

FRANCO'S SPAIN: A DUBIOUS REFUGE FOR THE POETS OF THE 'IRISH BEAT GENERATION' IN THE 1960S

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From the 1960s, Spain, then governed by the right-wing dictator General Franco, became an increasingly popular travel and/or living destination for Irish tourists and writers alike. This seems to have more to do with the fact that Spain was cheap and easily accessible from Ireland than with any romantic-nationalist notions about close historical and cultural ties between Ireland and Spain, which had played an important role in nineteenth-century Irish nationalist discourse on Spain.¹ Indeed, "time spent in Spain [...] seems to have become *de rigueur* for any self-respecting Irish poets since the 60s" (Goodby 118n). The Irish poets discussed in this paper – James Liddy, Michael Hartnett, John Jordan, and Pearse Hutchinson – stayed in Spain for varying periods of time, and the impressions they gathered in this country entered their work to varying extents.² They all knew each other, both from their studies at University College Dublin (Smith 155) and their frequent sessions at their favourite pub, McDaid's in Harry Street, "the center of Ireland's literary and bohemian life in the 1960s" (Wall 33). They also co-edited and/or contributed poems and articles to the same literary magazines, *Poetry Ireland* (edited by John Jordan), *The Dolmen Miscellany*, *Arena* (edited by James Liddy, Liam O'Connor, and Michael Hartnett), *The Holy Door*, and, from the late 1960s, *The Lace Curtain* (edited by Michael Smith). They shared a desire to make a change in the contemporary Irish poetry scene (mainly by extricating themselves from the long, inhibiting shadow of Yeats and undermining narrow definitions of 'Irishness'), an internationalist outlook and a strong interest in foreign-language poets, a Bohemian lifestyle imbued with the 'flower-power' *zeitgeist* of the 1960s, and a contempt for the puritanism of the Irish Church and State marking the first four decades of Irish independence. However, as their poems on Spain illustrate, they can hardly be said to form a coherent group or poetic

1 The 'Milesian Legend,' according to which the Irish descended from Spanish Celts who had invaded Ireland about 2,000 BC, the Irish-Spanish conspiracies and military interventions against England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, culminating in the Battle of Kinsale (1603), the integration of thousands of Irish exiles into the Spanish army, and the establishment of Irish priest seminaries all over Spain during the Penal Days constituted popular subjects of ballads and poems by Irish nationalist poets like Thomas Davis, James Clarence Mangan, Thomas D'Arcy McGee, and Thomas Moore. On cultural and historical links between Ireland and Spain, see Reynolds and Trainor.

2 Other Irish poets visiting Franco's Spain in the 1960s include Michael Smith, Seamus Heaney, Paul Durcan, Brian Lynch, Philip Casey, Joseph Hackett, Dorothy Molloy, Macdara Woods, and Anthony Cronin. In their poetry, these writers engage only marginally and from a predominantly personal, apolitical perspective with their experiences in Spain.

school; while they all prefer free verse forms, they differ thematically, above all in the extent to which they concern themselves with public issues in their poetic works.

The most unconventional and provocative literary magazine of the time was probably *Arena*. Largely the brainchild of James Liddy (1934-2008), but co-edited by Liam O'Connor and Michael Hartnett in four issues appearing between 1963 and 1965, *Arena* was a product of, and testament to, the "brief summer of love," i.e. the wave of optimism sweeping Ireland in the early 1960s following the success of the economic reforms suggested by T.K. Whitaker and implemented by Seán Lemass's government (Gardiner 75). The magazine offered a platform for young poets who looked to the anti-establishment American Beat writers as well as their anti-pastoral Irish compatriot Patrick Kavanagh rather than to the romantic Celtic Revivalists for models and celebrated individualism, (free) love, and egalitarianism. For lack of public funding, however, *Arena* foundered after four issues. In their last editorial the editors announced their departure for Spain:

We done our best when we were let. We were young, we were payers, we were bad proof-readers, we were (sometimes) merry, we were very, very wise. The door of the nearest pub stayed open all day and we drank like prodigal sons. Now we think Spain would be a cheaper drinking life. (Liddy, Hartnett, O'Connor 1)

Assessing his time as editor of *Arena* in 1983, James Liddy remembers what attracted him and Michael Hartnett to Spain in 1965:

It was the period when Spain became briefly Roman and General Franco offered dazzling suits of lights and peseta chatos of wine to interiorized Northern sensibilities. It was there two thirds of the Editors took themselves after the last double issue, to wind down its legacy in piles, dalliance and punning. ("Arena" 30)

In his poem "Reasons for Departure," however, Liddy strikes a more serious tone in trying to answer the question "Why do writers leave Ireland?" and explain the appeal of Spain. As for Irish writers' reasons for leaving their home country, he cites their contempt for the bourgeois literati engaging in the institutionalisation and tailoring of Irish literary studies to the U.S. market; as for Spain's attractions, he refers to Spain's cultural treasures, its pleasant climate, and its people's appreciation of "the solitary mind":

[...] [T]he reasons why we leave are simple and I'll say it
 For one should explain things to the young who live in a prison
 Run by elderly bores, whose function is to disillusion.
 We do not want to read what they write in the book columns,
 Sad journalese, conceived by lounge-drinking commuters
 Who outside the bourgeois details of marriage have never lived it
 Either up or down but variously export their insincere lies
 To flatter the Great Society's culture-loving ear
 Which believes in mass producing books like car hooters.
 These gentlemen support expansion, Paddy Columns
 Come lately into the trade area from Berkley to U.C.D.
 But why should we have to meet or speak on platforms with them?
 Though we leave we will not read at any poetry centres
 In grey Memphis or that motor mortuary, Los Angeles, [...]

Rather we will ship ourselves to, say, Spain and be God's spies
 Like Cordelia and Lear in a land where the architecture is fit for angels
 And in some sunny village or square consider the ties
 That attract the soul to the spiritual secret of a vital idea,
 Attempt to see God without coughing up moral phlegm. [...]
 It behoves us to travel where art is part of dignity
 And praise given to the solitary mind, where mutual desiring
 Projects on to a small world of known objects Singularity
 Which performs the miracle of opening hearts [...] (34)

In the account Liddy gives of his visit to Spain together with Michael Hartnett and Barry Cusack in the summer of 1964 in his autobiography *The Doctor's House* (2004), by contrast, he again foregrounds 'sex, drugs, and rock'n'roll' as Spain's major attractions. After arriving in Málaga, they head straight for a *bodega*, where they drink themselves to oblivion – "a gracious introduction to the land of Francisco Franco, Lorca's song ghost, and Philip II's gout-chair," as Liddy flippantly comments (*Doctor's House* 85). During a brief stay in Morocco they continue their drinking spree, smoke *keif*, and party with transvestites claiming to be in Franco's Foreign Legion and singing 'fascist' songs. On a bus trip they are stopped by the police, who check their papers but turn a blind eye to the hashish Hartnett had spilled on the floor in panic: "the officials were not interested in tourists" (*Doctor's House* 86).

Liddy's visits to Spain in 1964 and in 1965 together with Michael Hartnett obviously inspired his Bohemian novella *Young Men Go Walking* (1987), set in Ireland and Spain in the 1960s. Its plot centres on the troubled relationship between the thirty-year-old homosexual teacher Stephen Corrigan and the twenty-year-old student and aspiring poet Vincent Cosgrave. Stephen is attracted to Vincent, who, according to himself, is unequivocally heterosexual and "a conservative really" (84). As long as they remain on Irish soil, Vincent fends off Stephen's sexual advances. During their stay in southern Spain, however, he temporarily sheds his inhibitions and consciously becomes intimate with Stephen. Even though same-sex relationships were just as unlawful in Franco's Spain as they were in Ireland up to the 1990s,³ it seems that for Vincent different moral laws operate when far away from inquisitive acquaintances and relatives back home. However, he comes to repent of his temporary aberrance from his "permanent heterosexuality" (66) after a quarrel with Stephen over his political or, rather, apolitical views on Spain. Stephen is an unapologetic Bohemian, who proudly announces "I never did a day's work in my life" (88) and takes no interest in social questions. His romantic depiction of Spain as beautiful and backward in his letters infuriate the politically aware Vincent, who replies: "Your Mediterranean is a

3 "Homosexuality was designated as an offence under the 'law against delinquency and criminals' introduced in 1954. But towards the end of Franco's regime, it was increasingly viewed as an illness rather than a crime. [...] Jail terms of up to three years were imposed under laws covering 'public scandal' or 'social danger.' Homosexuals, almost all of them men, were packed off to mental hospitals, where some were given electric-shock therapy" (Keeley 8). In Ireland homosexuality was only decriminalised in 1993; see Healy 2.

Robert Graves subutopia which beckons to no one but the tired and lunatic [...] or an encircled James Joyce, a domesticated Rimbaud, all handicrafts, beaches, beautiful boys, gitanos, and old walls" (97).

Aware that Vincent resents his apparent indifference to the Spanish people suffering under the repressive military dictatorship of General Franco, to whom he flippantly refers as "Little Caesar," Stephen provokes Vincent into calling him a "fucking Blue-shirt" (108) with tactless remarks that the people's appalling poverty and physical sufferings are a result of "God's intervention" (108). Unlike Stephen, Vincent cannot enjoy himself fully in a country in which civil liberties are severely curtailed and socio-economic progress seems perpetually delayed: "The reason I can't stand Spain," he explains, "is that people are cowed. Franco gave nothing. No structure, no adventure, no contact with reality. There's nothing to come after him. He set up nothing" (112).

It is likely that the real-life models for Stephen and Vincent are the author, James Liddy, and Michael Hartnett respectively. Like Stephen, the late James Liddy remained unashamedly Bohemian and proudly recalled in his autobiography:

To join [Patrick] Kavanagh [in McDaid's] was to be part of the aristocratic all day in the bar, ultimately justifying the verdict of May O'Flaherty in Parson's on Baggot Street bridge, "James Liddy is a nice man, but he has never done a day's work in his life." (*Doctor's House* 63)

Similarly, like Stephen, his creator considered his homosexuality as a key component of his identity: "I will have to say straightaway that being queer, like being Irish and being Catholic, has charted my imagination" (Arkins 339). Finally, like Stephen, Liddy was labelled a "Fascist" and a "blueshirt" by Brian Lynch,⁴ the then openly left-wing editor of *The Holy Door*, presumably for his mildly anti-Semitic statements and flip-pant comparisons of De Valera with Hitler and Franco in some of his contributions to this short-lived magazine.⁵

The Winter 1965 issue of *The Holy Door* carries "Some Quickies" by James Liddy and Liam O'Connor, including one entitled "On Spain":

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- 4 In the biographical notes on contributors to the second issue of *The Holy Door*, Brian Lynch created the following entry for James Liddy: "A recent convert to fascism, which, as those who know him will testify, has always been latent in his personality. Has recently discovered his uncle's blue shirt and is having copies made for his friends"; back-cover of *The Holy Door* 2 (1965).
 - 5 Thus, in a deliberately provocative article Liddy argued that "Hitler must be understood and forgiven" and that "we [the Irish people] cannot afford to pose as virtuous, because we were in favour of Hitler during the war, at least a majority of us were [...]. So if we're talking of honesty [...], the Nazis got power by a free vote while our contemporary St. Patrick, Valera, split a country and allowed brother to kill brother against a free vote" ("Lazarus" 24).

As Spaniards go
 I prefer Franco
 To De Valera
 But I like Lorca. (19)

In these four short lines the authors intimate that, though they consider Franco a less despicable despot than De Valera, their sympathies lie with the defeated Spanish Republicans. While the frivolous tone and the brevity of this 'quickie' cast doubt on the sincerity of the opinions expressed in it, Liddy's opposition to Franco is more convincingly expressed in his elegy "The First Gone: Charlie Gavin Dead July 1962 in his Twenty-First Year," where he remembers:

Our favourite topic of conversation was the Spanish
 Civil war which you had read up – two anti-
 Francoites – I lent you *Homage to Catalonia* a month
 Before you died. (36)

To the extent that some of Liddy's poems express the poet's concern with recent Spanish history and the plight of the defeated Republicans,⁶ they contrast with his own and his character Stephen Corrigan's statements in *The Doctor's House* and *Young Men Go Walking*, conveying the impression that Liddy was completely indifferent to the plight of the people of Spain and availed of the cheap holidays it offered him without any feelings of guilt. Possibly, Liddy merely adopted his self-centred, Bohemian, and even more provocative quasi-Fascist guise to protest against, and distance himself from, the sweeping condemnation of the Franco regime by some of his Irish left-wing writer-friends; firstly, because in his opinion 'democratic' Ireland under De Valera as *Taoiseach* had not offered its citizens much greater personal freedom than Franco's Spain, and secondly, because he might have resented the hypocrisy of some of Franco's fiercest critics, who, while feigning to scorn the dictatorship in Spain and taking exception to Liddy's seeming apathy, still visited the country and enjoyed the low prices and the pleasant climate as much as he did.

One potential target of Liddy's protest against his writer-friends' double standards concerning Spain was the poet Michael Hartnett (1941-1999), his co-editor and travel companion, who frequently spoke out on public issues in a much more serious and sober tone than Liddy.⁷ Hartnett's most publicised statement was his announcement,

6 See, for example, "The Republic 1939," a short poem on Republican refugees taking "a handful of earth of the Republic," which they "held more dearly than any baggage," into exile in South America, where it dried out (35). As "a poem about the pain of enforced exile" from Spain, "The Republic 1939" [...] contrasts with the [above-mentioned] 'Reasons for Departure'," included in the same collection, *Blue Mountain* (1968), "where [the author's announced] exile [in Franco's Spain] is self-imposed" (Skinner 58).

7 Hartnett's celebration of love and his satirical barbs at "the sexual Puritanism of the Catholic church" (Grennan 300) in his early poetry are in keeping with the 'Make Love, Not War' motto of the 1960s, as are his critical observations on the sectarianism dividing the contemporary Dublin literary scene into an "Irish Catholic' [clique] on one side and [an] 'Anglo-Irish' [one] on the other" ("The Dublin Literary World" 6), with the former idolising Joyce and the latter Yeats.

in his 1975 poem “A Farewell to English,” that he would henceforward write his poetry in Irish. Although Hartnett refrained from idealising rural Ireland in the manner of the Celtic Twilight poets in his own poems about the West of Ireland, he shared the revivalists’ concern that socio-economic modernisation and urbanisation were posing a threat to Gaelic culture (Flannery 44).

It is presumably Hartnett’s commitment to keeping the Gaelic tradition alive which mainly accounts for his interest in the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca, who in his poetry immortalised Andalusian gypsy and peasant folklore, which had come under pressure from modernity (Liston 126). Yet Lorca also held a fascination for the liberal left-wing poet by virtue of his status as “an almost mythical figure, symbolic of victims of political oppression and fascist tyranny both in Spain and outside” (Liston 127), derived from his assassination by Falangist soldiers during the Spanish Civil War. Indeed, Hartnett stated in an interview in 1986 that “[he] went to Spain in 1964, deliberately to learn Spanish so that [he] could translate Lorca” (O’Driscoll 18). His stay, however, ended with his arrest, the confiscation of his passport, and his deportation from Spain for having shouted “Down with Franco!” in a pub (Fitzmaurice 106; Curtis 168).

Hartnett’s “Thirteen Poems Written in Madrid 1964 (i.m.F.G.L.) [in memoriam Federico García Lorca]” deal only marginally with Spain. It is only in the penultimate poem that Hartnett openly condemns Franco’s police state in terms reminiscent of Vincent’s statement in Liddy’s novella *Young Men Go Walking* that he dislikes Spain because the people are ‘cowed’:

[...] I hate this country.
 I hate the joy, the loquacity,
 the blind illogic of the people
 building again after war
 and expecting another:
 and the police,
 the police, the military, everywhere
 like rats that dominate
 a refuse-heap
 when it is too dark for crows.
 He is dying, the coin-adorned,
 and he will be mourned
 and what are principles in face
 of cheap wine, cheap cigarettes? (62)

This stanza recalls Vincent’s moral scruples about compromising his left-liberal, democratic principles by profiting from the low cost of living in a country where the vast majority of the people are kept in poverty by an authoritarian right-wing government. These sentiments reinforce the possibility that James Liddy modelled Vincent on Michael Hartnett, his fellow-traveller to Spain, whose public expressions of concern about socio-political issues in Ireland and Spain set him apart from the former’s poses as the unapologetic Bohemian or right-wing provocateur.

James Liddy and Michael Hartnett's common friend John Jordan (1930-1988), better known as a literary critic and editor of *Poetry Ireland* than as a poet (McFadden, *Selected Poems* 23), also belonged to the Bohemian clique of artists gathering at McDaid's (Smith 156). Jordan's fascination with Spain was presumably kindled by his friend Kate O'Brien, whose love for Ávila he shared (McFadden, *Selected Poems* 21), but it also stemmed from his internationalist outlook and his interest in the literature of Spain and other European countries (McFadden, *Crystal Clear* 9). Jordan "abhorred Irish national exclusivity" and aimed to contribute to the development of an "inclusive" Irish cultural scene which "would take full account of the cultural riches of European traditions, in a variety of languages" (McFadden, *Crystal Clear* 9). An astute but much-antagonised literary critic championing the work of Modernist writers like Pound, Eliot, Joyce, and controversial literary figures like Oscar Wilde and Sean O'Casey as early as the 1950s and '60s, Jordan began to crack under the pressure of leading a public life. He drifted into alcoholism and spent more and more time in hospital (McFadden, *Selected Poems* 16; Macdara Woods 20-22). His status as an outsider was arguably aggravated by his homosexuality, which would generally not have been looked upon in a favourable light in the Ireland of the 1950s and '60s and seemed irreconcilable with his Catholic faith (Jordan, *Diary*).

That Jordan's frequent visits to Spain were motivated by a desire to escape from the claustrophobic and presumably homophobic Dublin (literary) scene is suggested by his prose piece "Haemorrhage." In this autobiographical essay Jordan recalls his stay at a hospital in Barcelona in January 1964 and reckons that if he could have afforded it financially he would rather have stayed in the hospital than go back to "Dirty Dublin (where) my enemies were attempting to confound me" ("Haemorrhage" 11).

The "existentialist *angst*" afflicting Jordan in the 1960s and '70s also left its traces in his poems inspired by his visits to Spain (McFadden, *Selected Poems* 20). In "Tidings from Breda," Jordan muses on his childlessness and perceived lack of professional achievement and states his conviction that "Everyman has a singular future. / Mine is failure" (76). While the name of the Spanish *caudillo* appears in several poems, including "The Feast of St. Justin" and "A Paella for Drivellers," Jordan's poems are generally highly personal and offer no coherent critique of the socio-political conditions in Franco's Spain. The poem which comes closest to an expression of disapproval of the Franco regime is "Excoriations on Mont-Seny," written in Breda in 1963, where Jordan 'excoriates' the appearance of two heavily armed policemen destroying the atmosphere of peace and quiet on Mont-Seny.⁸

8 Jordan's short stories are similarly apolitical in content. "Passion," the only story set in Spain, illustrates the sexual inhibitions of a newly-wed Irish Catholic couple spending their honeymoon in Seville, while the brief references to Franco in "The Reader in Classics" and "Weariness of Flesh," both set in Dublin, merely serve to demonstrate the shallowness and meaninglessness of the political debates among the countless would-be intellectuals and artists populating Dublin's literary pub scene.

By contrast, John Jordan's friend Pearse Hutchinson (born in 1927) has engaged extensively with Spanish politics in his poetry. Like Jordan, Hutchinson resented the puritanical and stifling atmosphere in Ireland during the post-Emergency years and suffered from a dominant, conservative mother.⁹ Hutchinson's parents were fervent anti-Treatyite Republicans who named their son after Patrick Pearse and returned to Dublin from Glasgow after De Valera's accession to power in 1932 (Ó Gormaille 115). In the introduction to his poetry volume *The Soul that Kissed the Body* (1990), Hutchinson remembers how after the discovery of sex and his loss of faith he conflated puritanism with Irish Republicanism and found them both repellent:

Puritanism seemed to me the worst thing ever invented, it was my enemy, and with it I identified (not unnaturally, given that prevailing late-Forties atmosphere) Ireland itself. So I rejected Ireland, and with it the whole patriotic Republican tradition. (14)

His disenchantment with his native country engendered a strong desire "to escape, and not to England but to the Continent" (Ó Muirthile 23). His great interest in foreign languages and cultures led him to study Spanish at University College Dublin and visit Spain for the first time in 1950 (Ó Gormaille 116). After "[falling] in love with Barcelona," he learned Catalan, a language which was "completely forbidden" in Franco's Spain but "widely spoken" (Ó Gormaille 116). Later he also learned the equally suppressed Galician language and translated both Catalan and Galician-Portuguese poetry into English and Irish (Vincent Woods 113, 117). But the 1950s also saw Hutchinson's reconnection with his native culture. After spending the years 1951-1953 in Geneva working as a translator for the International Labour Office of the United Nations, he returned to Dublin for one and a half years, during which he discovered his love of Gaelic poetry and started to write poetry in Irish (Coleman, "Chronology" 2). Like his friend Michael Hartnett, Hutchinson was scandalised at the seeming indifference of the Fine Gael/Labour Party government (1973-77) to the fate of the Irish language and remonstrated against it in "The Frost Is all Over," a poem ending with the line: "To kill a language is to kill one's self" (173).

Hutchinson's concern about the fate of the indigenous language and culture of his home country made him all the more alert to the linguistic and cultural oppression in Franco's Spain, and particularly in Catalonia, where he lived from 1954 to 1957 and from 1961 to 1967 (Coleman, "Chronology" 1-3). The poem "Questions" is informed by Hutchinson's awareness of the different attitudes of the Irish and the Catalans to their respective native tongues, to which he referred in an interview in 1997:

Although Catalan was banned and not taught in the schools unlike Irish here, nonetheless Barcelona was a city where most of the people spoke Catalan all of the time. It was a living daily language in the capital city. I realized, although I had been to the Gaeltacht a few times, that that was what was missing in Ireland. (Ó Muirthile 24)

9 See Hutchinson's recollections of his youth in *The Soul that Kissed the Body*: "Living at home, under the thumb of a deeply loving but strong-minded, puritanical (though otherwise understanding) mother, was often hell" (14).

In the poem's first two stanzas Hutchinson derides the Gaelicist "fáinnetics" as "fun figures" and "bony old men in bonny kilts, embarrassing," who, in force-feeding the Gaelic tongue to Irish schoolchildren have merely succeeded in "[m]aking the language of Diarmuid and Deirdre / Sound a language of tyrants and fools." In the third stanza, however, the poet chides those readers who would immediately agree with such a facile dismissal of the efforts of the Gaelic revivalists and introduces a series of questions reminding them that, while they neglect their indigenous language and ridicule those who endeavour to keep it alive, people in Catalonia risk imprisonment by asserting their right to speak their language in public:

Mock those: well you may;
 But listen, have you lived where
 You look behind before you dare
 Speak your own language? [...]
 Where one fine day, the gun smiles, and everyone rumours a thaw,
 But next night, the gun kills, and all remember the law? [...]
 Your duty is: forsake, dislearn, disown
 Your own language?
 Go to jail for speaking it too clearly,
 Get beaten up for speaking it too clearly,
 Lose – worse, get (sub-thorn) – jobs, for speaking it nearly,
 While eminent Abbots are called commies for speaking it fairly clearly [...]
 Have you lived where twenty-five years of war
 Are called 25 Years of Peace? [...] ("Questions" 82-84)

Hutchinson's resentment of the Franco regime for its prohibition of the Catalan, Galician, and Basque languages, its violent suppression of political resistance, and promotion of social injustice manifests itself in many poems, including "Enriqueta Bru" (CP 256), "Spain 67" (CP 77), and "The Palace of Injustice or The Swallow's Well" (SKB 81).¹⁰ In these "Iberian texts, the poetic voice is that of a chronicler of the times, a witness of the facts who denounces injustice and who also awaits a political change which would precipitate an improvement of living conditions in society" (Veiga 140).

Hutchinson's more personal poems dealing with his own experiences during his lengthy sojourn in Spain reveal an ambiguous attitude towards his host country. In "Travel Notes" the poet reckons that no more than "Two foreigners in a century, / perhaps, break through to a nation's core" (26). That he does not consider himself one of the few exiles who manage to become fully integrated into their host society becomes clear from the poem "Speaking to Some," in which Hutchinson vents his anger at constantly being stared at and laughed at for his long beard. The unwanted attention from the native Spanish people makes him feel as out of place as a "tourist"

10 "The Palace of Injustice" was first written in Irish and then translated into English by Hutchinson himself for the collection *The Soul that Kissed the Body* (1990). For more comprehensive discussions of Hutchinson's extensive poetic engagement with Spain, see Veiga and Vincent Woods.

or the “Christian trivia pinned up in the places of / pleasure and worship / the Moors left in Andalusia” (80-81).

In his autobiographical travel piece “Intimations in Málaga” Hutchinson relates how in the late 1950s he and some other non-Spanish friends visit the British author Gerald Brennan in his house in the Alpujarra mountains and entertain themselves by drinking gin and staring down from the roof-top at naked Spanish kids playing in the garden. The appearance of a completely stripped teenage girl stirs up ambiguous emotions oscillating between “ascetic reverence” and guilt at indulging in a “Humbertian lust” (43). Back at their lodgings in a primitive fishing village far away from the overrun tourist resort of Torremolinos, Hutchinson and his companions “[feel] protected from the bridge, brandy and sad largesse of those rootless people: our wealthier compatriots in ‘exile’” (44). However, the author’s friend Sammy “break[s] the spell” by uttering the suspicion that has been nagging at the narrator all day: “That girl, [...] did he put her up to it, do you think, for our benefit?” (45). The “idea” that Brennan might have hired the girl to pose for them in the nude to satisfy their thirst for signs of the Andalusians’ ‘native savagery’ seems to be “so shattering” (45) to Hutchinson, as it dispels any illusions that he and his friends have nothing in common with those other voyeuristic tourists and exiled artists invading the Costa del Sol from the late 1950s. This epiphanic insight bespeaks a general sense of unease at occupying a privileged socio-economic position in comparison with the majority of Spain’s population, and this impression ultimately raises the question as to why Hutchinson as well as his politically aware poet-friends Jordan, Hartnett, and Liddy chose Franco’s Spain as their temporary exile.

Hutchinson answered this question at least for himself in an interview with Philip Coleman. He “wanted to get away from the Irish climate” and “live in a sunny country,” and he “also wanted to get – escape – from [his] mother’s influence which severely restricted [his] freedom”, as well as “from the society” of “puritanical Ireland.” Although he was aware that it seemed “odd” that he had “wanted to get away from it to Franco’s Spain,” he explained that in “Madrid and Barcelona there were places that were wide open, there was nothing you couldn’t get or do. Franco was far too clever to try to get rid of prostitution, for example” (Coleman, “Conversation” 224). Thus, in Barcelona the poet “live[d] a moderately Bohemian life while subsisting on his income from teaching English at the British Institute” (Parcerisas 7).

Yet, Hutchinson himself experienced the curtailment of freedom of speech in Franco’s Spain when, “following an altercation with the Spanish authorities[,] he [was] charged, with two Irish friends, with being drunk and disorderly and ‘mocking the Head of State,’ and threatened with deportation” (Coleman, “Chronology” 3). Moreover, he could not have helped being troubled by the realisation that he was enjoying himself in the very country where his fellow poets were forbidden to publish in their mother tongue, Catalan. Perhaps it was his feelings of guilt as much as his genuinely felt solidarity with his silenced or exiled Catalan poet friends, including Carles Riba,

Salvador Espriu, and Pere Quart, which motivated him to translate their work into English and/or Irish and to co-organise Catalan poetry readings at the British Institute in Barcelona in 1955 and 1962 (Hutchinson, *Done into English* 19-21). In particular, Hutchinson's translation of Josep Carner's poetry of 1962 represented a significant political gesture insofar as it was intended to enhance Carner's chances of being nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature and thus draw the world's attention to the suppression of the Catalan language and culture in Franco's Spain (Parcerisas 12). To the extent that he endeavoured to give something back to his liberating host country by defending and promoting the Catalans' right to use their language in public in his own poems and in his translations, Hutchinson stands out from his fellow Irish poets visiting Spain in the 1960s.

In conclusion, it is most likely the combination of cheap wine, sexual freedom, and a pleasant climate which initially attracted not only Hutchinson but also the other poets discussed in this paper – James Liddy, Michael Hartnett, and John Jordan – to 1960s Spain. Given the poets' generally liberal political and sexual views, making them in Liddy's opinion the "Irish Beat Generation,"¹¹ it seems ironic that they all found a refuge from the puritanism and narrow nationalism of many of their compatriots in a country governed by a right-wing dictator. As a comparative reading of their poems on Spain illustrates, none of the 'Irish Beat poets' could turn a blind eye to the socio-political ills still afflicting Spain in the 1960s. However, they differ above all in the extent to which they express their concern about the plight of the Spanish people and their own moral right to enjoy themselves in Franco's Spain in their poetry. While Liddy's poems are unashamedly Bohemian and Jordan's are of a highly personal nature, Hartnett's and, to a much greater extent, Hutchinson's writings on Spain express a sense of guilt for taking advantage of the low living costs and indulging in touristic voyeurism in a country whose people suffer from poverty and severely curtailed civil liberties. It is, above all, on account of the varying degrees to which these poets engage with socio-political issues in their poetry that they cannot really be said to constitute a coherent poetic school.

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11 See Liddy's essay "The Irish Beat Generation," where he states: "It is now in the region of forty years ago since we went to conquer Dublin and U.C.D.; our intentions were plain, we were to become poets, Modernists, and new Bohemians. We proceeded about our business with varying degrees of middle-class aplomb, tasting aesthetics, magic, and politics in McDaid's and other miraculous watering places. We wanted to trade for sex with a little bent flavour, and we practised our strut down Grafton St. [...] We were the Irish Beat Generation and I think we knew it" (44).

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