

1896 - 1979

Dublin scholar, wit and man of letters

Edited by Eoin O'Brien

Published by THE CON LEVENTHAL SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE

THE DR. A.J. (CON) LEVENTHAL SCHOLARSHIP

Con Leventhal died in Paris in 1979. Two years later a group of his friends came together in Dublin to consider how best to commemorate his erudition, charm and literary influence. It was resolved to establish a scholarship that would enable a graduate student in English or Modern Languages of Trinity College, Dublin to study in Europe. Con's friends and literary associates, and academic institutes at home and abroad contributed generously to the scholarship fund and to the scholarship auction in the Samuel Beckett Rooms in Trinity College on March 15th, 1984. The first scholarship will be awarded in the academic year 1984-5.

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will be held

in

THE SAMUEL BECKETT ROOMS TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

on Thursday 15th March 1984

at 8.15 p.m.

On view Wednesday and Thursday, 14th and 15th 12 midday to 6 p.m. (Catalogue p. 32)

THE WRITINGS OF A. J. LEVENTHAL

A Bibliography compiled by Eoin O'Brien

Con Leventhal was born in Dublin in 1896, and educated at Wesley College. His childhood experiences in Catholic Dublin are recounted with humour and poignancy in "What it means to be a Jew". His undergraduate studies at Trinity College were interrupted when he joined the first Zionist Commission immediately after the first World War and spent a year in Palestine where he helped to found the Palestine Weekly. He was invited to join the London office of the Jewish National Fund where he became associated with the Zionist Review.

Returning to Dublin to take up his academic studies, he recognised immediately the remarkable talent of his fellow-Dubliner James Joyce, of whose work he remarked "the riches are embarrassing". Leventhal submitted a review of *Ulysses* to the *Dublin Magazine* (this was to mark the beginning of a literary association and deep personal friendship with its editor Seumas O'Sullivan that was to last until O'Sullivan died and with him his famous magazine in 1958), but as he corrected the galley sheets word came that the printers in Dollards would down tools rather than have part in the publication of the blasphemous writings of Joyce. In anger Leventhal wrote — "A censoring God came out of the machine to allay the hell-fire fears of the compositors sodality." Determined that his review would appear in print, he produced a delightful magazine, *The Klaxon*, which introduced itself in strident tones —

"We are the offspring of a gin and vermouth in a local public-house. We swore that we were young and could assert our youth with all its follies. We railed against the psychopedantic parlours of our elders and their maidenly consorts, hoping the while with an excess of Picabia and banter, a whiff of Dadaist Europe to kick Ireland into artistic wakefulness".

The Klaxon, lasting for only one issue, was not permitted to achieve its nobly stated ambition, but it did at least publish a truncated version of Leventhal's article on *Ulysses*.

"In truth, there is no real parallel to Mr. Joyce in literature. He has that touch of individuality that puts genius on a peak. Rabelaisian, he hasn't the joie de vivre of the French priest; Sternesque, he is devoid of the personal touch of the Irish clergyman. Trained by the Jesuits, he can't guffaw like Balzac when he tells a good story. He is a scientist in his detachedness, but *Ulysses* is nevertheless, a human book filled with pity as with sexual instinct, and the latter in no greater proportion in the book than other fundamental human attributes."

After the demise of *The Klaxon* Leventhal became involved with another magazine *Tomorrow*, which was to fare only slightly better than its predecessor in that it lasted for two issues, each of which had to be printed overseas to escape the moral rectitude of the Irish type-setters. It provided Yeats, Stuart, Lennox Robinson and Leventhal, among others, with a platform from which they voiced with an iconoclastic honesty their stifled sentiments on art—

"We proclaim that we can forgive the sinner, but abhor the atheist, and that we count among atheists bad writers and Bishops of all denominations".

Completion of a doctoral thesis was the signal for Leventhal's return to the academic world, and when Samuel Beckett resigned his lectureship in French literature at Trinity College, Leventhal was appointed to succeed him. The two became close friends, and of Beckett's many critics Leventhal is unique in his empathy with Beckett, a quality that gives to his comments on his friend's work an immense value. Leventhal saw in Beckett a genius even greater than that which had attracted him to Joyce —

"Beckett is in a sense a more intellectual writer than Joyce and his jousting with words has a background of erudition deeper, one suspects, than that of the master — the cher maître of the avant garde of the twenties and thirties in Montparnasse".

It was Beckett's universality that elevated him, in Leventhal's view, above the mightiness of Joyce. Beckett was for all men of all time, even if "Mr. Beckett's work is not for the many", whereas Joyce demanded for full appreciation certain preconditions—"To appreciate Joyce fully one had not only to be a Catholic but have a Dublin background in addition..." Beckett's refusal to conform, his desire and ability to lift literature from the abyss of convention, his audacity and courage in daring to go further than Joyce, all appealed to Leventhal—"It may well be" he wrote of Fin de Partie in 1957 "that there is still a public that believes the age of experimentation is not over, that profundity however painful, is still preferable to vapid reiterations of tried and tiring formulae". Above all it was his friend's ability to establish landmarks in literature that most fascinated him—"En attendant Godot belongs to no school, it will make one"—he wrote in 1954.

Leventhal's contributions to magazines and newspapers are many and varied. He was for most of his life closely associated with influential periodicals. At Trinity he was Assistant Editor of the University Magazine, *Hermathena*. He was also a regular broadcaster from Radio Eireann and the B.B.C.

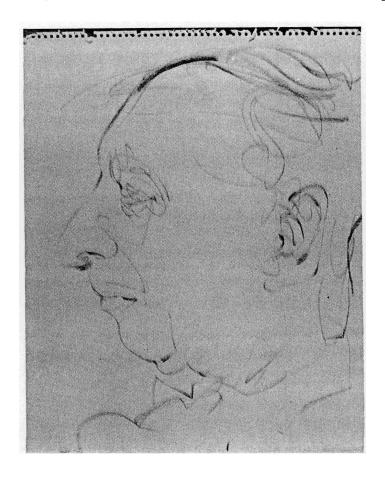
The influence of Judaism in life and art is a recurring theme in many of Leventhal's articles and in his poetry. His appreciation of lesser known writers such as Amy Levy and Hannah Berman was a characteristic of his literary awareness.

Con was probably happiest in the theatre. Here the expressionism of

literature could be projected in innovative form. For fifteen years he contributed quarterly a "Dramatic Commentary" to the *Dublin Magazine*, and he has left a remarkable diary of Dublin theatre through the forties and fifties. He tried and enjoyed acting.

After his retirement from Trinity College, he lived in Paris where he continued to contribute to Irish newspapers, to the *International Herald Tribune* and to *The Financial Times*.

This bibliography is not complete. Many of Con's translations and some of his published poetry may, I suspect, have been omitted. Others will, I hope, undertake the task of assessing more fully not only the writings of A.J. Leventhal, but also the relevance of his influence on his contemporaries.



A.J. Leventhal by Avigdor Arikha (Catalogue Lot No. 28)

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DRAMATIC COMMENTARY

A.J. Leventhal wrote the first of the series entitled *Dramatic Commentary* in the October-December issue of the *Dublin Magazine* in 1943. The strident tones, the felicitous style, and discerning criticism that were to characterise this unique diary of Dublin theatre during its fifteen years existence are evident in the opening lines of that first contribution in the forties:

"At its inception the Abbey Theatre incurred abuse to be followed by universal approval with a consequent acceptance at home like the prophet approved by proverb who only receives posthumous canonisation in his native town. Recognised in the first instance by the discerning few for the right reasons, praised by the equally discerning few in foreign parts, the latter brought their compatriots round to appreciation of a dramatic mode which despite a regional language and local dramatis personae, succeeded in crawling out of its provincial rompers to an adult metropolitan influence."

Leventhal's appreciation of theatre and the literature emanating from it, his affection for Irish theatre and his empathy with actors and actresses (he was himself an accomplished performer) give to his criticism a warmth and feeling that is at the same time devoid of parochial sentiment. These qualities together with his familiarity with European theatre, and the catholicity of Leventhal's interests make the *Dramatic Commentaries* a valuable legacy in theatrical criticism.

The last contribution to the series was in the April-June issue of the

Dublin Magazine of 1958 which also bears a poignant farewell tribute to the editor Seumas O'Sullivan:

"As this Magazine goes to press we regret to have to announce the death of its founder and Editor, James Sullivan Starkey, otherwise Seumas O'Sullivan, the name by which he is known in the world of letters. From the first number of the Dublin Magazine in 1923 up to the present issue there is continuous evidence of the product of a mind with one standard - the highest. The list of contributors' names to be found elsewhere in this number, bears witness to Seumas O'Sullivan's catholicity of taste in poetry and prose. Many of these writers found their first platform in this Magazine. While Ireland's greatest writers shine magnificently in its files, there is no narrow nationalism. O'Sullivan could find room for English, French and American contributors if they fitted into his scheme of things. And through the annals of this journal there emerges the individuality of the Editor, stamping it with his brave decisions as much avant garde as traditional. Much will yet be written about Seumas O'Sullivan as poet, essayist and editor, much about the man himself but there is little need to address the readers of this Magazine in this respect.

The future of this journal, now that its great artificer is gone, is uncertain. One would have liked at least one more issue in which writers could pay homage to this unique figure in the literary world. But many material and other considerations must be counted before a decision can be reached.

A.J.L."

In the following listing of the *Dramatic Commentary* the year and volume number of the *Dublin Magazine* are given at the head of the series for that year, and the issue number and page numbers follow each contribution.

II. DRAMATIC COMMENTARY The Dublin Magazine 1943-1958

1943. VOLUME 18

1. Dramatic Commentary. No. 4. pp. 52-55.

1944. VOLUME 19

- 2. Dramatic Commentary. No. 1. pp. 39-42.
- 3. Dramatic Commentary. No. 2. pp. 48-51.
- 4. Dramatic Commentary. No. 3. pp. 47-50.
- 5. The Bacchanals. By Euripides. Gate Theatre.

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6. The Picture of Dorian Gray. Adapted by Micheal MacLiammoir. Gaiety Theatre.

The Black Stranger. By Gerard Healy. The Players Theatre.

Clever Lad. By Nora O'Hare. New

Deirdre of the Sorrows. By J.M. Synge. Dublin University Players. The Earl of Straw. By Christine Longford. Gate Theatre. No. 2. pp. 43-46.

Le Malade Imaginaire. By Molière.
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 Le Gendre de M. Poirier. By Emile
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Clarke. Lyric Theatre Company. Cain. By Mary Davenport O'Neill. Lyric Theatre. No. 3. pp. 42-44.

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The Magistrate. By Sir Arthur W. Pinero. Dublin Gate Theatre.

Marks and Mabel. By Brinsley Mac-Namara. Abbey Theatre.

The Last of Summer. By Kate O'Brien and John Barry. Gaiety Theatre.

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The Skin of Our Teeth. By Thornton Wilder. Gaiety Theatre.

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20. The Playboy of the Western World.
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- 21. The Moonlighter. By George Fitzmaurice. Earlsfort Players. The King of Friday's Men. By M.J. Molloy. Abbey Theatre. The Briery Gap. By T.C. Murray. Abbey Experimental Theatre. Light Falling. By Teresa Deevy. Abbey Experimental Theatre. As the Crow Flies. By Austin Clarke. Lyric Theatre Company. Bluebeard. By Mary Davenport O'Neill. Lyric Theatre Company. Nicolas Flamel. By Gerard de Nerval. Translated by Seamus O'Sullivan. Abbey Experimental Theatre. No. 1. pp. 38-41.
- 22. The Father. By August Strindberg. Gate Theatre. The Grand House in the City. By Brinsley MacNamara. Abbey Theatre. No. 2. pp. 35-37.
- 23. Le Malade Imaginaire or The Hypochondriac. By Molière. Translated by the Earl of Longford. Gate Theatre. The School for Wives. By Moliere. Translated by the Earl of Longford. Hodges, Figgis & Co. Ltd. 6/-. The Linnaun Shee. By George Fitzmaurice. Lyric Theatre Company. Deirdre. By W.B. Yeats. Lyric Theatre Company. All Souls' Night. By Joseph Tomelty. Abbey Theatre. In Sand. By Jack B. Yeats. Abbey Experimental Theatre. Cock-A-Doodle Dandy. By Sean O'Casey. Macmillan Co., Ltd., Price 6/-. Abbey Plays, 1899-1948. With a commentary by Brinsley MacNamara. At the Sign of the Three Candles. Price

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- 25. Le Maître de Santiago. By Henry de Montherlant. Théâtre-Hebertot, Paris. Mr. Supple or Time Will Tell. By Christine Longford. Longford Productions. Gate Theatre. By the Board. By R.B.D. French and Barry Roach. Dublin University Players. Peacock Theatre. No. 1. pp. 44-47.
- 26. The Plot Succeeds. By Austin Clarke. Lyric Theatre Company. The Lady's Not for Burning. By Christopher Fry. Longford Productions. Gate Theatre. Knock. By Jules Romains. D.U. Modern Languages Society. Peacock Theatre Die Journalisten, By Gustav Freytag. D.U. Modern Languages Society. Peacock Theatre. Universities Dramatic Association Fes-
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- 30. House Under Green Shadows. By Maurice G. Meldon. On ne badine pas avec L'amour. By Alfred de Musset. Peacock Theatre. Minna Von Barnhelm. By Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. Peacock Theatre. The Dublin Marionette Group. Peacock Theatre. The Old Ladies. By Rodney Ackland and Hugh Walpole. Gate Theatre. No. 2. pp. 42-44.
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- pp. 51-53.
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- 33. Tolka Row. By Maura Laverty. Gaiety
 - Window on the Square. By Anne Daly. Abbey Theatre playing at the Queens Theatre.
 - Christopher Fry An Appreciation. By Derek Stanford. Peter Nevill Ltd. Price 12. 6d.
 - The Theatre Since 1900. By J.C. Trewin. Andrew Dakers, Ltd., Price 21s. No. 1. pp. 39-41.
- 34. Ireland's Abbey Theatre. By Lennox Robinson. Sidgwick and Jackson. 30s. Prohibido Suicidarse en Primavera. Dublin University Modern Languages Society. Dixon Hall. Boubouroche and Un Client sérieux.

Dublin University Modern Languages Society. R.I.A.M. Theatre. No. 2. pp. 32-35.

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Venus Observed. By Christopher Fry. Gate Theatre.

Hassan. By James Elroy Flecker. The Dublin Marionette Group.

The Dragon. By Lady Gregory. Bernadette Hall.

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 Home is the Hero. By Walter Macken. Abbey Theatre playing at the Queen's Theatre.

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Aisling. By Maurice Meldon. 37 Theatre Club.

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We, The Living. By Donal Giltinan and Pat Coldrick. Gaiety Theatre. No. 3. pp. 32-34.

40. Harrigan's Girl. By Seamus de Faoite. 37 Theatre Club.

The Playboy of the Western World. By John Millington Synge. Gaiety Theatre.

The Glass Menagerie. By Tennessee Williams. Bernadette Hall.

The Man Outside. By Wolfgang Borchert. 37 Theatre Club. No. 4. pp. 39-41

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41. The Hill of Quirke. By Christine Longford. Gate Theatre.

Gigi. By Anita Loos from the novel by Colette. Royal Irish Academy of Music.

The Enchanted. By Jean Giraudoux. Royal Irish Academy of Music.

The Love of Four Colonels. By Peter Ustinov. Gaiety Theatre.

St. Joan. By Bernard Shaw. Gate Theatre. No. 1. pp. 40-43.

42. John Courtney. By John Malone.
Abbey Theatre.

The Merchant of Venice. By William Shakespeare. University College Dublin Dramatic Society.

The Follies of Herbert Lane. The Pike Theatre Club.

Les Fourberies de Scapin. par Molière. Dublin University Modern Languages Society. No. 2. pp. 34-36.

43. A Moon for the Misbegotten. By Eugene O'Neill. Arts Theatre.

The Seventh Step. By Padraic Fallon. The Dublin Globe Theatre.

The Cardinal and the Crows. By Seamus de Faoite. Pilgrim Productions.

The Typewriter. By Jean Cocteau. Studio Theatre Club. No. 3. pp. 51-53.

44. Knocknavain. By J.M. Doody. Abbey Theatre playing at the Queen's Theatre. A Riverside Charade. By Brian Guinness. Abbey Theatre playing at the Queen's Theatre.

The Demon Lover. By Lennox Robinson. Gaiety Theatre.

The Male Animal. By James Thurber & Elliot Nugent. Gate Theatre.

More Follies of Herbert Lane. The Pike Theatre Club. No. 4. pp. 50-52.

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45. Not for Children. By Elmer Rice. Gate Theatre.

The Quare Fellow. By Brendan Behan.

The Pike Theatre Club.

Dear Charles. By Alan Melville. Olympia Theatre. No. 1. pp. 47-49.

46. The Bishops Bonfire. By Sean O'Casey.
Cyril Cusack Productions. Gaiety
Theatre.

Crime passionnel. By J.-P. Sartre. Studio Theatre Club.

It's Never Too Late. By Felicity Douglas. Olympia Theatre.

Nightmare Abbey. Adapted from the novel by Thomas Love Peacock by Dennis McDonnell. Dublin University Players. No. 2. pp. 28-32.

47. Henry IV. By Luigi Pirandello. Gate Theatre.

Juno and the Paycock. By Sean O'Casey. Radio Eireann.

We Dig for the Stars. By T.B. Morris. Pike Theatre Club.

Airs on a Shoestring. An Intimate Revue by Laurier Lister. Olympia Theatre. No. 3. pp. 51-54.

48. The Madwoman of Chaillot. By Jean 53
Giraudoux. Olympia Theatre.
The Gentle Toucher. By Fergus
Cogley. Studio Theatre Club.
Kathleen. By Michael Sayers. Olympia
Theatre. No. 4. pp. 32-34.

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49. Waiting for Godot. By Samuel Beckett.
Criterion Theatre, London, and The
Pike Theatre Club.

Twilight of a Warrior. By Walter Macken. Abbey Theatre playing at the Queen's Theatre.

The Lark. By Jean Anouilh. Translated by Christopher Fry. Gate Theatre. Café de Paris. London. No. 1. pp. 52-54.

50. Judgement on James O'Neill. By Francis MacManus. Abbey Theatre playing at the Queen's Theatre.

Intimate Relations. By Jean Cocteau. Olympia Theatre.

Heartbreak House. By Bernard Shaw. Gate Theatre.

Room Service. By John Murray and Allen Boretz. Dublin Globe Theatre playing at the Gaiety Theatre. No. 2. pp. 23-26.

51. The Golden Link. By Edward Lindsay-Hogg. Gate Theatre.

The Devil's Disciple. By Bernard Shaw. Olympia Theatre.

Pygmalion. By Bernard Shaw. Olympia Theatre.

Time Remembered. By Jean Anouilh. Translated by Patricia Moyes. Dagg Hall.

Limpid River. By Séamus de Burca. Gate Theatre. No. 3. pp. 46-48.

52. Candida. By Bernard Shaw. Gate Theatre.

Androcles and the Lion. By Bernard Shaw. Cyril Cusack Productions. Gaiety Theatre.

Early and Often. By John McCann. Abbey Theatre playing at the Queen's Theatre.

The Golden Cuckoo. By Denis Johnston. Cyril Cusack Productions. Gaiety Theatre. No. 4. pp. 44-46.

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53. Winter Wedding. By Tomas Mac Anna. Abbey Theatre playing at the Queen's Theatre.

Nekrassov. By Jean-Paul Sartre. Translated by Sylvia and George Leeson.

Pike Theatre Productions playing at the Gate Theatre.

The Little Hut. By Andre Roussin. Adapted by Nancy Mitford. Pike Theatre Productions playing at the Gate Theatre.

The Matchmaker. By Thornton Wilder. The Dublin Globe Theatre Co., playing at the Gaiety Theatre.

The Enchanted (Intermezzo). By Jean Giraudoux. Translated by Maurice Valency. Dublin University Press. No. 1. pp. 41-43.

54. A Leap in the Dark. By Hugh Leonard. Abbey Theatre playing at the Queen's Theatre.

Glanmore. By Conor Farrington, R.I.A.M. Theatre.

Blood Wedding. By Federico Garcia Lorca. Dublin University Players.

Say it with Follies. The Pike Theatre Club.

The School for Scandal. By Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Longford Productions. Gate Theatre.

Step-in-the-Hollow. By Donagh Mac-Donagh. Gaiety Theatre. No. 2. pp. 22-26.

- 55. Dublin International Theatre Festival. No. 3. pp. 52-54.
- 56. All that Fall. By Samuel Beckett. Faber & Faber. 5s.

The Less We Are Together. By John O'Donovan. Abbey Theatre playing at the Queen's Theatre.

Stealing The Picture. By Joy Rudd and Carolyn Swift. Pike Theatre Club.

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Adam. International Review. Edited by Miron Grindea. Nos. 253-256. No. 4. pp. 42-45.

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57. Inbal. The National Ballet and Dance Theatre of Israel. Gaiety Theatre.

The Diary of Anne Frank. Dramatised by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett. Gaiety Theatre.

Hamlet. By William Shakespeare. Cyril Cusack Productions. Gaiety Theatre. No. 1. pp. 32-34.

58. Roger Casement. By Roger McHugh and Alfred Noyes. Cyril Cusack Productions. Gaiety Theatre.

Exiles. By James Joyce. Dublin University Players.

The Moment Next to Nothing. By Austin Clarke. Lyric Theatre Company.

Romanoff and Juliet. By Peter Ustinov. The Globe Theatre Company. Pantagleize. By Michel de Ghelderode. Pike Theatre. No. 2. pp. 32-34.