes us believe it real and who is “mad” in reality. These questions, evoked by the meta-theatricality of *Six Characters*, enable us to experience one aspect of Brecht’s V-effects, namely, familiar things that become unfamiliar or strange to us and make us think again.

As noted above, in addition to referring to Brecht, Kilroy makes some great changes in the setting of the original play by Pirandello, instead of merely following the original plot, for instance, by reducing the number of the actors (in the original, there are more than six actors and additional stage staff). The following is the scene where the characters first appear in front of the audience:

FATHER We’ve come here, mister, looking for an author.

DIRECTOR What author?

FATHER That’s immaterial – as a matter of fact. You see our author is dead, so, any author will do.

DIRECTOR Author? Who’s this author you’re talking about?

FATHER The same author as your own, mister. (*P* 19)

What might interest us the most here is that Kilroy emphasises the death of the author (of Pirandello’s work) that characters are searching for. Quite absurdly in a way, the Father claims that the author is dead, but still he declares that he’s searching for his creator.

The author is to characters what the creator is to creatures, namely, God to men. It seems that

Kilroy adds the historical implications that although we are living in a world after the Nietzschean death-of-God, we still must ask ourselves about the existence of God, just as, despite being conscious that there is no essential meaning of life, we are still searching for it. Moreover, in terms of not being able to contact the man the characters are looking for, we recall instantly *Waiting for Godot* (1953). However, while in Beckett's play the audience (at least, for the first-time one) finally comes to understand that Godot will not come after all, in Pirandello's original the audience is kept in suspense for the possibility that the characters will meet their author at the end of the play (yet, as we learn, it does not happen). In Kilroy's adaptation, this aspect is radicalised: the Six Characters' attempt to find their author is destined to fail from the very beginning, since that author, Pirandello himself, is already dead. Thus, it can be said that Kilroy not only increases the absurdity of the characters' situation but also keeps the audience aware that this is an adaptation of the original. Just as the meta-theatre is conscious of its theatrical characteristics, Kilroy's *Six Characters* is conscious of its status as an adaptation. That is why Kilroy's version ends with the following conversation:

ACTOR 2 Who needs a director? Who needs a writer?

ACTRESS 2 Oh, really? You mean: Why Pirandello? (*P* 79)

Whereas, as we shall see, *Double Cross* deals with historical figures, in *Six Characters*, there is basically neither direct historical reference nor implication. However, Pirandello seems to foresee the contemporary absurd situation after World War II. This seems to have interested Kilroy, who once said in an interview: "I actually think that good adaptations, no matter how much they depart from the original, always send you back to the original. But they send you back to the original *with a fresh eye*, hopefully" (*D* 142; emphasis added). What we have to see "with a fresh eye" is not only the original work, but also the world around us in an unfamiliar way, which is newly acquired through the theatrical experience. In the quarrel with the Director, the Father laments harshly: "We do not change, we never change, can never change, and that is our – curse! Fixed for all time" (*P* 68). It is here that some of us recall, as cited above, that the word "curse" was identified with "illusion" of the theatre by the Father. After all, the tragic plot of *Six Characters* itself – the Father's sexual relations with the Stepdaughter, the Son's hatred toward his parents, the drowning of the Girl, and the suicide of the Boy – does not change at all. However, as the Director unwittingly says, "everyone and everything on earth change," since our own life, as well as characters in this play, may be "fixed" but merely "[h]alf-finished" (*P* 67)<sup>(4)</sup>. The reason Kilroy repeats "incompleteness" and "half-finished" consists in his belief that it is only the audience members who search for an author in order to complete things.

#### IV. The Significance of Addressing the Audience: *Double Cross*

As almost every critic discussing *Double Cross* points out, the title of this play has at least three implications. The first implication is that double-cross means “betrayal” or “treachery,” which has undoubtedly been a dominant motif in Irish literature in general. Second, as seen in one chapter’s title (“Kilroy’s Doubles”) in Anthony Roche’s *Contemporary Irish Drama*, the double is a Kilroyan subject from the beginning of his literary career as a playwright. In fact, Kilroy writes in his preface to *Double Cross*: “I was drawn to the stories of these two men out of an interest in doubleness or doubling, that is, the way things repeat themselves in life or attract their opposites” (1986: 6). Third, “cross” as a verb implies, as Mary Trotter argues, “the crossing and double-crossing of persons, borders, ideologies and languages in the creation of self” (34). In fact, the two main characters Brendan Bracken and William Joyce, both of whom were played by Stephen Rea, turn out to be “traitors” to their homeland in terms of denying their own familial roots. They are “doubles” mirroring each other, and they are struggling to “cross” any boundaries, both geographically and culturally, even though they are destined to fail.

The play begins with a scene in which Bracken, “Minister of Information in His Majesty’s Government,” is listening to the radio news report by Joyce, who “announces the collapse of France” in place of the German Supreme Command. Although Bracken is fed up with it, he has to “listen to the filthy little traitor as part of [his] job.” But finally, he cannot stand it any more and switches off the wireless. Then, like a ghost, “JOYCE *appears on the video/film screen*,” continuing to speak loudly not only to Bracken, but also to the audience, as if he were talking to his radio listeners (*DC* 22; italics original). This use of the screen seems to foreshadow that in Kilroy’s adaptation of *Six Characters*, the characters emerge from the screen and appear on stage. More importantly, through Joyce’s speech and Bracken’s retort, the audience are allowed to learn the historical background of both men along with the changing situation of “this quite unnecessary war” (*DC* 23).

In terms of the theatricality which is more foregrounded in *Six Characters*, it is highly meta-theatrical that the nameless “ACTOR *and* ACTRESS *forward in anonymous coats, to either side of the stage*” (*DC* 24; italics original) and make a speech directly to the audience, saying such things as “Ladies and gentlemen, this is the story of two men who invented themselves,” “Both men left Ireland in the twenties” and “In England they both obliterated all evidence of their Irishness. Fabricating, instead, ultra-English identities for themselves.” And then, Bracken himself suddenly intercedes: “Actually, I died of cancer” (*DC* 24). His consciousness of his own future death creates an uncanny feeling, because the protagonist is aware of himself as a historical figure who died in 1959, just as the *Six Characters* are aware of their natures as fictional roles.

If one of the aspects of V-effects is to unmask the play’s fictionality and theatricality, then the

following surely surprises and shocks the audience:

ACTRESS Ladies and gentlemen! We cannot vouch for the accuracy of anything that is going to follow –

ACTOR Even of what is verifiable in the history books –

ACTRESS It has been put together to make a point.

ACTOR Question: What is the difference between as Irishman's need to conceal his Irishness and an Englishman's need to believe in the concealment?

ACTRESS Question: What is the connection between the Germanic love of English literature and the success of Dr. Goebbels' radio propaganda?

ACTOR Put another way: Why does the *victim* always try to imitate the *oppressor*?  
(*DC* 26-27; emphasis added)

These lines are meta-theatrical and self-referential, in that they reveal to the audience that while this is a play based on the historical past, at the same time, it is no more than a fiction, as it is neither non-fictional nor historically verifiable. Moreover, the two questions raised here are socio-historically related to (post-)colonial Ireland, and they urge the audience to reconsider not only what happened in the past, but also what is happening now. Even after political independence in 1922, the historical relationship between Ireland as “victim” and England as “oppressor” remained in another form when *Double Cross* premiered in 1986, because the Troubles in Northern Ireland were not yet solved. Thus, given that Bracken also calls to the audience, “We” in the above citation indicates all the people on the stage. In contrast, in *Six Characters*, only the individual characters recognise their theatrical roles. In this case, the meta-theatrical nature of the play can be said to be more radicalised, because in spite of the fact that *Double Cross* is a kind of historical play dealing with the actual events during the Second World War, its beginning boldly announces the impossibility of vouching for “the accuracy of anything that is going to follow.” Here is a stark contrast between realism based on “accuracy” (or the realness), and Kilroy's defamiliarised (anti-)realism not guaranteeing it.

This play is full of doubles who are “crossing” each other metaphorically, as the text says, “Other students of the Imagination refer to [the Principle of Circularity] as the Double Cross Effect” (*DC* 62). Especially, the symmetrical relationships between Popsie and Margaret as each protagonist's lover are indicative of this, since they render historical figures into ordinary people who are worrying about trivialities in life. Intriguingly, Popsie and Margaret, also played by a single actress, Kate O'Toole in the original production, call to the audience just twice in each part (*DC* 30, 47, 75, 78). Kilroy's attention to the structural design of this play is meticulous, because the two



parts begin with the imaginary dialogue between Bracken and Joyce using the radio-voice and film-screen, ACTOR and ACTRESS annotate the historical situation, the scene moves to psychosexual harsh exchanges of words between the couple, and finally, the decisive incident happens all of a sudden in each life of the two male protagonists; Blitz and Joyce's capital sentence.

There is sufficient evidence to support Lord Beaverbrook's importance as a character, because he is another naturalised British "success" from a foreign country (Canada), namely, another double of Bracken and Joyce. In a sense, he is given the role of bridging two protagonists who "have never met" (*DC* 85), but who, in this play, are said to have seen each other once. In fact, Kilroy makes Beaverbrook say almost the same line to each of them: "I'm a journalist, Brendan, I chase stories" and "Sure. I'm a journalist. I chase stories" (*DC* 42, 87). Literally, he plays the role of a medium between the two protagonists and members of the audience who "chase stories" while watching the play. Strangely, most critics have not thus far focused on the symbolic meaning of Beaverbrook as a character, even though he introduces one of the main themes of the play: whether "Identity can be a fiction" (*DC* 86)<sup>(5)</sup>. In the preface of the play, Kilroy says in a stern tone: "To base one's identity, exclusively, upon a mystical sense of place rather than in personal character where it properly resides seems to me a dangerous absurdity. To dedicate one's life to the systematic betrayal of that ideal seems to me equally absurd" (1986: 6-7). This remark echoes Beaverbrook's following idea: "I have always felt that there was something *screwball* about this emphasis on nationality.... Betrayal produces its own fidelities" (*DC* 84-85; emphasis added). On one level, it is Beaverbrook that most fully represents the author's opinion.

But of course, for better or worse, Kilroy is not a naive writer, so his attitude is ambivalent or neutral toward every character. For, according to the *Collins English Dictionary*, "screwball" as an adjective meaning "crazy" or "absurd" is used mainly in the US and Canada (the *OED* shows that it is used in "chiefly *U. S.*"). Just as Bracken reveals his identity through his Irish accent<sup>(6)</sup>, Beaverbrook, a Canadian-British newspaper publisher, also cannot be immune to language exposing aspects of his identity. While Bracken says desperately, "I want nothing to do with what was! I cannot be what I am if I'm saddled with that," Bracken cool-heartedly replies to him: "You can forget it. It's past.... My dear boy, history has been uncommonly generous to you.... History allowed you to choose" (*DC* 43-44). The difference between Beaverbrook and these two protagonists lies in the different historical pasts of Canada and Ireland. Both of them used to be under the control of the British Empire, but Ireland suffered from poverty in the post-World War II period (at least, until its accession to the European Economic Community in 1973). For Beaverbrook, who simple-mindedly says, "I am British. You're British. We believe in the Empire. We believe in the greatest compromise between democracy and elitism ever devised by human political ingenuity" (*DC* 43), cannot understand Lord Castlerosse's line: "(*To audience*) To understand Bracken, you see, you must go

back to before the war. Of course, the Irish are always trying to be something other than Irish or else they're being more Irish than you could possibly believe" (*DC* 37; italics original). Here again, by making him directly address the audience as "you," Kilroy directs them to think about themselves and their own national history.

In the preface, Kilroy describes his motivation for *Double Cross* in detail:

I wanted to represent something of this conflict between effete sophistication and fascist brutality in the conflict between Brendan Bracken and William Joyce, while retaining the threads that I saw binding them together. To this end I even tried to devise two contrasting styles for the two parts of the play.... The style for Bracken is based, parodically, upon the Comedy of Manners while that of Joyce is closer, I hope, to something like Brecht. (*DC* 14)

This quotation demonstrates not only his interest in Brecht but also his strong consciousness of "styles" or the structural symmetry of doubles. Thus, we cannot but ask ourselves how Joyce's style is Brechtian. These two Irish protagonists tried in vain to become British. This is especially true in the case of William Joyce, who supported the Nazis as "Lord Haw Haw" and finally, quite ironically, was "hanged for high treason" (*DC* 26) after the war, because he betrayed his country, the UK, in spite of his Irish origin<sup>(7)</sup>. As Marilyn Richtarik argues, we see their "pathology as having more to do with their denial of their Irishness than with their belief in concepts like Irishness and Englishness in the first place" (199). But compared with Bracken, the audience would have difficulty in sympathising with William Joyce, since he can seem to be nothing but a war criminal. Indeed, Dubost questions the fact that "[Kilroy] places on a par two men whom most spectators would classify in separate categories (because of their allegiance to Churchill or Hitler...)" (*D* 68). The author himself states that *Double Cross* "was written out of" "[a] rage against the whole nature of fascism.... So, what actually happened to me was that I had to find within myself a lot of empathy for these two individuals, or at least understanding, or whatever" (*D* 128). His honestly disclosed feelings are vital, because any history, even of fascism, cannot and must not be fixed, but should be open to (re-)interpretability and changeability.

To the above citation Kilroy continues: "But the distancing, I think, has to do with, again, kind of forcing the audience to cut loose from easy solutions" (*D* 128). As Christopher Murray argues, "Temperamentally drawn into sympathy with the protestant, individualistic point of view Kilroy formed a cultural outlook which allowed him the 'distance' – a favorite word – by which to see and assess Irish identity and Irish experience" (91). Despite, or rather because of, distancing temporarily and geographically (the two parts of *Double Cross* took place in London and Berlin respectively) the audience can reflect on themselves though many doubles/double-crosses.

## V. Conclusion

As both Roche (2009: 146) and Gerald Dawe (36-37) note<sup>(8)</sup>, anyone familiar with Irish literature cannot help being reminded of “the other Joyce,” because he also went into exile voluntarily and was unable to escape from the “nightmare” of history (*U* 2.377). James Joyce is an intertextual double of both Brendan Bracken and William Joyce, who are, as it were, photographic negatives of exiled Irish men, whereas Stephen Dedalus as Joyce’s alter ego is a positive one. However, unlike the two protagonists of *Double Cross*, the author of *Ulysses* never denied his national identity as Irish. When he was 24 years old, Joyce, in his letter to the future publisher of *Dubliners*, arrogantly wrote: “I seriously believe that you will retard the course of civilisation in Ireland by preventing the Irish people from having one good look at themselves in my nicely polished looking glass [*Dubliners*]” (1966: 134). Kilroy also refers to his protagonists as “something like mirror images” (*DC* 11).

Coincidentally at the age of 24, the future playwright Kilroy, who had just graduated from University College Dublin, concluded his article with the following sentence, giving tribute to Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: “Is it fanciful to imagine that in this building there will be found two, three, or five years hence, a group of young Irish dramatists *forging* in splendid co-operation with their fellow artists *the uncreated conscience of their race?*” (Kilroy 1959: 198; emphasis added) In the fifth and final chapter of *Portrait*, the protagonist Stephen Dedalus triumphantly declares: “I go to... forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race” (Joyce 2007: 224). While Stephen and Joyce emphasise the significance of being alone in order to become an artist, Kilroy finds, in “splendid co-operation” with other artists, his own artistic possibility. In a sense, by following in the wake of the revolutionary precursors such as Brecht and Pirandello, Kilroy joins the intertextual “group,” who has been and is trying sincerely to deconstruct the literary convention in the name of realism. Therefore, influenced by Brechtian V-effects, Kilroy’s plays as a kind of imagined community attempt to encourage the whole audience to see who they are and how the world should be changed.

### Acknowledgments

This work was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number JP15K02364. I would also like to thank Editage ([www.editage.jp](http://www.editage.jp)) for English language editing.

### Notes

- (1) Roche also enquires about Brecht of Kilroy himself; “*And there is a vein of mordant comedy running through your plays. Yet their ends seem to me to be serious and the comedy is used as in Brecht to explore the social dimension*” (2002: 158; italics original).
- (2) In this article, he touches on Brecht twice; in particular, the following might be definitive proof of the

above citation: “The two most interesting examples of workshop theatre to-day are to be found in England, since with the death of Brecht, the creative spirit seems to have gone out of the Berliner Ensembler” (196). In another article, when illustrating the difference among the generations of Irish playwrights after the Celtic Revival, Kilroy emphasises the importance of “distancing,” which is another translation of V-effect, without mentioning the name of Brecht: “For an Irish playwright today to write about the forties or fifties requires a similar act of *distancing*, of occupying an angled perspective, if you will, of finding a way of framing, of indicating or acknowledging the fact that we are in the past but that we are looking at it from the present” (2000: 4; emphasis added). In this sense, “distancing” turns out to be pretty useful for the (re-)interpretation of the history.

- (3) According to John White, “[Viktor] Shklovsky is nowhere mentioned in Brecht” (80), yet Brooker writes “The terms ‘de-familialisation’ or ‘estrangement’, when understood as more than purely formal devices, give a more accurate sense of Brecht’s intentions. A better term still would be ‘de-alienation’” (217), although he clearly distinguishes those concepts between Brecht and Shklovsky. In contrast, Dubost uses the term “distancing” without any notes; “Brecht’s distancing” (*D* 10) or “distancing techniques” (*D* 122).
- (4) Another English translation of Pirandello’s *Six Characters* reads: “Our reality doesn’t change: it can’t change! It can’t be other than what it is, because it is already fixed for ever. It’s terrible” (Pirandello 266). It is clear that Kilroy intentionally added the word “curse” in this scene.
- (5) In terms of Irish identity, comparing the two introductions by Kilroy in both the 1986 and 1994 versions, Hiroko Mikami analyses the change of his tone, saying that “Kilroy omits his uncritical praise for the Field Day movement, and focuses on the question of national identity which ‘Field Day did so much to promote.’ Now, he sees nationalism in a different light” (2002: 101). Eamon Jordan also highly evaluates *Double Cross*, as it “can show how [Bracken and Joyce’s] disaffections with their own identities lead to their embrace of difference, to the fabrication of identities that at their core are built on self-doubt and disgust” (28).
- (6) Anthony Roche argues that “[o]nly during a rooftop bombing does that suppressed Irish identity [of Bracken’s] emerge” (2009: 145).
- (7) To interpret Joyce’s “betrayal,” many critics, including me, use the binary opposition between England and Germany, but Aidan O’Malley claims that “[Joyce] never thought of his broadcast for Nazi Germany as a betrayal of England,” for “he split the meaning of England and created an idealised England to which his loyalty was summoned, and another England in which this ideal had been betrayed (typically, in his fascist rambings, by Jews)”, believing that “his duty was to help destroy this [second England]” (154-55). His comment is no doubt worth investigating, but it would require another article to tackle this issue.
- (8) Not pointing out Brechtian influence on Kilroy, the comments below by Dawe share the interest with the points discussed so far in this paper: “What makes *Double Cross* so different from [Tom] Murphy’s plays is the play’s expectations of the audience. It is a play which assumes the maturity of everyone – actor and audience, reader and critic – to accept highly conscious theatrical terms of reference” (34).

## Works Cited

- Brecht, Bertolt. *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. Edited and translated by John Willett, Hill and Wang, 1978.
- Bennett, Michael Y. *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre and Literature of the Absurd*. Cambridge UP, 2015.
- Brooker, Peter. “Key Words in Brecht’s Theory and Practice of Theatre.” *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht*. 2nd ed., edited by Peter Thomson and Glendyr Sacks. Cambridge UP, 2006, pp.209-24.

- Dawe, Gerald. *Stray Dogs and Dark Horses*. Abbey Press, 2000.
- Dickson, Keith. *Towards Utopia: A Study of Brecht*. Oxford UP, 1978.
- Dubost, Thierry. *The Plays of Thomas Kilroy*. McFarland & Company, 2007; cited in the text as *D*.
- Jordan, Eamon. *Dissident Dramaturgies: Contemporary Irish Theatre*. Irish Academic Press, 2010.
- Joyce, James. *Letters of James Joyce*, vol.2. Edited by Richard Ellmann, Viking Press, 1966.
- ... *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. 1916. Edited by John Paul Riquelme. Text Edited by Hans Walter Gabler and Walter Hettche, Norton, 2007.
- ... *Ulysses*. 1922. Edited by Hans Walter Gabler with Wolfhard Steppe and Claus Melchior, Random House, 1986; cited in the text as *U* with episode and line numbers.
- Kilroy, Thomas. "Author's Note." *Double Cross*. Faber & Faber, 1986, pp.6-7.
- ... "Brecht, Beckett and Williams." *Sagetrieb*, vol.3, no.2, 1984, pp.81-87.
- ... *Double Cross*. Gallery Books, 1994; cited in the text as *DC*.
- ... "A Generation of Playwrights." 1992. *Theatre Stuff: Critical Essays on Contemporary Irish Theatre*, edited by Eamon Jordan, Carysfort Press, 2000, pp.1-7.
- ... "Groundwork for an Irish Theatre." *Studies*, vol.48, 1959, pp.192-98.
- ... "The Irish Writer: Self and Society, 1950-80." *Literature and the Changing Ireland*, edited by Peter Connolly, Smythe, 1982, pp.175-87.
- ... *Pirandello: Two Plays: Six Characters in Search of an Author and Henry (after Henry IV)*. Gallery Books, 2007; cited in the text as *P*.
- Mikami, Hiroko. "Kilroy's Vision of Doubleness: The Question of National Identity and Theatricality in *Double Cross*." *Irish University Review*, vol.32, no.1, 2002, pp.100-09.
- ... "Looking Back at the Time of the Emergency: Kilroy's *Double Cross* (1986) and McGuinness's *Dolly Wests Kitchen* (1999)." *Journal of Irish Studies*, vol.27, 2012, pp.19-27.
- Mortimer, Anthony. Introduction. *Three Plays: Six Characters in Search of an Author, Henry IV, The Mountain Giants*, by Luigi Pirandello. Oxford UP, 2014, pp.vii-xxvi.
- Murray, Christopher. "Thomas Kilroy: The Artist and the Critic." *Irish University Review*, vol.32, no.1, 2002, pp.83-94.
- O'Malley, Aidan. *Field Day and the Translation of Irish Identities: Performing Contradictions*. Palgrave, Macmillan, 2011.
- Pirandello, Luigi. *Naked Masks: Five Plays by Luigi Pirandello*. Edited by Eric Bentley, Dutton, 1952.
- Richtarik, Marilyn. "The Field Day Theatre Company." *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Irish Drama*, edited by Shaun Richards, Cambridge, 2004, pp. 191-203.
- Roche, Anthony. *Contemporary Irish Drama*. 2nd ed. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- ... "An Interview with Thomas Kilroy." *Irish University Review*, vol.32, no.1, 2002, pp.150-58.
- Trotter, Mary. "'Double Crossing' Irish Borders: The Field Day Production of Tom Kilroy's *Double Cross*." *New Hibernia Review*, vol.1, no.1, 1997, pp.31-43.
- White, John. *Bertolt Brecht's Dramatic Theory*. Camden House, 2004.

