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(Rome)

“A Genuinely Funny German Farce” Turns into  
a Very Irish Play: *The Broken Jug* (1994),  
John Banville’s Adaptation of Heinrich von Kleist’s  
*Der zerbrochne Krug* (1807)

John Banville’s concern with national cultures different from his own, especially with German-speaking literature, has been widely analysed.<sup>1</sup> References to German culture are scattered throughout his writings. Sometimes they are semi-quotations or direct quotations, like for example the Wittgensteinian sentence “whereof I cannot speak, thereof I must be silent”<sup>2</sup> at the end of *Birchwood* (1973), which is the epistemological counterpart to the philosophical opening statement “I am, therefore I think”,<sup>3</sup> the reversal of the Cartesian dictum *cogito, ergo sum*; more frequently they are ethereal and implicit allusions which create an intriguing pattern of intertextuality and challenge the reader to find out the foretexts for the clues given. For both open and hidden indebtedness to foreign cultures and to German culture in particular, *The Newton Letter*

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1 See Rüdiger Imhof, “German Influences on John Banville and Aidan Higgins,” in *Literary Interrelations. Ireland, England and the World. Vol. 2. Comparison and Impact*, eds. Wolfgang Zach and Heinz Kosok (Tübingen: Narr, 1987), 335–347; Id., *John Banville. A Critical Study* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1989); Gordon J. A. Burgess, “An Irish *Die Wahlverwandschaften*,” in *German Life and Letters* 45 (1992): 140–148; Joseph Swann, “Banville’s Faust: *Doctor Copernicus, Kepler, The Newton Letter* and *Mefisto* as Stories of the European Mind,” in *A Small Nation’s Contribution to the World. Essays on Anglo-Irish Literature and Language*, eds. Donald E. Morse, Csilla Bertha, Istvan Palfy (Debrecen: Lajos Kossuth University, 1993; Irish Literature Studies 45), 148–160; Ingo Berenmeyer, *John Banville: Fictions of Order. Authority, Authorship, Authenticity* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2000), see esp. 168–185; Elke d’Hoker, “Negative Aesthetics in Hugo von Hofmannsthal’s *Ein Brief* and John Banville’s *The Newton Letter*,” in *New Voices in Irish Criticism* 3, ed. Karen Vandeveld (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), 36–43.

This article is the revised version of the paper presented at the 2006 IASIL (International Association for the Study of Irish Literature) Conference in Sydney.

2 John Banville, *Birchwood* (London: Picador 1998), 175.

3 Banville, *Birchwood*, 11.

(1982), the third book of the science tetralogy,<sup>4</sup> can be considered a pivotal text in Banville's work, despite its limited size – it is a novella of 80 pages – and the minimizing definition as “an Interlude”, in the sub-title. Here we find in a condensed form quotations from Hugo von Hofmannsthal's modernist essay *Ein Brief*, patterns, episodes and figures from Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften*, images and atmospheres from Henry James' *The Sacred Fount*, of course references to Newton and also to several other writers and philosophers, such as Rilke, Marvell, Yeats and Sartre. The indebtedness to Hofmannsthal,<sup>5</sup> the obvious influence of *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* and the fascinating reverberations of *The Sacred Fount* reveal Banville's concern for a recurring issue in his writing: the contrast between appearance and reality and the desperate quest for truth. In fact all the above mentioned fore-texts share the tendency to fathom in a subtle and even morbid way the problem of the ineffability and allusiveness of human experience, namely in linguistic terms (discrepancy between word and thing in *Ein Brief*), in terms of contrast between inner feelings and social constraints (conflict between love and marriage in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*) and in terms of metanarrative throwing into question the reliability of the plot, which seems to be the result of a conjectural account (*The Sacred Fount*). Most of Banville's borrowings are affected or even originated by his enduring attempt to explore the multilayered, obscure structure of reality and the enigma of our existence. No wonder he is attracted by an author like Heinrich von Kleist, whose *oeuvre* is permeated by *das Unheimliche* and who in many respects is

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4 The tetralogy includes the novels *Doctor Copernicus* (1976), *Kepler* (1981), *The Newton Letter* (1982) and *Mephisto* (1987).

5 The protagonist of *The Newton Letter* is a historian who is writing a biography on Isaac Newton trying explain the scientist's crisis as this is depicted in a (real) enigmatic letter written to Locke. The reasons for this psychological and existential collapse are described in Banville's second letter; this letter is a borrowing from Hofmannsthal's *Ein Brief*, in which Lord Chandos explains to Francis Bacon the reasons why he finds it impossible to continue writing. Banville's fiction is an extended apostrophe which the protagonist addresses to Clio, the Muse of History, containing an account of his stay in County Wexford. Here he has rented accommodation in the peaceful and idyllic estate of Fern House where he hopes to finish his biography, but he is distracted by the inscrutable and puzzling inhabitants of the run-down house Charlotte, Otilie and Edward. He ends up having an affair with Otilie, though he seems to be much more interested in Charlotte. Although he has a series of revelations and insights, he cannot understand what is going on around him and he constantly misinterprets the nature of what he observes.

the counterpart the *Weimarer Klassik*. Certainly Banville regards him very highly, since he has translated and adapted *Der zerbrochne Krug*, *Amphitryon* and *Penthesilea*<sup>6</sup> for the Irish stage. Furthermore, his latest novel *The Infinities*,<sup>7</sup> a sort of comment on Heinrich von Kleist retelling of the story of Amphitryon, provides new evidence for his interest in the German author.

Banville is first and foremost a novelist. His dramatic pieces are considered “interesting digressions from novel writing,” and have been described as “a sporting interlude between major enterprises, a relaxation of the major creative design.”<sup>8</sup> This is no doubt why they have received so little critical attention. Banville’s concern with Kleist dates back to at least the Eighties. In *Mefisto* (1986) he re-works several concepts of Kleist’s essay *Über das Marionettentheater* (1810). When in 1988 he reviewed the translations of Kleist by Martin Greenberg,<sup>9</sup> he described *Der zerbrochne Krug* as “a genuinely funny German farce”,<sup>10</sup> and was looking forward to an Irish adaptation of the play. He would then go on to write this adaptation himself in 1994. In the 1997 interview with Hedwig Schwall, Banville stated: “I think Kleist is one of the very great artists of the modern era. It’s a shame that especially in the English-speaking world he is hardly known at all. That’s why I did my version of *The Broken Jug*, to get him on the stage here.”<sup>11</sup> In a more recent interview (with Derek Hand) he says “it was a joy to be at the first read-through of it [his version of *The Broken Jug*, A. F.]. I was the only audience, and I sat there laughing and enjoying myself [...]. I became stage-struck immediately”.<sup>12</sup> If *The Newton Letter* is “a brilliant exercise

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6 John Banville, *The Broken Jug: After Heinrich von Kleist* (Oldcastle: Gallery Press, 1994); John Banville, *God’s Gift: A Version of Amphitryon by Heinrich von Kleist* (Oldcastle: Gallery, 2000); John Banville, *Love in the Wars: After Kleist’s Penthesilea* (Oldcastle: Gallery, 2005).

7 John Banville, *The Infinities* (London: Picador, 2009).

8 Joseph McMinn, *The Supreme Fiction of John Banville* (Manchester – New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), both quotations 157.

9 Heinrich von Kleist, *Five Plays*, trans. from the German, with an Introduction, by Martin Greenberg (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1988).

10 John Banville, “The Helpless Laughter of a Tragedian,” in *The Irish Times*, December 3, 1988, 9.

11 “An Interview with John Banville,” in *The European English Messenger* 6 (Spring 1997): 13–19, here: 14.

12 “John Banville and Derek Hand in Conversation,” transcribed by Hedda Friberg, in *Irish University Review. John Banville Special Issue 36* (Spring / Summer 2006): 200–215, here: 210.

in literary derivation”,<sup>13</sup> this play can be said to be a convincing and surprising exercise in literary re-shaping and adaptation. The title page itself announces: *The Broken Jug after Heinrich von Kleist*. Here there is no need to seek hidden allusions.

Kleist refers to and subverts the clichés of both Classicism and Romanticism. He takes an in-between position and seems to be an outsider – *ein Fremdling* – in his time because of the modernity of his writing in terms of form and content. In fact he baffled and shocked his colleagues with the wild passions of his characters (e.g. Penthesilea) and the unusual themes of his narrative and plays, which transcend the aesthetics of the *Goethezeit* appealing to the sensibility of contemporary readers. *Der zerbrochne Krug*, Kleist’s only comedy, is usually referred to as a “comedy of deception” or “comedy of errors”.<sup>14</sup> This was a theme the author had dealt with in his tragedies and that he now tries to elaborate in a comic manner, although the play is

durchaus kleine leichte Komödie. Selbst in den sprachgewitzten Maskeraden [...] kann sich der Zuschauer wohl kaum [...] entspannen [...] Es ist ein hintergründig bedeutungsvoller, bisweilen abgründiger Spaß, den sich Kleist mit der alten Fabel vom Zerbrochenen Krug erlaubt hat.<sup>15</sup>

The motive of the broken jug or pitcher has a long-standing tradition, and can be found in different literatures.<sup>16</sup>

The central theme of *Der zerbrochne Krug*,<sup>17</sup> which has a trial-like structure, is the difficulty encountered in attempting to discover the

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13 Imhof, “German Influences on John Banville and Aidan Higgins”, 335.

14 See e.g. the Chapter “The Comedy of Errors: *The Broken Pitcher*,” in Robert E. Helbling: *The Major Works of Heinrich von Kleist* (New York: New Directions, 1975), 119–130.

15 See *Kommentar* to Heinrich von Kleist, *Der zerbrochne Krug*, in H.v.K., *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe in vier Bänden*, Bd. 1, *Dramen 1802–1807*, unter Mitwirkung v. Hans Rudolf Barth eds. Ilse-Marie Barth und Hinrich C. Seeba (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1991), 721–767, here: 795.

16 See Robert Mühler, “Die Mythe vom zerbrochenen Krug,” in R.M., *Dichtung der Krise. Mythos und Psychologie der Dichtung des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Wien: Verlag Herold, 1951), 13–39.

17 The play was inspired by an engraving by Jacques Le Veau which Kleist had seen 1801 in Berne. In a preface which the author wrote for the play but which was not published he reports: “Ich nahm die Veranlassung dazu aus einem Kupferstich, den ich vor mehreren Jahren in der Schweiz sah. Man bemerkte darauf – zuerst einen Richter, der gravitatisch auf dem Richterstuhl saß: vor ihm stand eine alte Frau, die einen zerbrochenen Krug hielt, sie schien das Unrecht, das ihm widerfahren war, zu demonstrieren: Beklagter, ein junger Bauerkerl,

truth, or the impossibility of unveiling the ‘true’ reality which lies behind the facts. The play follows the analytical structure typical of most German dramas of the Classical period: the action begins after the fact, and explores the psychological reasons underlying the behaviour of the main characters as they search for the ‘truth’. At the beginning of the play Adam, the parody of a provincial judge in a small Dutch village, is preparing himself for a court session in which Frau Martha will accuse Ruprecht, her daughter Eve’s fiancé, of having broken a precious jug during his visit to the girl’s bedroom. Gerichtsrat Walter is there too, as he is making an inspection tour regarding the administration of justice in the Dutch villages. The trial is presided over by Judge Adam, who gradually, mostly through ironical slips of the tongue which reveal Kleist’s mastery of language, demonstrates that he himself has committed the crime under investigation. In other words, he has broken the jug, which may also be seen as a symbol of innocence and virtue. Adam had tried to seduce Eve by promising to prevent Ruprecht being sent to a distant colony for military service. The Judge endeavours to hide the truth about his visit to Eve, but the more he tries to cast suspicion on Ruprecht, the more concrete the evidence (his missing wig, his dishevelled physical appearance) which turns against him. In the end he is publicly declared guilty, while Ruprecht and Eve reconcile and make plans to get married.<sup>18</sup>

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den der Richter, als überwiesen, andonnerte, verteidigte sich noch, aber schwach: ein Mädchen, das wahrscheinlich in dieser Sache gezeugt hatte [...] spielte sich, in der Mitte zwischen Mutter und Bräutigam, an der Schürze” (Heinrich von Kleist, “Vorrede” to H.v.K., *Der zerbrochne Krug*, 259). E. L. Stahl observes that “[i]n Le Veau’s engraving the judge does not appear as the guilty person. It is usually assumed that the boy and the girl are responsible for the breaking of the jug. Perhaps a secret meeting between them was the occasion of the accident. Presumably the judge is to find out what really occurred and the affair of the two lovers is thus revealed. If this is the story which the picture tells, Kleist has completely altered it both in his description and in his play. The guilty person in the comedy is Richter Adam” (E. L. Stahl, *The Dramas of Heinrich von Kleist*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1961, 70). For the detailed *Entstehungsgeschichte* see *Kommentar* to Kleist, *Der zerbrochne Krug*, 732–745.

- 18 There are three different versions of the play: “a) als Autograph [...] leider unvollständig [...]; b) auszugsweise gedruckt in der Zeitschrift ‚Phöbus. Ein Journal für die Kunst‘ [...]; c) [...] Erstdruck des gesamten Werkes aus dem Jahre 1811” (*Kommentar* to Kleist, *Der zerbrochne Krug*, 721). There is no evidence that Banville knew about the three versions of the comedy. Greenberg’s translation is based on the *Erstdruck*. As Banville’s adaptation in some linguistic details is reminiscent of the English version he had reviewed in 1988, I am quoting Kleist’s play from Greenberg’s translation (Kleist, *The Broken Jug*, in H.v.K., *Five Plays*,

The play was premiered on 2 March 1808 in Weimar under the direction of Goethe, whose sceptical attitude towards Kleist was probably the cause of the unsuccessful performance.<sup>19</sup>

Staged on 1 June 1994 at Dublin's Peacock Theatre, Banville's drama was welcomed enthusiastically by the critics. The Irish quality of the atmosphere and theme might have given some spectators at the performance the impression that the play had been written by a local writer. In fact Banville retains the analytical structure of the play along with most of the elements of the story, but he shifts the setting from Holland to the West of Ireland, namely to the village of Ballybog, which recalls Brian Friel's *Ballybeg*. He also chooses to set the play in a tragic moment in Irish history: August 1846, the time of the Great Famine. Furthermore, he introduces an interesting, new character: Mr Ball, the servant of the visiting inspector Sir Walter. What is more, he turns Kleist's 12-scene comedy into a two-act play, while Kleist's five-stress iambic verses become blank verse with very few couplets linked by rhyme. The stage directions are longer and more detailed than in Kleist, often bringing local peasants as hungry people to the spotlight, giving the play a quality of togetherness which is not found in the original.

This change in geographical setting and historical period (from Holland in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to Ireland mid 19<sup>th</sup> century) allows Banville to put forward the issues and class conflicts of the critical time of the Great Famine, thus displaying a social concern which is not found in the original text.

The poor and hungry people of Ballybog do not appear as actual characters on stage, but rather they are mentioned in the stage directions, and their presence is obliquely referred to by the 'outsiders', that is by Sir Walter and by Ball, while Judge Adam pretends not to see them:

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trans. Martin Greenberg); the original German version (*Erstdruck*) can be found in the footnotes (DTV edition). Strangely enough, Francoise Canon-Roger ("Ruptures en representation: *The Broken Jug* de John Banville", in *Etudes Irlandaises* 21–22 (Autumne 1996): 125–133) writes that Rüdiger Imhof was the translator of Kleist's play for Banville's adaptation, while John Kenny points out that "there is no acknowledgment of any involvement by him in the actual writing of the adaptation" ("Appallingly Funny": John Banville's *The Broken Jug*," in *Beyond Borders. IASIL Essays on Modern Irish Writing*, ed. Neil Samuels (Bath: Sulis Press, 2004), 83–103, here: 88). Kenny's article is the most extensive and detailed comment on the comedy published so far.

19 See *Kommentar* to Kleist, *Der zerbrochne Krug*, 760–767; see also Thomas Wichmann, *Heinrich von Kleist* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1988; SM 240), 144–148.

Adam: [...] We have no hunger around here.  
Our folk are fit as fiddles, and well-fed.  
We have no hunger here.  
Maggie: (Aside) No hunger! Jesus!  
Ball: I must have been imagining it, then;  
I swore I saw them dying in the streets.  
Adam: I tell you, stuff and nonsense! Lies, all lies!<sup>20</sup>

The ‘as-if’ attitude Judge Adam displays here also characterizes his approach to the case, that is to the trial he is conducting: “I don’t care. I pretend not to see, not to understand”. He behaves as if he were unable to grasp what is going on, although he is responsible for both the breaking of the jug and the miserable conditions of the Ballybog people.

In both dramas Adam is a grotesque pleasure-seeker but without having the *physic du role* for this: he has a wrenched foot, a damaged head and a “woebegone appearance”.<sup>21</sup> In the Irish play, Judge Adam’s perfidiousness and cruelty – he keeps his tenants starving while he can afford to live in luxury – is stressed in the asides between Mr Ball and Lynch. They exhibit a peculiar form of complicity, and can be said to represent the opinion of the common people looking reality directly in the eyes:

Judge Adam (Off): Get off to hell, the lot of you – get off!  
By God, I’ll burn the roofs over your heads  
If you don’t keep away from my courthouse!  
Lynch (to Ball): His tenants.  
Ball: I can see he loves them well.  
[...]  
Judge Adam: Damned scroungers ... But forgive me, sir, I’m rude.  
I have a bit of a land outside the town  
That is divided up in conacre.  
It’s charity, of course, but little thanks  
I get from tenants who don’t want to work  
But dance and drink all day and half the night.  
Lynch (aside to Ball): The dance of death, that is: he’s starving them.<sup>22</sup>

Judge Adam’s cynical attitude towards social problems is probably the most striking divergence from the German text, where he is depicted as a self-centred, grotesquely odd yet rather harmless figure. In Banville, the Judge consistently ignores the most basic needs of others, his only aim being to satisfy *his own* physical requirements, namely hunger, thirst,

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20 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, 19.

21 Helbling, *The Major Works of Heinrich von Kleist*, 120.

22 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, 26–27.

and lust. As John Kenny has observed,<sup>23</sup> the stage directions regarding the starving people *outside* are in sharp contrast with the abundance of food *inside*: the faces of hungry people coming and going at the window outside offset Walter and Adam “*seated at a small table, eating*”.<sup>24</sup>

The choice of a crucial period in Irish history shows once again Banville’s concern with Irish issues. Furthermore, local history in general plays an important role in a specific passage of the play, the *ekphrasis* of the broken jug. Here Banville substitutes all elements referring to the history of the Netherlands with the highlights of “old Ireland’s history”.<sup>25</sup> We read about Brian Boru, Queen Maeve, Kathleen Nì Houlihan, Dermot MacMurrough, the siege of Derry, the victory at the river Byrne and so on.<sup>26</sup> At a more superficial level names, and in particular place names, are an important cue to the Irish quality of the play: Huisum is turned into Ballybog, Holla into Killen, Amsterdam into Oxford, Utrecht into Dublin or, in some cases, London.

Whether reading the play or attending the performance, it is difficult not to detect these blatant elements of Irishness in setting, period and atmosphere. The Irishness of the play is rendered in a paradistic manner: it becomes near folklore when Judge Adam offers Sir Walter poteen, which he accepts, not knowing it is illegal:

Judge Adam: Or there is whiskey  
 [...] Or there’s poteen  
 Sir Walter: There’s what?  
 Judge Adam: Poteen: the stuff they make  
 Themselves.  
 They say it eases hunger pains – I mean,  
 They take it as a kind of sustenance.  
 Sir Walter: Oh, yes? Well, in the spirit of research,  
 I’ll try it.  
 [...]  
 Hmm, interesting; I must say, interesting.  
 Judge Adam: We confiscate it from them by the gallon.  
 Sir Walter: What do you mean?  
 Judge Adam: The stuff’s illegal –  
 moonshine.  
 Sir Walter: Illegal?  
 Judge Adam: That’s right; you just broke the law.<sup>27</sup>

23 See Kenny, “‘Appallingly Funny’: John Banville’s *The Broken Jug*”, 97.

24 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, 65.

25 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, 42.

26 See Banville, *The Broken Jug*, 42–43.

27 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, 58.



Irish ‘otherness’ is stressed by Judge Adam in order to justify his unusual way of conducting the trial, whereas Sir Walter is seen as a representative – in some cases as a corruptible representative, as the potteen episode shows – of English norms and laws:

Judge Adam: The fact is, sir, we do things different here.  
 We have peculiar statutes in these parts  
 That are not written down, nevertheless  
 Are tried and true [...]  
 [...]
 The trouble is, when you come over here,  
 You Englishmen I mean, you do not see  
 That things are different here to over there,  
 And try to push your customs down our throats –  
 Sir Walter: Yes, yes, spare me the patriotic speech;  
 A little English dullness now and then  
 Perhaps might save a deal of trouble here.<sup>28</sup>

As a representative of official institutions, Sir Walter is very much concerned about the honour of the ‘bench’, much less about doing justice to Martha Reck. He is portrayed as someone who administers the judicial system (the German name Walter comes from ‘walten’= to govern), not as the embodiment of equity and morality; he aims at solving the case of the broken jug and avoiding a scandal for the court (“I cannot allow anarchy to rule”<sup>29</sup>), but he does not really care about the rights and the feelings of people involved in the trial. When it gets pretty clear that Judge Adam is responsible for the visit to Eve and the breaking of the jug, Sir Walter shows a dubious duplicity in his behaviour as he is ready to cover him just for “the honour of the court”,<sup>30</sup> which seems to be his constantly recurrent idea. When he suggests Judge Adam “Dismiss the court, and save what face you can”,<sup>31</sup> he is obviously worried about the ‘face’ of the judicial system which he fears it is turning into “a circus show”.<sup>32</sup> It is the *Schein* he cares about, not the *Sein*, the very essence of justice. Sir Walter tries to do his best to preserve the apparent ‘correctness’ of the trial, though this will cause the wrong person, that is Robert, to be persecuted: “*Robert*: Eighteen months in jail? / *Sir Walter*: Keep calm now, please; / remember, he’s the judge. / Apply for bail, I guarantee he’ll

28 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, 41–42.

29 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, 80.

30 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, 73.

31 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, 73.

32 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, 80.

grant it, And after that you can appeal the case”.<sup>33</sup> Though John Kenny states that Sir Walter is less steadfast than in Kleist,<sup>34</sup> the German *Gerichtsrat* appears to be a “pflichtvergessener Jurist”<sup>35</sup> too; he has been very rightly characterised as “die wohl problematischste Erscheinung des ganzen Stückes [...], in der Kleist’s Justizkritik eine neue strukturelle Dimension und institutionelle Zuspitzung erreicht”.<sup>36</sup> As the trial begins, *Gerichtsrat Walter* seems to be a *deus ex machina* who arrives to restore order and to punish crimes, but, as the proceedings progress, he becomes corruptible; he drinks the wine *Richter Adams* offers him so as *Sir Walter* accepts and enjoys the illegal poteen. In Kleist’s “Variant” he goes even further in his attempt to preserve the court, in fact he tries to hide rather than reveal the truth accusing *Eve* to be the guilty person (“Wenn sich die Jungfer gestern gleich der Mutter / Eröffnet hätte züchtiglich, so hätte / Sie dem Gericht Schand’ erspart, und sich / Zweideut’ge Meinungen von ihrer Ehre”<sup>37</sup>) and he justifies *Adam*’s behaviour to the point that he would like to get him back to his work again (“Herr Schreiber, fort! Holt ihn zurück! / [...] Von seinem Amt zwar ist er suspendiert, [...] Doch sind die Cassen richtig, wie ich hoffe, / So wird er wohl auf irgend einem Platze / Noch zu erhalten sei. Fort, hol ihn wieder”<sup>38</sup>). As *Schneider* remarks, “mit dieser völlig unverständlichen und nur noch aus Kumpanei erklärbaren Nachsicht gegenüber *Adam* hat der *Gerichtsrat Walter* am Schluß des Stückes das Justizwesen nunmehr bei allen Beteiligten endgültig um den letzten Kredit gebracht”.<sup>39</sup> *Banville* tends to transform Kleist’s critique of the judicial system in a confrontation between English behavior patterns and manners on the one hand and Irish pride and traditions on the other. When *Eve* openly accuses *Judge Adam*, *Sir Walter*’s reaction is rather baffling: “(Sotto voce) Be quiet, now, this is a court of law; / I cannot allow anarchy to rule. / The man’s a rogue, but he’s a

33 *Banville*, *The Broken Jug*, 80.

34 See Kenny, “‘Appallingly Funny’: John *Banville*’s *The Broken Jug*,” 91.

35 Hans-Peter *Schneider*, “Justizkritik im *Zerbrochnen Krug*,” in *Kleist-Jahrbuch* (1988/89): 309–326, here: 325.

36 *Schneider*, “Justizkritik im *Zerbrochnen Krug*,” 315.

37 Kleist, *Der zerbrochne Krug* (Variant), 361.

38 Kleist, *Der zerbrochne Krug* (Schluss der Handschrift), 265.

39 *Schneider*, “Justizkritik im *Zerbrochnen Krug*,” 319. For a balanced and straightforward analysis of *Gerichtsrat Walter* and of *Richter Adam* see *Kim Fordham*, *Trials and Tribunals in the Dramas of Heinrich von Kleist* (Oxford, Bern et al.: Peter Lang, 2007; North American Studies in 19<sup>th</sup> Century German Literature, 41), 50–69.

judge; / It is the *bench* that we must recognize, and not the man”.<sup>40</sup> He insists on keeping order in the court (“Call in the bailiffs, clear the room”), thus provoking Robert’s violent reaction as an Irishman (“Go back to England, you, you damned stuffed / shirt”<sup>41</sup>) and reminding the reader /spectator of the political and social quality of Banville’s play. Political issues arise also in the antagonism between Martha Reck and the nationalist Robert Temple, depicted as a “native Irish”. Eve’s mother on the other hand is a descendent of the people who “stole”<sup>42</sup> land from the natives.

Elements of Irishness are not to be found only in the setting, atmosphere and period of this drama, however. They are first and foremost present at a deeper level in the *Weltanschauung* and in the way themes and motifs of the original text are re-worked and dealt with. *The Broken Jug* could be considered a work of Irish Literature inasmuch as the author, attracted by Kleist’s peculiar way of looking at the facts, develops his own perspective, thus disclosing a *Weltanschauung* which the reader recognizes as being a typically Banvillean way of considering characters and facts. This quality can be said to be Irishness in the *Gehalt* of the play, which is clearly Irish – as has been illustrated – in the *Inhalt* too.

Kleist and Banville share a fascination for the grotesque, embodied here, in a literal sense, by Adam, whose physical blemishes reflect the strongly corporeal quality of the figure. This is an aspect Banville often highlights in his fiction. Derek Hand observes that in *The Book of Evidence* “almost every character possesses some slight physical impediment or blemish”.<sup>43</sup> In both Kleist and Banville, Adam is obsessed with his body: he is shown (or he is related as) eating and drinking, seducing Eve, healing his wounds, or hiding his club foot. In an aside, he even goes so far as to admit having problems with his bowels when Bridget talks about “a ... monument, / That really turns my stomach”<sup>44</sup>, a ‘monument’ she found in the lane near Eve’s house after the night visit paid by the mysterious man, that is Adam.

Judge Adam’s physical problems are in striking contrast with his role as pleasure-seeker. In the opening stage-directions of the play, the “*cur-*

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40 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, 80.

41 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, both quotations 81.

42 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, both quotations 47.

43 Derek Hand, *John Banville. Exploring Fiction* (Dublin: The Liffey Press, 2002), 124.

44 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, 77.

*tained alcove*<sup>45</sup> – a detail not found in Kleist – where the Judge sleeps alludes to an aspect of Adam’s corporeity which is emphasized later on in the Irish text, namely to sexual life and erotica, presented from a voyeuristic perspective and making use of several puns and word-plays.

When Eve reproaches Robert because he has been spying on her and the man who was in her room, Ball seems to be coarsely amused: “*Eve*: To think I once thought you [Robert] a man of honour!; *Ball (aside)*: A man of honour or a man on her?”<sup>46</sup> Robert’s description becomes more explicit, ending with a semi-quotation from Shakespeare (*Othello*, 1.1.118: “the beast with two backs”):

[...] the cobbler gets her down,  
I see her legs up, waving in the air;  
[...]  
I spy her window, with a candle in it,  
And their two shadows on the windows shade,  
Still at their two-backed business.<sup>47</sup>

Judge Adam would like to interrupt Robert’s eye-witness account, but Sir Walter begs him to continue. These are the comments of Ball and Lynch: “*Lynch (to Ball)*: He’s getting interested, I can see; *Ball*: He likes a bit of hot stuff does the boss”.<sup>48</sup> The equivalent dialogues in Kleist’s play are ironical and allusive, and not as explicit as in Banville’s text. The verses of the German author contain the key-expression “durch das Schlüsselloch sehen”,<sup>49</sup> translated into English as “to see through the keyhole”,<sup>50</sup> which is no doubt what prompted Banville to re-write the scene with voyeuristic overtones. In the Irish play Robert seems obsessed with the verbs ‘to spy’ and ‘to see’: “I spied Eve in the garden – with a man! / At first I thought my eyes must be mistaken, / but no, it’s Eve”;<sup>51</sup> “I spy her window, with a candle in it”; “I saw them; they were standing up and / struggling”. Eve has a rather violent reaction: “You peeping tom, you! Are you not ashamed / Admitting how you hid and spied on me?”<sup>52</sup>

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45 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, 11.

46 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, 51.

47 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, 51.

48 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, 51.

49 Kleist, *Der zerbrochne Krug*, 129.

50 Kleist, *The Broken Jug*, trans. Martin Greenberg, 129.

51 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, 49.

52 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, 51.

Ambiguity is, as already discussed, a key concept in the works of both writers, though much more evident in Banville, who re-works in his own way some of the main ideas of the German author. Banville is fascinated by Kleist's attitude to reality: “Kleist saw with unwavering clarity that at the heart of things there is always *ambiguity*. At the height of his tragedies there will suddenly break out for a moment [...] a kind of helpless laughter, a Nietzschean whoop [emphasis added]”.<sup>53</sup>

In Kleist, literary ambiguity is the result of his philosophical concern, in particular his interest for Kant. For many years *Kleist-Forschung* has assumed that the reading of specific texts by Kant had deeply influenced Kleist as he realized that it is possible to know the *Phenomenon*, the world as it appears and as we experience it, but not the *Noumenon*, the world as it really is (the thing-in-itself, *das Ding an sich*).<sup>54</sup> In other words, he realized that what is seen and experienced is simply appearance, *Schein*. In his letter to his fiancée Wilhelmine von Zenge of 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1810 he describes his dismay while reading “d[ie] neuere sogenannte Kantische Philosophie”:

Wenn alle Menschen statt der Augen grüne Gläser hätten, so würden sie urtheilen müssen, die Gegenstände, welche sie dadurch erblicken, *sind* grün – und nie würden sie entscheiden können, ob ihr Auge ihnen die Dinge zeigt, wie sie sind, oder ob es nicht etwas zu ihnen hinzuthut, was nicht ihnen sondern dem Auge gehört. So ist es mit dem Verstande. Wir können nicht entschieden, ob das, was wir Wahrheit nennen, wahrhaft die Wahrheit ist, oder ob es uns nur so scheint. Ist das letzte, so *ist* die Wahrheit, die wir hier sammeln, nach dem Tode nicht mehr – u alles Bestreben, ein Eigenthum sich zu erwerben, das uns auch in das Grab folgt, ist vergeblich –<sup>55</sup>

53 Banville, “The Helpless Laughter of a Tragedian,” 9.

54 It is not my aim here to discuss extensively the meaning of the Kant crisis in Kleist's writing. For this aspect see Ernst Cassirer, *Heinrich von Kleist und die kantische Philosophie* (Berlin: Reuther & Reichard, 1919); Ludwig Muth, *Kleist und Kant. Versuch einer neuen Interpretation* (Köln: Kölner Universitäts-Verlag, 1954); Walther Müller-Seidel, *Vorsehen und Erkennen. Eine Studie über Heinrich von Kleist* (Köln: Böhlau, 1961); Sergio Lupi, *Coscienza e inconscio nell'arte di Kleist* (Firenze: Olschki, 1969); Helbling, *The Major Works of Heinrich von Kleist*, 23–34; Bernhard Greiner, “Die Wende in der Kunst – Kleist mit Kant,” in *DVJS* 64 (1990): 96–117; Tim Mehigan, “‘Betwext a false reason and none at all’. Kleist, Hume, Kant and the *Thing in Itself*”, in *A Companion to the Works of Heinrich von Kleist*, ed. Bernd Fischer (New York: Camden House 2003), 165–188.

55 Heinrich von Kleist, Letter n. 39, in H.v.K., *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe in vier Bänden*, Bd.4, *Briefe von und an Heinrich von Kleist 1793–1811*, unter Mitwir-

While in the first half of the twentieth century scholarship considering the impact of Kant on Kleist focused on which of Kant's texts he had read and what passages exactly raised the *Kantkrise* he refers to in the above mentioned letter,<sup>56</sup> in the past few decades scholars have tended to adopt a much wider perspective and to claim that from his first encounter with Kant (summer 1800) his reading was not direct, but it occurred through other sources or philosophers, probably through the *Bestimmung des Menschen* by Fichte, who considered himself to be a Neo-Kantian. In fact it has been observed that Kleist's equation between *Scheine* (impressions) and *Erscheinungen* (appearances) is a misconception which can be prompted by the reading of Fichte's system, whereas Kant makes a distinction between them.<sup>57</sup>

Although now there is fairly broad agreement in Kleist scholarship about the fact that his *Kantkrise* is a reckoning with the Enlightenment in general and must not be seen from a mere philosophical, but from a wider and more empirical point of view,<sup>58</sup> Kleist's dualistic *Weltan-*

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kung v. Hans Rudolf Barth eds. Ilse-Marie Barth und Hinrich C. Seeba (Frankfurt a. Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1997), 205.

- 56 “[...] Dir muß ich jetzt daraus [aus der Kantischen Philosophie, A.F.] einen Gedanken mittheilen, indem ich nicht fürchten darf, daß es Dich so tief, so schmerzhaft erschüttern wird, als mich [...] Seit diese Überzeugung, nämlich daß hienieden keine Wahrheit zu finden ist, vor meine Seele trat, habe ich nicht wieder ein Buch angerührt” (Kleist, Letter n. 39, 205).
- 57 See Helbling, *The Major Works of Henrich von Kleist*, 31. With reference to Kleist's incorrect reading of Kant, Sean Allan (*The Plays of Henrich von Kleist. Ideals and Illusions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) points out that he failed to perceive the only 'window' that Kant had opened upon the *Noumenon*, that is the personal knowledge of the Categorical Imperative, “the vital role of Kant's notion of duty ('Pflicht') in preserving the autonomy of the individual moral will” (34).
- 58 Recent new voices reassess the meaning of the *Kantkrise* for Kleist. According to Jochen Schmidt it was a means to shirk his “Amt und Wissenschaft”, that is, a work he had no disposition for. If we assume that *Wahrheit* is the ultimate scope of *Wissenschaft*, Kleist does not seem to be much concerned with it; in fact on 5<sup>th</sup> Februar 1801 he writes in a letter to his half-sister Ulrike “[a]ber auch selbst denn, wenn bloß Wahrheit mein Ziel wäre – ach, es ist so traurig, weiter nichts, als gelehrt zu sein” (Kleist, Letter n. 38, 200). If *Wahrheit* is not his ultimate aim, as he states six weeks before he admits his dismay with the Kantian philosophy, then the *Kantkrise* is “eine inszenierte Scheinkrise”: “Kleist wollte Dichter werden, wagte es aber noch nicht offen zu sagen, denn das galt in Preußen nicht als ehrenhaft” (Jochen Schmidt, *Henrich von Kleist. Die Dramen und Erzählungen in ihrer Epoche*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 2003, 15). Bernhard Greiner too tends to play down the importance of the crisis, in fact he com-

*schauung* and his effort to overcome the two-sidedness of human experience remain the distinctive features of his *oeuvre*. As a result of his attempt to grasp the *Ding an sich*, in his novellas and dramas there are two narrative levels: on the one hand, a superficial, puzzling level of behaviour – his characters often have a puppet-like status – which conceals, on the other hand, a deeper level of unconscious feelings and reasons the reader can only guess at. Quite often the ending of Kleist’s novellas and tragedies turns out to be an ambiguous open ending inasmuch as it seems to muddle the very facts the reader thought had been cleared up. Repressed experiences and feelings appear suddenly, and they shed a fascinating light on the inner world of the characters, revealing their contradictions and weaknesses.

Kant is obliquely referred to or openly mentioned in Banville’s literary texts and in a few interviews; the special focus is on the philosophical aspects of the language theme, that is, on the difficulty of capturing through language – and through literature – the very essence of the world. The opening sentence of *Doctor Copernicus* “At first it had no name. It was the thing itself, the vivid thing”<sup>59</sup> is reminiscent of the *Ding an sich*, which stands throughout the book for “Copernicus’ indefatigable endeavour to discern the truth”<sup>60</sup> and which represents a sort of creative obsession in Banville’s *oeuvre*. Commenting on a passage from Rilke’s Ninth Elegy of his *Duinkerker Elegien* – a poetical reflection on the problem of the *Leistungsfähigkeit* of language – he mentions the *Ding an sich*, which in his opinion “includes [...] people, emotions, ideas, the plots of the novels: the *Dasein* which is the thereness of the world”.<sup>61</sup> The works of the German author illustrate this epistemological issue insofar as they do not show the *Wahrheit*, but the process – in its more general meaning and also in the meaning of ‘legal action’ – which should lead to the *Wahrheitsfindung* and which does not, because, as Banville observes, “truth [...] does not exist, [...] there are only workable versions of the truth which we contract to believe in”.<sup>62</sup> As we watch and in-

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ments on what he calls “eine Berührung (nicht Beeinflussung) zwischen Kants Philosophie der Kunst und Kleists künstlerischem Schaffen” (Greiner, “Die Wende in der Kunst – Kleist mit Kant,” 97).

59 John Banville, *Doctor Copernicus* (London: Granada, 1980), 13.

60 Imhof, *John Banville. A Critical Study*, 78.

61 “An Interview with John Banville”, in *The European English Messenger*, 15.

62 John Banville, “My Readers, that Small Band, Deserve a Rest” (John Banville interviewed by Rüdiger Imhof), in *Irish University Review. John Banville Special Issue* 11, n. 1 (Spring 1981): 5–12, here: 8.

terpret the world through our *ego*, which is the source of our experience and knowledge, all we are aware of is – in a Fichtean way – our individual consciousness. The attempt “der Sache völlig auf den Grund zu kommen”<sup>63</sup> cannot be successful as “die Sache”, the *Ding an sich* has no fixed reality outside of our consciousness. But why do Kleist’s and Banville’s characters insist on seeking the truth and looking for order if they know it is an illusion? Elke d’Hoker points out that this tendency “reminds one of Kant’s ethical non-sequitur: ‘we cannot, therefore we must’; or even Beckett’s adage, ‘I can’t go on, I’ll go on’”, concluding that “[t]he [...] hopeless business of grasping the world in meaningful patterns is simply necessary to go on with life at all”.<sup>64</sup>

Banville admits having a penchant for artists who are “poetic philosophers”<sup>65</sup> and whose texts *tell* but do not *explain*: profound psychological novels, very accurate in the description of people and places, though “*the object itself stands in its own mystery [emphasis added]*”.<sup>66</sup> He considers Henry James – “the enduring Banville model most bypassed in the criticism”,<sup>67</sup> as John Kenny very rightly observes – to be the master of this technique insofar as his carefully wrought and analytically discriminating novels leave the *Ding an sich* unsolved: “there is a profound mystery about the best of Henry James’ books, even though they are perfectly comprehensible”<sup>68</sup>. The formal perfection contrasts with the *Unheimlichkeit* of the narrated plot. The same can be said for Kleist’s works, which display a puzzling mastery of style but which leave the reader with a sense of inscrutability and *Unheil*.<sup>69</sup> Banville’s ideal novel is a text in which “we know everything, we’ve been given all the information, but nothing is ex-

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63 Kleist, *Der zerbrochne Krug*, 331 (trans. by Greenberg: “to get to the bottom / of this case”, 131).

64 Elke d’Hoker, “Books of Revelation: Epiphany in John Banville’s Science Tetralogy and *Birchwood*”, in *Irish University Review* 30 (2000): 32–50, both quotations 49. For the gnoseological aspects of Banville’s philosophical references see Laura P. Zuntini de Izarra, *Mirrors and Holographic Labyrinths. The Process of a ‘New’ Aesthetic Synthesis in the Novels of John Banville* (San Francisco and London: International Scholars Publications, 1999).

65 “An Interview with John Banville,” in *The European English Messenger*, 15.

66 “An Interview with John Banville,” 17.

67 John Kenny, “Well Said Well Seen: The Pictorial Paradigm in John Banville’s Fiction”, in *Irish University Review. John Banville Special Issue* 36, 57.

68 “An Interview with John Banville,” 17.

69 Das *Bettelweib von Locarno* and *The Turn of the Screw* are probably the most significant unsettling works by Kleist and by James suitable to illustrate the contrast between formal closeness and deliberate obscurity of meaning.



plained to us. It can't be. This is the only reason for doing art, [...] to show the absolute mystery of things".<sup>70</sup>

Compared to other works by Kleist, *Der zerbrochne Krug* would appear to be less *unheimlich* and to have a traditional happy ending: the Judge is unmasked, and Eve and Ruprecht are going to get married. No doubt this “conciliatory ending is in keeping with the canons of comedy”.<sup>71</sup> But in a way the happy ending is just *Schein*; in fact the text has small but significant rifts which cannot be overlooked. During the process, Eve realizes that Ruprecht does not trust her: when he surprises her with another man, he suspects her of infidelity and her sense of honour is quite hurt :

Eve: [...] Ruprecht, shame on you  
because you have so little trust in me!  
[...]  
Even if  
you had stooped and seen through the keyhole drinking  
from the jug with Lebrecht, you should have thought: Eve's  
an honest girl and I am confident there is  
an explanation for all this which honors her.<sup>72</sup>

At the end of the trial Eve is less naïve. Her feelings have been hurt, and Kleist leaves us “guessing whether she will be able to reconcile herself to the new reality”.<sup>73</sup> She's disappointed by Ruprecht's behaviour and discovers, as Helbling observes, a “tragic split in her own”.<sup>74</sup>

In Banville's drama, in contrast, Eve is self-confident and not at all naïve. She goes so far as to verbally attack and offend Robert's male vanity when he suspects her of having an affair with the crippled Joe Byrne:

Eve (to Sir Walter): Your honour, this is fantasy; poor  
Byrne,  
He can't get work, he cut his hand last May,  
The wound won't heal, he comes to me for food.  
(Pointing to Robert) He has to think he has a rival  
for me

70 “An Interview with John Banville,” 15.

71 Helbling, *The Major Works of Heinrich von Kleist*, 123.

72 Kleist, *The Broken Jug*, trans. Greenberg, 129 (“Eve: [...] Pfui, Ruprecht, pfui, o schäme dich, daß du / Mir nicht in meiner Tat vertrauen kannst. / [...] / Und hättest du durch's Schlüsselloch mich mit / Dem Lebrecht aus dem Krüge trinken sehen, / Du hättest denken sollen: Ev' ist brav, / Es wird sich alles ihr zum Ruhme lösen, [...]”, Kleist, *Der zerbrochne Krug*, 329).

73 Helbling, *The Major Works of Heinrich von Kleist*, 129.

74 Helbling, *The Major Works of Heinrich von Kleist*, 129.

In order to puff up his silly pride.  
 (To Robert): But you must be hard up –<sup>75</sup>

She is not as wordy as in Kleist, and she tells Robert openly that she's disappointed:

Eve: Ah Robert Robert, you will break my heart;  
 I thought you meant it, when you said you loved  
 me  
 But I was wrong, I see. You're like the rest.<sup>76</sup>

She is not an angel-like creature, but a Banvillean character. Her boldness recalls Ottilie in *The Newton Letter*, who is not, as Gordon Burgess observes, “a self-effacing virgin who is too shy to profess her love, but a girl who jumps into bed after only the briefest of acquaintances”.<sup>77</sup>

Banville's play sheds an extremely dubious light on Eve's relationship with Robert *and* with Judge Adam as well. When she tells Sir Walter about Adam's attempt to force her to yield to his advances by promising her to prevent Ruprecht being sent abroad, she seems shocked:

He came to me, to fill the papers out,  
 He had his robes on, and his wig and all;  
 Meant to impress me, I suppose – oh God!  
 And then he said I'd have to – no, I can't.<sup>78</sup>

But when her fiancé, Robert, says “Oh Eve, to think you'd do all that for me” she exclaims “(Bitterly) I did it for myself, not you; remember / that”.<sup>79</sup>

The closing stage directions of Banville's text are quite different from Kleist's; in the German play we read that “*they* [Ruprecht and Eve, A. F.] *kiss*”<sup>80</sup> and Ruprecht's father says “Kiss as lovers / should, all discord banished; and if it's Whitsun / you would like, be married there!”<sup>81</sup> In the Irish version Willie, Robert's father, hopes to reconcile them (“Oh

75 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, 50

76 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, 63.

77 Burgess, “An Irish *Die Wahlverwandschaften*,” 140.

78 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, 82–83.

79 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, both quotations 83.

80 Kleist, *The Broken Jug*, trans. Greenberg, 157 (“*Sie* [Ruprecht und Eve, A. F.] *küssen sich*”, Kleist, *Der zerbrochne Krug*, 357).

81 Kleist, *The Broken Jug*, trans. Greenberg, 157 (“*Küßt und versöhnt und liebt euch; / Und Pfingsten, wenn ihr wollt, mag Hochzeit sein!*”, Kleist, *Der zerbrochne Krug*, 357).

come on, now, the pair of you, make up”<sup>82</sup>), but he is unsuccessful. The stage directions state that “*Robert tries to take Eve’s hand, but she turns away from him*”.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, in the closing lines Robert speaks of getting married (“At Whitsun, if you want, we’ll have the wedding”<sup>84</sup>), but Eve does not seem to be interested. In the final stage directions we read: “*Eve says nothing, slowly moves to the door, where she pauses and glances back at Judge Adam who lifts his head and returns her glance*”.<sup>85</sup> The reader/spectator is lead to suspect there may be some sort of eerie understanding between the two of them, between the accuser and the culprit. While in Kleist Richter Adam leaves finally the scene saying “Dear me”,<sup>86</sup> in Banville the last words he pronounces are directed to Eve:

Ah Evie, dear, you should have stuck with me,  
 Not got yourself involved with that crowd there,  
 Watch out for him (Indicating Robert) – he’ll  
 bring you misery,  
 And as for her (Indicating Martha) – she’ll make  
 your life a hell.<sup>87</sup>

Considering the litigiousness of Robert and of Martha and their rather rough manners, one might think that in a way Judge Adam’s prediction about Eve’s unhappy life with Robert and her mother could really come true.

Banville perceives the artificial quality of the happy ending in the German version and decides to give it up, broadening the gap between *Schein* and *Sein*, thus making it impossible to discover the ‘truth’. The Irish drama ends up being much more Kantian than Kleist’s comedy. The German author in fact provides a conciliatory – though artificial – ending, because unlike Banville, he is worried about the canons of the genre. If he characterises the original text as a ‘funny farce’, his version stresses the tragic side of the facts. The Judge is found guilty, but this ‘unmasking’ does not mean we get to the heart of the truth, *das Ding an sich*. We are under the impression that we have got to it, yet this is but an illusion. At the end of the drama, Eve refuses to reply to Robert’s remark

82 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, 83.

83 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, 83.

84 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, 84.

85 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, 84.

86 Kleist, *The Broken Jug*, trans. Greenberg, 155 (“Verzeiht, ihr Herrn”, Kleist, *Der zerbrochne Krug*, 357).

87 Banville, *The Broken Jug*, 81.

about the place of the wedding and exchanges glances with Adam, who seems to be not only prosecutor and culprit at the same time, but also, and surprisingly, a successful seducer.

What is intended to be the unmasking of the guilty person turns out to be the unmasking of the innocent and angel-like character of the original text, that is Eve, whose dark side is revealed in the ambiguous ending. Banville has re-worked the play *after Kleist*, but in the drama he remains very much his own man, expressing his own *Weltanschauung* in an individual, typically Banvillean way in content, form and psychology.