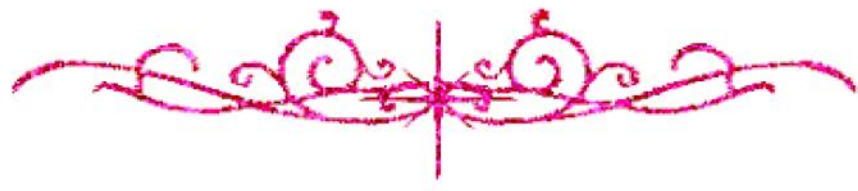


# بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ



HOSSAM MAGHRABY



# شبكة المعلومات الجامعية التوثيق الالكتروني والميكروفيلم



HOSSAM MAGHRABY



# جامعة عين شمس

التوثيق الإلكتروني والميكروفيلم  
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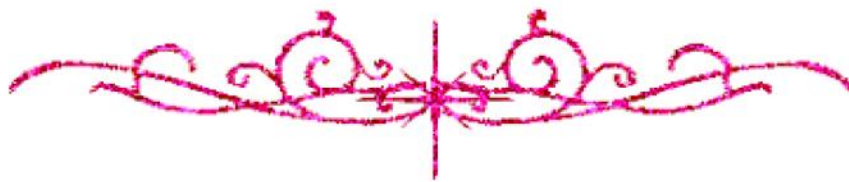


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الأصلية تالفة



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بالرسالة صفحات

لم ترد بالأصل



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B16562

**FACT AND FANTASY  
IN  
HISTORICIZING IRELAND**

**In Selected Plays**

**by**

**DENIS JOHNSTON**

**M.A. Thesis**

**Submitted to the Department of English**

**Language and Literature**

**Faculty of Arts**

**Cairo University**

**Submitted by**

**Zeinab Ibrahim**

**Supervised by**

**Professor: Amal Mazhar**

قامت بالكتابة  
عنه  
د. أمال مازح

## الإجازة

أجازت لجنة المناقشة هذه الرسالة للحصول على درجة الماجستير في الآداب  
بتقدير / بمرتبة ممتاز  
بعد استيفاء جميع المتطلبات  
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# Introduction

## Historicizing Ireland

Denis Johnston (June 18, 1901 – August 8, 1984) is a distinguished Irish playwright who was a multitude of other things: lawyer, actor, play director, book reviewer, public lecturer, teacher, war correspondent, producer for television, essayist, historian, script writer, literary critic and mystical philosopher. Johnston is the son of a Supreme Court judge. He received his early education in Dublin where he was born. Then, he was further educated at Cambridge University in England and at Harvard University in the United States. Johnston started writing plays in the 1920s and by the mid 1930s, he was considered by many people to be one of the most brilliant and original playwrights writing for the Irish stage (Introduction, 8- 9).

His finest plays are “among the best the modern Irish theatre has to offer. He made the name of the Gate theatre in 1929 with his astonishing first play *The Old Lady Says, “No”!*” (Adams, 1). Excluding radio and television drama and two adaptations, he wrote nine plays altogether. These plays are *The Old Lady Says, No!* (1929), *The Moon In The Yellow River* (1931), *A Bride For The Unicorn* (1939), *Storm Song* (1934), *Blind Man’s Buff* (1936), *The Golden Cuckoo* (1939), *The Dreaming Dust* (1940), *Strange Occurrence On Ireland’s Eye* (1956), and *The Scythe And The Sunset* (1958). Moreover, he published a biography, *In Search Of Swift* (1959), and two autobiographical volumes, *Nine Rivers From Jordan* (1953) and *The Brazen Horn* (1968 and 1976).



Denis Johnston was a member of the Dublin Drama League, which had been created to explore new and experimental dramatic forms. His first produced play, *The Old Lady Says, "No"!* (1929), in which he incorporated the newly discovered expressionist techniques, became Johnston's most popular play in Ireland and he became the Gate's theatre's first notable playwright. Moreover, Johnston was a member of the Irish Academy of Letters since 1950. He was the first dramatist to write television scripts for the British broadcasting corporation and received The Order of the British Empire for service as a BBC war correspondent during the second World War, and later a couple of medals from Tito's partisans. After World War II he held a number of chairs and professorships at American Universities and colleges. In the late 1970s, Johnston received the annual award for literature from the allied Irish banks and honorary doctor of literature from the new University of Ulster (Ronsley, 7-8).

Denis Johnston is one of the writers characterized by their devotion, loyalty and sense of commitment towards their homelands. He expresses his feelings towards Ireland saying:

I went away from Ireland because I wanted to get into television, but I don't think I have ever left Ireland. To tell the truth, I keep coming back every year. What draws one back to Dublin is what draws one to the bedroom. It's the place where you are born, where you make love and where you die. (Denis Johnston *Works*, 6).

He, also, says “I have a city – a birthplace – that I know and love. Not because I admire its inhabitants particularly, but because I feel at home there ....” (quoted by Adams, 242).

Being one of the most distinguished Irish dramatists who were mainly concerned with the issues of their country, Denis Johnston work has been discussed and analyzed by many critics from various perspectives. It is worth mentioning that controversy has accompanied nearly everything Johnston produced starting from his first play. In Dublin, there was a mixture of dislike and affection for *The Old Lady Says, “No”!* when it was first produced in 1929. Although the play achieved tremendous success, Johnston was severely attacked by major figures in the field of drama at the time. *The Old Lady Says, “No”!* was described by Joseph Holloway as a “mad house play” (qtd. by Maxwell, 28). Moreover, being reluctant at the time to promote new experimental dramatic forms, Yeats and Lady Gregory gave a negative assessment of Johnston’s first play in which he made use of the newly discovered expressionist techniques to expose the false romantic values and clichés prevailing in the Irish society at the time.

In *Denis Johnston’s Irish Theatre*, Ferrar refers to the fact that Yeats’ comments on the play show that “he found the script too obvious and rough in structure (12). Moreover. In “A note on what happened”, Johnston quotes Yeats’ words, “I liked the play but it has one or two faults. The first is, the scenes are too long ... then there are too many scenes” (80). Furthermore, in “Opus One”, Johnston mentions that the prologue of the play was felt by Lady Gregory to be an all – “too brief preliminary to a vein of coarseness” (21).

Moreover, other critics have certain reservations regarding Johnston's work. For example, according to John Boyd in "The Endless search", Johnston's "... searching vision of life .... has occasionally become blurred, his sense of character .... has occasionally failed him" (157). Moreover, in "Denis Johnston's horse laugh", Robert Hogan points out that during Johnston's active career "critics found him an uncomfortable writer. He was hard to pigeonhole, for his work was sometimes complex in statement and usually unpredictable in technique" (59 - 60). Furthermore, according to Prosper Jolyot in *The World Drama*, Johnston's "themes are often too localized to have appeal outside Ireland" (424).

Moreover, in "The Moon in the Yellow River", Thomas Kilroy speaks of Johnston's isolation from the Irish traditions, he says:

Certainly Johnston stands apart from the main thrust of Irish drama in the first half of this century; the theatre of ideas, has never really taken hold in Ireland .... Johnston had no antecedents in the local theatrical scene and has had no influence on those who followed him (50).

However, Maxwell gives a different opinion in his book, *A critical History Of Modern Irish Drama* (1891 - 1980). He emphasizes that:

Any consideration of Johnston's career can hardly place him anywhere but in the Irish movement. If he is difficult to place in that, he is impossible to place in



the much longer and more secure English tradition  
(129).

Also in his essay "Denis Johnston's Horse Laugh", Hogan asserts the impact of Shaw on Johnston saying that:

His plays are full of Shavian reverberations; *The Golden Cuckoo* almost seems a variation of *Saint Joan*, and *The Moon* has its obligatory discussion scene (61).

In spite of the fact that the surrounding atmosphere did not offer Johnston enough encouragement at the beginning of his career, his work started to be more positively estimated after that. Later, Yeats changed his opinion of *The Old Lady Says*, "No"! In "Drama: Dublin and Belfast" in 1946, he made a completely different assessment:

One can realize what a symbol of its age and generation *The Old Lady* is. It has all the noise, the indignation, the incoherence, the violence, the cynical sincerity of the roaring twenties .... It is a spontaneous reaction, following an age of false romantic values and rancid political clichés, and it was bound to have been written by somebody (359 - 360).