

## ABSTRACT

The oeuvre of the Irish poet, novelist, playwright and essayist Eugene Rutherford Watters (later publishing under the name Eoghan Ó Tuairisc), who wrote both in English and Irish, has been mostly neglected by literary criticism. This thesis focuses on Watters' ambitious long modernist poem *The Week-End of Dermot and Grace* (1964), which has so far received only perfunctory critical treatment. Formally, *The Week-End* shows clear affinities with the works of high modernism (especially with the poetry of T.S. Eliot), especially in terms of poly- and multivocal qualities of Watters' overtly allusive language and the liberal employment of wide-ranging intertextual references. On the thematic level, the poem centres around Watters' preoccupation with the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima on 6<sup>th</sup> August 1945 by the American forces, a momentous event that impelled the poet to questions about faith, civilisation, technology, and collective guilt in the context of the Irish neutral stance during the Second World War. Reflections on Hiroshima also led him to contemplate the role of the poet and poetry in the modern "atomic age".

Given the aforementioned qualities of the work, the method chosen for the analysis consists of a close reading of the poem in the light of the historical, literary, and biographical background. The core of thesis consists of a section-by-section detailed commentary (Chapter 5). An account of the author's life and work accompanies the analysis (Chapter 2), together with an overview of the historical (Chapter 3), literary and philosophical contexts (Chapter 4) in which the poem originated. The final chapter (Chapter 6) is dedicated to the overall assessment of *The Week-End*. Special attention is paid to the close relationship between *The Week-End* and its Irish counterpart "Aifreann na Marbh" (1964, Requiem Mass). The outcome of the thesis thus consists mainly in a coherent critical assessment of the poem, but it also attempts to reassess Watters' poetic work both in the context of Irish literature and in the tradition of European modernist poetry, and to provide a solid basis for future research into his poetry.

Key words: Eugene Rutherford Watters, Eoghan Ó Tuairisc, modernism, atomic bomb, Hiroshima, long modernist poem, *The Week-End of Dermot and Grace*, "Aifreann na Marbh"