

Scott Brewster and Werner Huber (eds.)

IRELAND:
ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

Irish Studies in Europe

Edited by

Werner Huber, Catherine Mignant, Hedwig Schwall

Volume

5

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**IRELAND:
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Scott Brewster and Werner Huber (eds.). -

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The present volume is the fifth in the *Irish Studies in Europe* series. It is published under the aegis of *EFACIS: The European Federation of Associations and Centres of Irish Studies* and is meant to reflect something of the multi-disciplinary and international character unique to this organisation.

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Lincoln, Vienna
January 2015

Scott Brewster
Werner Huber

INTRODUCTION

Scott Brewster

A decade ago, with its economy and cultural confidence surging and with new political alignments possible in the North, Ireland seemed to have ‘arrived’ on the world stage by conventional measures of success. Yet the recent financial storms and accompanying social pressures are a reminder of the challenges as well as the opportunities of leaving behind old certainties and becoming ‘global.’ It has equally meant reappraising values, attitudes and practices seemingly consigned to the past and to questioning the verities that have driven the heady but uneven transformation of modern Ireland. This volume explores the Irish experience, both within the contemporary period and over a much longer historical span, as a process of navigating between ‘here’ and ‘elsewhere,’ of discovery and unpredictable encounter, of temporal and spatial dislocation as well as complex connectedness.

Many of the papers in this volume were originally aired at “Arrivals and Departures,” the eighth biennial conference of the European Federation of Associations and Centres for Irish Studies (EFACIS) at the University of Salford in September 2011. It was the first EFACIS conference to be held in the UK and also the first to be organised in collaboration with the British Association for Irish Studies (BAIS). In keeping with the multi- and interdisciplinary character of EFACIS, the Salford conference programme featured papers drawn from history, literature, politics, film studies, cultural geography, diaspora studies, economics, social sciences, and visual culture, and much of this diversity is represented in the current volume. Fittingly, this landmark event took place in North-West England, a part of Britain whose history has long been marked by a strong and vibrant Irish presence, as evidenced by the internationally renowned Institute of Irish Studies at the University of Liverpool, highly active organisations and community groups such as the Manchester Irish Education Group and the Irish World Heritage Centre in Cheetham Hill, Manchester, and the annual Manchester and Liverpool Irish Festivals. The family histories of so many in this region involved leaving Ireland in the last two centuries and making new starts here: this experience formed part of the thematic impetus behind the conference title. The University of Salford has made its own distinctive contribution to charting that history, most notably in the work of Professor Frank Neal. Sadly, on the first full day of the conference, news reached us of Frank’s death after a long illness, and tribute was paid to his work and commitment to Irish Studies during the course of the conference. Greater Manchester, a part of the world enriched by people who left Ireland to build lives elsewhere in previous historical moments of crisis or opportunity, thus provided an ideal setting in which to reflect on a time of rapid change for Ireland.

This volume entered its final stages of preparation in late 2014, the year after The Gathering, a tourism initiative designed to celebrate the arrivals and departures, transformations and returns that have shaped Ireland's history and definitions of Irishness. In a press statement released on 23 December 2013, The Gathering Ireland 2013 concluded that the initiative had met its "broad-based aim of engaging the people of Ireland to invite ancestral relatives and friends to attend 5,000 Gatherings across the country."¹ The summary of outcomes, however, was couched primarily in commercial rather than cultural terms: The Gathering delivered €170m in revenue and had remained within its €13m budget from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. It had been a "bumper year" for Irish tourism, which increased by 7.3%, and visits from the United States – a "key target market" – saw double-digit growth. As the official website declared, the year "showed the world just what we're made of." The Gathering may have epitomised "uniquely Irish pride and passion" and affirmed abiding connections between Ireland and its diasporas, but it also exploited a sustainable brand that could be marketed efficiently and cost-effectively in a period of continuing austerity. Significantly, the success of the project depended on human investment and sought to engage families and communities still counting the financial and social costs of Ireland's uninhibited embrace of impersonal, international exchange.

*

Ruth Barton opens the volume with an exploration of Irish popular entertainment in British working-class culture centred on the *Old Mother Riley* film series, which ran from the late 1930s to the early 1950s. With their mix of comedy, sentimentality and strongly performative elements, the films enjoyed enduring popularity despite attracting critical derision (*Mrs Brown's Boys* is a contemporary parallel). Mother Riley's act offered the pleasures of nostalgia but also subverted dominant middle-class culture. This image of the Irish as at home in working-class Britain then disappeared until the 1980s when, as Barton argues, Irish figures are portrayed as "symptomatic of British working-class authenticity" in films such as Terence Davies's *Distant Voices, Still Lives* (1988). These often fleeting images disclose the "fugitive knowledge" of how 'a rich history of Irishness' has been articulated in British cinema.

Mervyn Busted reassesses the relatively neglected Protestant Irish migrant experience in Britain by focusing on two personal narratives and the role of the Orange Order. The Liberal MP Mitchell Henry possessed the wealth, education and family connections to settle comparatively easily in Britain and to circulate between the two islands. Not all who arrived had these advantages, however, and for many the Orange Order offered a point of religious identification, a source of charitable support and a means of exerting considerable influence on constitutional politics. Busted shows how a figure such as William Touchstone could use the Order, alongside other

1 <www.thegatheringireland.com/Media-Room.aspx> (15 Jan 2014).

forms of association, as a platform from which to forge a close relationship with the Conservative party. These different examples indicate the substantial visibility and involvement in British public life of Protestant Irish migrants.

Donatella Abbate Badin investigates the ways in which Italy has offered complex and often distorting mirrors in which Irish writers can contemplate themselves. Badin demonstrates how Irish accounts of travel in Italy convey “hetero- and auto-images alike.” In the early nineteenth century the gaze of Grand Tourists such as Lady Morgan and Thomas Moore was conditioned by Ireland’s colonial status. Contrastingly, post-independence voyagers like Elizabeth Bowen, Sean O’Faolain, and Colm Tóibín have striven to see Italy in all its diversity, but each encounter ends up as an exercise in self-fashioning.

Michelle Paull reconsiders Sean O’Casey’s one act play, *Time To Go* (1951), treating it as a departure from his previous theatrical practice and as a transitional moment in his political thought. Its initial unpopularity may be partly explained by its departure from realist techniques, but also because the post-war audience misunderstood O’Casey’s fleeting vision of a transformed economic system. O’Casey’s play can be read as an attack on the isolationism of De Valera, but Paull also sees it as uncannily prescient for contemporary Ireland in its critique of capitalist models of exchange and “the false logic of the market economy.”

Brigitte Bastiat analyses four plays by Owen McCafferty (*The Waiting List*, *Mojo Mickybo*, *Closing Time*, and *The Absence of Women*) that portray the dislocation, entrapment and frustrated longing for elsewhere of protagonists in Belfast during and after the Troubles. Set amidst the violence of the 1970s and 1980s or in a post-conflict city in which sectarian tensions and conservative attitudes remain, the plays revolve around immobilised and alienated characters for whom neither a consoling return to, or escape from, Belfast appears possible. As Bastiat argues, these characters dream of departure, but never arrive anywhere.

EFACIS 8 broke new ground by hosting a plenary panel on the Visual Arts in Northern Ireland, organised by the Canadian photographic artist Sylvia Borda. She discusses her CHURCHES IN-NI project, which portrays, in the form of a series of ceramic plates, faith buildings from the 1950s and 1960s that subscribe to modernist design principles and eschew overt denominational signifiers, thus defying “their own religious roots or purpose.” Borda’s project at once reveals Northern Ireland’s unchronicled modernist architectural past and casts an ironic glance at the imagery that has defined cultural identity in the North. In doing so, her work suggests the possibilities of fresh perspective seemingly denied in McCafferty’s drama.

Hedda Friberg-Harnesk follows the transit in Anne Enright’s fiction between Ireland and America, a movement which enables border-crossings and encounters with elsewhere. Friberg-Harnesk utilises the work of Salman Rushdie, Michael Cronin, and Susan Bassnett on cultural translation and global travel to show how Enright high-

lights the ethical necessity of the “thoughtful negotiation” of such crossings, even if her travellers translate the complexity of the Other with varying degrees of sensitivity and insight.

Eoin Flannery similarly places Irish fiction into global circulation, discussing Colum McCann’s prize-winning *Let the Great World Spin* (2009), a novel that centres its oblique response to 9/11 on Irish characters and brings questions of Ireland and Irishness into a productive dialogue with the transnational networks of power symbolised by the World Trade Centre. The novel is shadowed by the devastating impact of 9/11 and does not minimise the suffering of its victims, but it refuses to be overwhelmed by the event. McCann braids together diverse narratives and time-frames into a story of “grace and hopeful anticipation,” exemplified by the novel’s treatment of Philip Petit’s tightrope walk between the Twin Towers in 1974.

Claudia Luppino surveys the fiction of John McGahern, Colm Tóibín, and Clare Keegan from 1990 to 2010, reading the mobility and instability of individual characters as symptomatic of Ireland’s coming to terms with its historical legacies. The novels and short stories under discussion chart two decades that veered from surging confidence to pessimism about the future and grew introspective about the state-building past. These tensions and transitions are registered in the complex shifts between different temporal and spatial dimensions in each author’s work.

The volume concludes, fittingly in light of the earlier discussion of *The Gathering*, with Anne Groutel’s assessment of the role of diaspora business elites in shaping Ireland’s economic affairs in the wake of financial crisis, primarily through the Irish Global Economic Forum. In recent years, diaspora elites have offered advice and qualified support for the Irish Government, identifying business opportunities, but also emphasising the need to promote indigenous entrepreneurship and highlighting political failures in economic strategy. The note of scepticism was dramatised in 2012 by the actor Gabriel Byrne’s decision to step down as cultural ambassador to the US; in doing so, he denounced *The Gathering 2013* as a “sham” designed to “shake down” Irish Americans. As Groutel concludes, the diaspora elites are ready to help Ireland’s economic recovery, but expect the Irish government to be a transparent partner, to acknowledge its responsibility for the crisis, and to show a ‘commitment to act.’

OLD MOTHER RILEY GOES TO THE PICTURES: SCREENING THE IRISH IN BRITAIN

Ruth Barton

This chapter offers an exploration of the place of Irish popular entertainment in British working-class culture, using film as the medium for my argument. As I suggest, this has some equivalence with the positioning of the immigrant Irish in popular American culture, although the differences between both sets of representations may be more revealing. My argument will focus in particular on films of the 1930s featuring Irish ballads and Irish Music Hall performers, concluding with a discussion of the re-emergence and re-articulation of this form of cultural expression in the work of the Liverpool-Irish director Terence Davies in the 1980s.

While some considerable work has been carried out on the Irish in Britain, this has traditionally been the preserve of historians and sociologists, with much of the research focused on the immediate post-Famine decades. Whereas scholars of Irish-America have increasingly become interested in discussing how representations of the Irish in popular culture – in film, music, literature – shed light on the positioning of Irish-Americans within dominant WASP culture and as part of ethnic culture, very little comparable or comparative research has been undertaken on the Irish in Britain. The only sustained debate on representation has been the series of responses to L.P. Curtis' *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (1971); these, including Sheridan Gilley's "English attitudes to the Irish in England, 1780-1900" (Gilley 81-110), have continued to focus on the Irish in Victorian Britain and earlier.

The essays in the special edition of *Irish Studies Review* (Barton 2011) entitled "Screening the Irish in Britain" provided the first dedicated analysis of how the Irish have been represented by British film and television makers since the beginnings of cinema. Although not by any means definitive (or intended to be), the collection found common ground in arguing for the willed invisibility of the Irish in Britain, particularly in the case of women. By further narrowing the topic of representation to the Irish in Britain (rather than in Ireland), the silence became even louder. As so many writers have noted, Irishness often had to be identified through a name or a visual clue, rather than through specific markers of ethnic identity. This contrasts sharply with the equivalent situation in the United States, where Irish characters have occupied highly visible positions from the early days of cinema through to the present. There are obvious historical reasons for the divergence between the two diasporas, most specifically in terms of the relationship between the home country (Ireland) and the host country (the United States, Great Britain), so that while the Irish in America became viewed as exemplary immigrants and earned themselves favoured immigrant status, the Irish in Britain suffered from suspicions of allegiance to the IRA throughout the

decades when Anglo-Irish relations were poor. Similarly, official American ideology has always subscribed to the expectation that immigrants would make America their home; whereas in British culture immigrants have more commonly been constructed as aliens whose home was elsewhere.

What the two cultures have in common is an understanding that Irish characters are most likely to be identified as entertainers or insurgents. That is, they may appear as singers, dancers and comedians, or as boxers and brawlers. In American cinema and television, the Irish could also be policemen or priests – such authority positions were less often on offer in British screen narratives. In the United States, the ‘fighting Irish’ have become part of the national narrative and have been celebrated for an often unreconstructed version of masculinity, a situation that was quite unthinkable in British culture.

The two cultures converge in their acceptance, even celebration, of the Irish as entertainers. In both cultures, Irish ballad singing, Irish dancing and the performance of Irish comic stereotypes have long been imbricated in popular, working-class entertainment. In American turn-of-the century vaudeville and British Music Hall alike, the Irish were welcomed as part of the show; as William H.A. Williams writes (in a piece that evidently predates *Riverdance*):

In vaudeville, to be Irish was to dance. Irish immigrants brought traditional step dancing to America, where it became a part of theatrical dancing. Solo Irish step dances, such as the double jig and the hornpipe, are still performed with the upper body stiff and the arms held at the sides. All action is in the feet that beat out the rhythm. The contrast between the immobility of the upper body and the movement of the feet could be accentuated by balancing a glass of water on the head of the dancer or an egg on each shoulder. (Williams 120)

Even before this, the influential Irish playwright Dion Boucicault (1820?-1890) had moved between Ireland, Britain and the United States, doing much during his career to improve the image of the Irish in popular entertainment, particularly through his reformulation of the stage Irishman from the butt of low-class humour to a much-loved and subversive trickster. Although issues around copyright prevented substantial cross-fertilisation between British Music Hall and American vaudeville, there was certainly some crossover between the two. In particular, audiences in Britain were quick to embrace minstrelsy or blackface entertainment (where white artists impersonated Afro-American stereotypes). The Liverpool Irish, as John Belchem has illustrated, greatly appreciated minstrelsy and, as in America, themselves regularly made careers as blackface performers (Belchem 220-236; Williams 65-66). Blackface was not, however, just a living, it was a statement of difference:

Where the stage Irishman was a parody figure with redeemable features (hence the refrain, ‘Pat’s not so black as he’s painted’), the ‘nigger’ minstrel was beyond civilized reform, purportedly portrayed at his ‘semi-barbarian’ best in blackface minstrelsy [...] With the ‘negro’ irredeemably below, the Liverpool-Irish acquired a new self-confidence on the stage, as in politics. Irishness was not homogenized into a generic whiteness but accentuated and romanticized in the variety section, the ideal platform for melliflu-

ous rendition of the beauties and delights of the old country, suitably sentimental and nostalgic fare for an expatriate audience 'across the water'. The Liverpool-Irish were able to become white and green simultaneously. (Belchem 235)

In the late Victorian period, Irish singers, dancers and stand-ups (who regularly combined song, dance and joke-telling) also moved freely between Ireland and Britain, playing to equal acclaim on both sides of the Irish Sea. Outside of Dublin, few Music Halls were built, but performers were as likely to perform in parish halls and at fairs around the country. In Dublin, Dan Lowrey's Star of Erin Music Hall on Dame Street would eventually become today's Olympia Theatre; from its foundation in 1879 it was to play host to generations of Music Hall entertainers. Dan Lowrey himself began his career as a stage-Irish performer in Liverpool's taverns. Similarly popular was Belfast's Alhambra Music Hall.

American vaudeville and British Music Hall both hosted and provided the material for early cinema; in Ireland the first films were projected at the Star of Erin Music Hall on 15 February 1895, reflecting a pattern across Britain of interspersing the exhibition of moving pictures with live performances. Those live performers were in turn captured on film in short comedy sketches and projected back to their audiences as part of the popular entertainment of the late Victorian era. Both early American and early British moving pictures regularly featured comic acts by vaudeville and Music Hall performers. The "Happy Hooligan" and "Bridget" sketches in turn-of-the-century American cinema perpetuated the stereotype of the luckless Irish labourer and domestic help; while in Britain numerous "Mike Murphy" films appeared in the early 1900s, reflecting similar comic situations.

*

If the early films are straightforward knockabout comedies in the main part, the coming of sound introduced a new dimension to filmmaking that in turn gave rise to a cycle of films made by British production companies that were structured around Irish ballads and Irish comic acts.¹ It is this cycle that I find particularly interesting for the light it sheds on the place of Irish working-class entertainment in British popular culture. These films were made in the 1930s and were B movies, many of them quota quickies; that is, following the 1927 Cinematographic Films Act they were made to satisfy the regulations on the quota of British films that must be released and exhibited in Britain. They were part of a larger cycle of such productions – Stephen Guy concludes that "out of a total of just over 1,500 full-length feature films made in that decade [1930s], at least 220 can be described as musical films" (Guy 99). They are essentially musicals, though not of a type recognisable to fans of the Hollywood musical, in so far as they are low-budget productions with numbers drawn from, in the case of the films discussed below, Irish ballads. These films include: *Danny Boy* (Oswald Mitchell, Challis Sanderson, 1934; remade 1941), *Kathleen Mavourneen*

1 For an initial exploration of these films, see Barton, *Irish National Cinema* 56-60.

(Norman Lee, 1937), *The Minstrel Boy* (Sydney Morgan, 1937), *Rose of Tralee* (Oswald Mitchell, 1937), *The Londonderry Air* (Alex Bryce, 1938), *My Irish Molly* (Alex Bryce, 1938), *Father O'Flynn* (Wilfred Noy, Walter Tennyson, 1938), and *Mountains O'Mourne* (Harry Hughes, 1938).

Reviews and viewings of these films reveal that they played mainly to working-class, and therefore partially immigrant, audiences. Thus, the British trade paper the *Kinematograph Weekly* wrote of *Mountains O'Mourne* that it was "obviously designed to appeal to the masses," and further: "Tuneful numbers [...] are neatly and logically presented, and sentiment is of the sure-fire variety for the unsophisticated" ("Reviews for Showmen"). The film was also a success in Ireland where it was enthusiastically reviewed in the Irish papers and broke box office records when it played at the Grand Central Dublin ("Mountains O'Mourne Retained" 24). The storyline was simple – a tale of hardship and unfortunate coincidences redeemed by the singing talents of Paddy Kelly (Niall MacGinnis). Other films revolved around Music Hall plots; *Rose of Tralee* concerns an Irish ballad singer, Patrick O'Brien (Fred Conyngham), who has created for himself a successful radio career in the United States under the name of Paddy O'Malley. Back in London, his wife Mary (Kathleen O'Regan) is struggling to make ends meet and to bring up their four-year-old daughter Rose (played by British child star Binkie Stuart). When Patrick returns to London, he fails to find his wife and child and numerous complications ensue. At a St Patrick's Night dance at the Royal Hotel in London, all are reunited to the strains of "Rose of Tralee." Binkie Stuart reappears in *My Irish Molly*, a film that again moves between Ireland, Britain and the United States. This time Stuart plays the orphaned Molly who is unaware that she is, in fact, an heiress, something that her conscienceless aunt, Hannah (Maureen Moore), is determined to hide from her. The film includes a subplot that sees Molly appear singing Irish ballads on "The Shamrock Baby Food Hour."

In common with the American backstage musical, then, the films did not just feature numbers familiar from Music Hall, they also incorporated Music Hall themes into their narratives. Any number of these and other films from the 1930s include narratives of Irish immigrant life and tell stories of escape from working-class English environments, usually Liverpool, to an idealised rural Ireland or to the United States. Often they dramatise the immigrant's arrival in Liverpool and are set in Liverpool or London. Irishness is denoted as rural and familial and associated with themes of disempowerment, emigration and loss. The singing of ballads both articulates this loss and facilitates the overcoming of it – through the singer's professional recognition and incorporation into mainstream entertainment. They are marked by a high degree of sentimentality, which, in turn, reinforces their Irishness, an identity that then and now sanctions the expression of sentiment where it otherwise might not acceptably be articulated.

Although these films were not made by Irish directors or production companies, they drew on what were evidently popular aspects of Irish culture amongst the British

working-class audience, whether of Irish descent or not. Many featured Irish actors and singers. We may assume that they pre-sold themselves on the familiarity of their characters, situations and particularly their songs. That they played successfully in Ireland indicates that this model of representation was enjoyed by Irish audiences, too. Indeed, the Irish at home and the emigrant Irish had every reason to take pleasure in such entertainment, it being at once a celebration of Irishness and the validation of Irish entertainment in popular culture.

* *

The most durable of these Irish-themed films, and the best known, however, was the *Old Mother Riley* series, a total of seventeen feature films, which pulled together both comedy and sentimentality. These are derived from a popular Music Hall act performed by Englishman and regular pantomime dame Arthur Lucan (1885-1954).² Lucan was born Arthur Towle but changed his name to honour the Irish village in which he had his first date with his wife and performance partner, Kitty McShane (1897-1964), who was just fifteen at the time of their marriage. He made his initial appearance as an Irish washerwoman in Dublin, stepping in to replace a pantomime dame when he became unwell. He soon teamed up with Kitty McShane and they took their act to London, appearing at the Alhambra in 1925. Subsequently he and McShane joined the revue "Irish Follies," which toured Britain between 1926 and 1928; by March 1927, Lucan was the principal comedian in the Follies, headlining at the Wood Green Empire. The twosome continued to appear on stage, notably in the Royal Variety Performance of 1934.³ Their act was as mother and daughter, with Lucan appearing in drag and never hiding his English accent. They debuted on film in *Stars on Parade* (1936) followed by a small performance in *Kathleen Mavourneen*. Soon they moved from side show to the main act, appearing thereafter in: *Old Mother Riley* (Oswald Mitchell, 1937), *Old Mother Riley in Paris* (Oswald Mitchell, 1938), *Old Mother Riley MP* (Oswald Mitchell, 1939), *Old Mother Riley Joins Up* (Maclean Rogers, 1939), *Old Mother Riley in Society* (John Baxter, 1940), *Old Mother Riley in Business* (John Baxter, 1940), *Old Mother Riley's Ghosts* (John Baxter, 1941), *Old Mother Riley's Circus* (Thomas Bentley, 1941), *Old Mother Riley Detective* (Lance Comfort, 1943), *Old Mother Riley Overseas* (Oswald Mitchell, 1943), *Old Mother Riley at Home* (Oswald Mitchell, 1945), *Old Mother Riley's New Venture* (John Harlow, 1949), *Old Mother Riley, Headmistress* (John Harlow, 1950), *Old Mother Riley's Jungle Treasure* (Maclean Rogers, 1951), and *Mother Riley Meets the Vampire* (John Gilling, 1952).

2 After Lucan's death the series migrated to television where Roy Rolland played the part, often accompanied by Danny LaRue.

3 Background information taken from Fisher (77-85) as well as King & Cavendar.

In addition to noting the sheer popularity of the series, which resulted in the flow of new films, we need to appreciate that many of these titles were re-released on several occasions to cater for a pre-VCR market. The releases were inevitably greeted with derision by upmarket critics, a response that did nothing to diminish their popularity with audiences. The trade press reported regularly on their box office success in the provinces, where the films time and again broke existing exhibition records. The films also played across Ireland and in Dublin where reviews indicate that they were much-loved fixtures in the schedules. In fact, the series is “one of the longest lasting movie series in British film history” (Shafer 5). Stephen Shafer also reminds us that “because the movies of these transplanted music hall stars like Arthur Lucan rarely played the influential West End, critics rarely wrote about them, except in terms of ridicule. Consequently, they have been largely ignored by social historians and forgotten by students of film” (5). In similar vein, John Fisher has written that

Lucan was born in Lincolnshire, his readiest audience was spread throughout Lancashire and Yorkshire, the content of his act with its quaint illogicality and endearing blarney was unmistakably Irish, and yet its essence was the Irish of the Liverpool dockside and neighbouring industrial towns. (Fisher 83)

In the tradition of this kind of comedy, the films revel in the anarchic possibilities of the comic central character before reconciling him/her to mainstream values by the end of the film. As *Old Mother Riley*, Lucan is visually marked (by costume) as working-class as well as by performance, by profession and by environment. His accent is a performative interpretation of a brogue, thus indicating simultaneously Irishness and not-Irishness. In the same vein, the comedy is frequently derived from issues of mistaken identity. Some of the comic plots explicitly draw on *Old Mother Riley*'s Irish identity (as when in *Mother Riley Meets the Vampire* she receives a telegram informing her that her Uncle Jeremiah in Ireland has died and left her a fortune).

Lucan was by far the more talented performer of the two; Kitty McShane tended to be wooden. Her main attraction was the singing of sentimental Irish ballads; thus, for instance in *Old Mother Riley's New Venture*, Kitty appears onstage at a cabaret organised by her 'mother' in the hotel they have inadvertently agreed to run. The occasion is a St Patrick's dinner, and both Kitty and an (unidentified) Irish tenor entertain the guests with numbers such as “Galway Bay.” As Stephen Guy notes, it was common for these Music Hall-derived films to “film the stories and invent a covering story to explain the linkage, however flimsy” (Guy 101). *Old Mother Riley* was based on Lucan and McShane's enormously popular number, “The Matchseller,” and *Old Mother Riley in Paris* was a reworking of another sketch, “The Stepwasher.” The set-up favours a straightforward proscenium-arch framing and the performers act to camera, with Lucan regularly infringing filmmaking practice by looking directly at the camera and in doing so acknowledging both the presence of the audience and their complicity with his act.

The series is a reminder of the familiarity and popularity of Irish Music Hall entertainment in working-class Britain. Pleasure in the *Old Mother Riley* films could not have

been confined to Irish emigrants – they did not constitute a large enough audience –, but was much more widespread in the provinces, where the films helped to express a general sense of exclusion from dominant society, of lack of opportunity, and the sheer physical graft of labour as reified in the bony, angular body of Arthur Lucan as Old Mother Riley. Old Mother Riley's act was both familiar and yet 'other', he/she was a member of the working class but Irish. Indeed, her Irishness allowed for a dual set of associations: on the one hand, rebellion against dominant British culture – much of the humour is aimed at puncturing middle-class aspirations and snobbery in a fairly conventional appeal to a working-class audience that in the 1930s was feeling particularly alienated from its own bourgeoisie – and, on the other, the pleasures of sentimentality and nostalgia associated with the singing of ballads (usually by Kitty McShane). Such entertainment allowed for moments of audience communality, of putting the hard work of the day behind you and joining in a singsong. Ballad singing was commonly taken up by the 'audience' in the Music Hall or was part of a shared experience in the pub or in the parlour, as Lucan's direct, inclusionary look to camera confirms. The lyrics of ballads allow for an expression of loss and for a dream of a better life often associated with immigrant culture but equally shared by the non-immigrant working class. In the United States, by contrast, the films found no success, being too regional, too unsophisticated, and too class-based for an American audience.

Certain of the films allude, in turn, to a sense of nostalgia for such acts, presenting them in the narrative as events in the past, as Music Hall was superseded by radio and cinema – as in the opening sequence from *Old Mother Riley's Circus*. The film opens with a shot of a hand holding a sheet of music, with the title "Meet Me Tonight in Dreamland" clearly in shot. "I'm sure this is just the number for your BBC Old Time programme," the man holding the sheet remarks, passing it to another man as a piano plays in the foreground. "Sung by Maggie O'Hara," the second man comments. "Yes, I knew her well in those days," the original speaker reminisces. They discuss her sudden departure from the stage, wondering what happened to Maggie since. The film then cuts to Arthur Lucan, in costume, singing 'Meet me tonight in Dreamland' in his creaking voice, outside the steps of the Pavilion Theatre, before a policeman attempts to move her on. "Only a few years ago, my voice was the toast of the town," she remonstrates with the policeman. Struck by a comment he makes, she takes a cleaning job in the auditorium. "I wonder what my old-time public, who sat and cheered me night after night, would think if they only could see me now," she laments as she scrubs the boards.

* * *

The scene was prescient; in common with other revue and Variety acts, Lucan and McShane's popularity waned in the post-war era, with tastes becoming increasingly sophisticated. In the end, the marriage broke up and both sides of the partnership

were to die penniless. For a long time after the last Old Mother Riley film had faded from the screen, the representation of the Irish as at home in working-class British culture vanished. Instead, Irish characters, when they did appear, were most commonly stereotyped as insurgents and unwelcome aliens. However, during the 1980s, particularly from the Thatcher era onwards, the Irish began to reappear on screen, most consistently as representatives of an old strain of working-class culture marked both by hard labour and sentimental entertainment. Whereas the films of the 1930s spoke to the British working classes, these films speak equally if not more to the sympathies of the liberal left, for whom they function as a tool for articulating a post-imperial critique of British history and society. They draw on many of the same signifiers of Irish working-class culture – anarchic resistance to dominant society and a rich cultural heritage constructed around communality and sentimentality. Thus, the Irish make frequent appearances as sympathetic ethnics in the cinema of Ken Loach, notably in his return-to-favour film, *Hidden Agenda* (1990), but more generally in his English- and Scottish-set films, such as *The Golden Vision* (1968), *The Big Flame* (1969), and *Raining Stones* (1993). As John Hill argues:

this primarily involves appealing to Irish-Catholic elements of working-class experience as a means of reinforcing the sense of working-class disadvantage and oppression highlighted in Loach's work. At the same time, however, it also involves invoking a sense of the working-class camaraderie and, in some cases, political resistance which the films show arising in response to these same social and economic circumstances. (Hill 102-103)

Hill goes on to argue that the Irish in Loach's cinema underwrite the films' authenticity while recuperating poverty and Irishness as a positive rather than a negative attribute.

This portrayal of the Irish as symptomatic of British working-class authenticity can be found in numerous other British films from the 1980s onwards. In many of them, too, it is tempered by its associations with an inarticulate and brutal masculinity. It is with one of these releases, Terence Davies's *Distant Voices, Still Lives* that I conclude this essay. *Distant Voices, Still Lives* is essentially two films of 45 minutes' duration that were released back-to-back in 1988 and funded by the British Film Institute Production Fund, which had been set up to support experimental low-budget feature films. Davies was born in Liverpool in 1945, the youngest of ten children, of whom seven survived childhood. His background was working-class Irish-Catholic, and his films are infused with both nostalgia for family life and the horror of a childhood dominated by his brutal father, a rag-and-bone man who routinely physically and mentally abused his wife and children. Davies's father died after a two-year-long battle with cancer when Davies was six-and-a-half. Davies's mother, on the other hand, was a source of boundless maternal love and affection. *Distant Voices* is focused on the violent family patriarch, played by Pete Postlethwaite. In *Still Lives* the family achieves tranquility in the wake of the death of their father. Although the film is autobiographical, the family does not exactly correspond to Davies's own. Nor is he directly represented. Although it is framed by his memories, it is as much a film about how memory

is constructed as a film of memories. Many of the sequences are set up as *tableaux vivants* or photographs, while many more are set in pubs and living rooms where the women find solace, community and celebration in the popular songs of the period, including "Roll out the Barrel," "Buttons and Bows," "If You Knew Suzie."

Irishness in *Distant Voices, Still Lives* is almost invisible, a reflection of the willed invisibility of the immigrant Irish in contemporary British working-class culture and an unmistakable point of departure from the equivalent American-made films. Where Terence Davies often and publicly discusses his childhood and Liverpool Catholic culture, he too does not seem to connect it to his identity as the descendent of immigrants. Few of the many critical articles and books on the film reference its Irish content; only Geoff Eley, in his essay on the diptych, poses the question as to what "fugitive knowledge" (Eley 40) needs to be applied in order to tease out its references. "One such context," he answers himself, "would be the field of religious affiliation; for although Catholicism is key to the biographical framing of Davies's earlier trilogy, it is notably understated in *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, and yet the negative coding of Irishness and Catholicism remains no less vital to the national fantasy of the present than to the discursive working class of history" (41).

Following Eley's comment, I would like to suggest that Irishness in the film reflects two competing discourses around Irish immigrant identities. Liverpool Catholicism, which has come to stand in for Irishness generally, is discursively understood to be both communal and authoritarian, a throwback to an older period where the family unit was at once a safe place and also a place of patriarchal abuse. The integrity of this unit was guaranteed by the patriarchally constructed Catholic Church that in its turn provided solace to the Irish immigrant working-class mother. All this is there in Davies's film. At the same time, the brutal father is offered two moments of subjectivity, one in which he creeps into the children's room and places Christmas stockings on their beds, and the other where he is grooming his horse. In this second sequence, the children creep onto the roof of the stable and watch their father at work. Not noticing them, he softly sings the ballad "When Irish Eyes are Smiling." In the commentary to the DVD, Terence Davies says of this memory of his father currying the horse: "It was the only time I saw him actually happy" (Davies 2007).

If Davies consciously historicises his film by its covert referencing of the history of Liverpool-Irish working-class Catholicism, I believe that he unconsciously provides another reference point for his father's identity in this very brief moment that stands out in the film for its singularity. It is not just singular because of its privileging of the father's subjectivity, it is singular because it is the only moment when we hear him, and not the womenfolk, sing. Where they sing popular songs of the period (1940 to the late 1950s), he, of course, is singing an Irish tune. The occupation of grooming his horse reconnects him to the Irish culture of his Liverpool childhood, as does the singing of the ballad. It may be an extrapolation too far but we may also read into this sequence a suggestion that this man's brutality has arisen from his alienation and

loss of culture. He can only recover himself through recourse to the sentimentality that sustained an earlier immigrant working-class generation. I think this is the kind of fugitive knowledge to which Eley refers and to which, as Irish Studies scholars, we have access. It is this fugitive knowledge that allows us to read into contemporary British cinema, and other cultural forms, a rich history of Irishness that has on the surface been obliterated but which allows for an articulation, on the one hand, in say the films of Ken Loach, of post-colonial expiation and, on the other, in films such as *Distant Voices, Still Lives* of both dissent and consolation, and without which British culture would be much the poorer.

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IRISH PROTESTANTS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY MANCHESTER: THE TRULY INVISIBLE MINORITY?

Mervyn Busted

Studies of Irish migrants in nineteenth-century Britain have underlined the fact that the influx was very largely working-class and Catholic and have ignored the gender dimension. Research is gradually refining the picture, particularly with regard to gender (O'Sullivan 1-24) and, to a lesser extent, class (Foster 289-291), but the Protestant Irish migrant experience in Britain remains relatively neglected. In 1989 Lowe remarked: "Very little is known about Irish Protestants in Lancashire, or anywhere else in Britain" (Lowe 2). After twenty years little progress could be discerned: "Protestants remain largely invisible in the growing body of work on Irish migrants to England" (Morgan & Walter 171).

This, of course, is in sharp contrast to elsewhere in the Irish diaspora, where Protestant migrants of Ulster background in particular have attracted considerable attention in North America and the Antipodes (Akenson 53). Traditionally, the relative neglect of the Irish Protestant migrant in Britain has been put down to the inadequacies of the nineteenth-century census, with its omission of data on religion in Britain and the argument that the much less numerous Protestants integrated easily, thanks to their religion and their generally unionist politics (Morgan & Walter 171). Moreover, much of the work on Protestant migrants which has been done has concentrated on sectarian conflicts on Clydeside and Merseyside and the role of the Orange Order in mobilising Protestant Irish migrants in opposition to Catholicism and Irish home rule,¹ though some recent research has uncovered Irish Protestant elements elsewhere in Britain and has emphasised the welfare role of the Order² in helping them adapt to life in Britain. This chapter, based on a long-term study of nineteenth-century Irish migrants in the Manchester region, tries to tease out the Protestant element in the Irish migrant inflow with particular reference to two personal narratives and the role of the Orange Order.

It is hardly surprising that there are only vague estimates of Irish Protestant numbers in Britain. One authoritative source suggests that in the last quarter of the nineteenth century 20% of the estimated 1,500,000 Irish-born who arrived in England and Wales were Protestant, with particular concentrations in London, Glasgow and Liverpool (Connolly 232). In the case of Manchester, there are hints of Irish Protestants in the

1 A particular emphasis in McFarland on Scotland and Neal (*Sectarian Violence*) on Liverpool.

2 MacRaild (*Faith*) has detailed this dimension of the Order in work on the north-east of England and Cumbria.

city in the first decade of the nineteenth century, as demonstrated by the appearance of the Orange Order. The Order had been founded on 21 September 1795 following a clash at the Diamond crossroads near Loughall, Co. Armagh, between the Catholic 'Defenders' and the Protestant 'Peep O' Day Boys.' Each local lodge was to be authorised by a warrant and to consist exclusively of Protestants dedicated to uphold the Protestant religion in church and state (Haddick-Flynn 134-144). In the tempestuous times surrounding the 1798 rebellion in Ireland, the Order spread rapidly. It appealed not only to Irish Protestants, but also to soldiers in the British army and militia regiments stationed in Ireland and attracted by its religious outlook and loyalist politics. The first lodge in England was set up in 1798 when Colonel Stanley's First Regiment of Lancashire Militia returned to Manchester with warrant number 220 and in the next few years other returning regiments also established lodges in the city (Senior 151). The Order also began to attract local loyalists and Irish Protestant migrants who were to become the backbone of the movement in Britain (MacRaild, "Networks" 164). The lodges "were, in some respects, a cross between old comrades' associations, drinking clubs and 'King and Country' loyalist groupings" (Haddick-Flynn 204), though, as will be shown later, they also had a significant role as mutual assistance groups. Of the 35 civilian lodges found north of a line from Chester to Hull in 1811, 23 were in the Manchester region (Neal, "Manchester Origins" 14). In 1803 the first public Orange Order procession in England took place in Oldham on July 12, the anniversary of the victory of the iconic King William III over the Catholic King James II at the battle of the Boyne in 1690 (Haddick-Flynn 205). Such processions quickly became a defining feature of the Order, and in 1807 Manchester was the scene of the first clash between the Order and Irish Catholics in Britain.

The sequence of events was described by an indignant and uncomprehending local newspaper:

We are sorry to find that a portion of that spirit which has often disturbed the harmony of our sister country, exists in this part of the Empire. Monday last a body of Orangemen, as they are termed, paraded with their sashes and favours to hear divine service [...] when, on their return, a very serious and alarming affray took place between them and a body of the Greens, as they are called [...] The conflict was desperate [...] Let us hear no more of such disgraceful outrages – at which savages and Hottentots would blush. (*Cowdroy's Manchester Gazette* 18 July 1807).

Perhaps in response to this, the following year it was decided to organise the Lancashire lodges into England's first County Grand Lodge and then shortly afterwards to set up the Grand Lodge of the English Orange Institution, which was based originally in Manchester before it transferred to London in 1820 (Neal, "Manchester Origins" 18-19).

Overall, the total of Irish-born people in Manchester shadowed the general trend in England, reaching a total of 52,000 or 15.4% of the city's total in 1861 and declining steadily thereafter, though of course there were growing numbers of second and subsequent generations (Busted 9). When the parliamentary commissioners investigat-

ing the state of the Irish poor in Great Britain came to collect evidence in Manchester in January and February 1834, several witnesses hinted at an Irish Protestant presence, but only one ventured an estimate of numbers. Fr. Daniel Hearne, parish priest of St. Patrick's Church, which served Angel Meadow, the largest and most long-lasting Irish neighbourhood, gave evidence. He was widely acknowledged to have an unparalleled insight into local living and working conditions. He noted, "there are also a great many Irish Protestants in my district," but at this stage admitted that as for their numbers "there is no means of ascertaining" (*Report* 43). However, commission chairman George Cornwall-Lewis, who wrote the introduction to the final report, suggested that in 1833 there were about 35,000 Irish-born people in the city of which 5,000 (14.3%) were Protestant.³ Interestingly, when Fr. Hearne spoke at the city's St. Patrick's Day celebrations in March 1842, he estimated that "the Irishmen in Manchester, and their immediate descendants, numbered upwards of 70,000" and added, "there were upwards of 8,000 Irishmen who were not Roman Catholics," suggesting 11.5% were Protestant (*MG* 23 Mar 1842).⁴

At this time there were also some hints about the denominational make-up of the city's Protestant Irish. Up to mid-1845 Irish Presbyterians had worshipped in temporary premises, but in August that year the *Manchester Courier* reported: "The foundation stone of Trinity Presbyterian Church [...] for the use of the Irish Presbyterian Church assembling in the Corn Exchange was laid." The ceremony was conducted by the redoubtable Rev. Dr. Henry Cooke, champion of Irish Presbyterian orthodoxy and pan-Protestant political unionism. In his address he warmly praised the project as likely to have "a beneficial effect on young Irishmen from the north of that country, great numbers of whom came to Manchester for employment." It was reported that "behind the church, it is intended to erect school houses" (*MC* 16 Aug 1845). The project suggests a comfortable, prosperous element amongst the city's Protestant Irish, a point borne out by the first of the two personal narratives to be considered here.

The career of Mitchell Henry (1826-1910) indicates that those Irish Protestants with extensive personal wealth and family connections could not merely move easily within society in Britain, but could also enjoy several careers. Henry was second-generation Ulster Protestant, born in the fashionable Ardwick district of Manchester in 1826. His father Alexander was born in Loughbrickland, Co. Down, and his mother in Dromore. In 1805 his uncle founded A. & S. Henry, a Manchester firm specialising in the finishing, marketing and warehousing of cotton goods, which expanded into premises in six other cities. Henry was educated privately, at University College London, and at a medical school which eventually became part of Manchester University. Graduating FRCS in 1847, he set up a practice in London's Harley Street in 1848,

3 *Report* vii; Cornwall-Lewis gave no source for this figure.

4 The following sigla will be used throughout: *MG* (*Manchester Guardian*); *MC* (*Manchester Courier*); *MEN* (*Manchester Evening News*); *MCN* (*Manchester City News*).

and in 1857 was appointed a surgeon at Middlesex Hospital (*MG* 24 Oct 1910). In 1862 came his first change of career when, following the death of his father, he abandoned medicine and returned to become a partner in the family firm.

Three years later Henry embarked on a political career, facilitated by the fact that his father had been a prominent Manchester Liberal and M.P. for Lancashire South from 1847 to 1852. He failed to be elected for Woodstock in 1865 and was equally unsuccessful in Manchester in 1867 and 1868. The latter campaign was notable for two developments. On 10 October 1868 he launched *The Manchester Evening News*, as an election newsheet. Once the campaign was over, he sold it to the proprietors of the *Manchester Guardian*, who published it as a Liberal-leaning daily.⁵ A second development was Henry's growing emphasis on Irish issues. In 1867 he had referred to English 'errors' in the government of Ireland, reminding his audience that "he knew Ireland well, being attached to it by hereditary ties, and residing there for some part of every year" (*MG* 15 Nov 1867). His links to Ireland had been strengthened when in 1849 he married Margaret Vaughan of Dromore, Co. Down. As a keen angler he frequently visited west Galway, and this had led him to purchase a 13,000 acre estate from the Blake family. There he had constructed the splendid Kylemore Castle and became an improving landlord, spending heavily on wasteland reclamation and local schools. This led one supporter in the 1868 campaign to recommend him to voters on the basis of his "important business connections with Manchester, his intimate and personal knowledge of Ireland, his large and liberal employment of Irishmen in the sister isle" (*MG* 21 Jul 1868). In terms of policy, he made it clear that though he was "a sincere and attached member of the Church of England," he supported disestablishment of the Church of Ireland, denominational education and Irish land reform and opposed inspection of convents.⁶ In 1871 he was returned unopposed as Liberal M.P. for Co. Galway.

He became a close associate of Isaac Butt, taking a prominent part in the organisation of the founding conferences of the Home Rule League in 1873. In parliament he specialised in finance, arguing cogently that Ireland had long been overtaxed. His personal vision was an Ireland which exercised self-government as an integral part of a federal United Kingdom, to be won by constitutional agitation (*MC* 19 Mar 1877). He struggled unavailingly to bring order to Butt's personal finances and often stood in for him at political engagements. On Butt's death in early 1879 Mitchell was mooted for leadership of the Parliamentary Party, but Parnell, with his eye on the post, preferred William Shaw as being easier to replace, as indeed happened in May 1880 (Hourican 628). Henry found himself uncomfortable with the increasingly militant tactics adopted by Parnell and his associates, and matters were not helped when, at a

5 *MG* 7 Oct 1928; the paper was sold by the Guardian Media Group to Trinity Mirror plc in 2010.

6 *MG* 18 Aug 1868 and 3 Sep 1868. Ultra Protestants regularly campaigned for inspection of convents to ensure no nuns were forcibly detained.

public meeting in Manchester's Free Trade Hall in late 1879, Parnell publicly contradicted him after he had made a speech on land reform (*MG* 11 Nov 1879). Henry's unease increased as the Land League campaign got under way. Early in 1881 he publicly condemned what he described as "a reign of terror in Ireland," arguing that Land League tactics had "unhinged society completely" (*MG* 5 Jan 1881) and diverged from the party line to support the vigorous coercion policy of Chief Secretary Forster. He also broke ranks to support Gladstone's 1881 Land Act when party policy was to wait and test it in the courts (Jackson 121). By 1882 he feared for the whole future of the union of Ireland and Britain, believing "the course taken by a certain number of the Irish representatives has completely poisoned the mind of parliament [...] all sympathy for the country has been destroyed" (*MG* 12 Aug 1882). By 1884 his alienation was complete and the following year he stood down from the Co. Galway seat, convinced Ireland was heading for "eventual disgrace and [...] civil war" (*MG* 5 Sep 1885). He was returned as a Liberal for Glasgow Blackfriars in 1885, but opposed the Home Rule Bill and was defeated when he stood as a Liberal Unionist in 1886. He returned to the family business in Manchester, converted it into a limited company in 1889 and served as chairman until 1893. Growing financial difficulties led him to sell the Kylemore estate in 1903 and retire to Leamington where he died in 1910.

Although his political career was truncated, the notable feature of Henry's narrative is that he had careers in medicine, business and politics, moved easily between the three and when the political path was blocked, simply returned to business. The combination of great wealth, family networks and professional qualifications enabled him to circulate on both sides of the Irish Sea. But for those of Irish Protestant background who lacked such wealth and family links to business or professional qualifications the experience of settlement in Britain was not so simple (McAuley 62). It has been suggested that for some this process of adjustment was helped by the Orange Order (see MacRaild, "Networks" 164-184), and it is proposed to illustrate this by reference to the history of the Order in Manchester from the 1830s onwards and the personal narrative of the Irish-born William Touchstone.

Following its arrival in Britain at the end of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, the Orange Order had a troubled history. To some extent their loyalist politics led members to find favour in conservative circles, especially in the troubled years after 1815 (Senior 156). However, the authorities were also nervous of the secretive, oath-bound nature of the Order and the disturbances which frequently followed their demonstrations. This official wariness probably lies behind the refusal to allow lodges to take part in the Manchester procession which marked the coronation of King George IV in 1821 (*MG* 7 Jul 1821). It also partly explains legislation such as the Unlawful Oaths Act (1823) and the Unlawful Associations Act (1825), though these were also aimed at parliamentary reform groups and embryonic trades unions. Manchester was generally regarded as a stronghold of the Order (see MacRaild, *Faith* 43), and in the 1820s its demonstrations proceeded quietly. In July 1829, it was

reported that “a numerous and respectable body of the members of the Local Orange Association of Manchester, assembled at an early hour in the morning [...] Having formed a procession [...] they marched to St. Philip’s church, Salford” (*MC* 18 Jul 1829).

But the early 1830s developed into a particularly troubled period. Riots broke out in 1830, 1834 and 1835, and there is evidence of ongoing low-level sectarian feeling even during quieter times. In July 1830 lodges met for dinner in their club rooms above various taverns “according to annual custom” (*MC* 17 Jul 1830). As usual they displayed a flag, but on the north side of the city this provoked violent reaction from local Irish Catholics who went from tavern to tavern, seizing the flags, breaking windows, destroying furniture and a portrait of a former Grand Master. The disturbances died away as police and soldiers arrived (*MG* 17 Jul 1830). The following three years were relatively quiet, but a court case in February 1832 illustrated how sectarian feeling was not far beneath the surface. A Protestant resident of Angel Meadow, who had given evidence in court against a local Catholic, was beaten by relatives of the defendant and his family “upbraided by their neighbours, who are Catholics, with being ‘bloody heretics and Orangemen’.” A local newspaper linked the incident to “the ill feeling which exists in that district of the town amongst the lower classes of Irish” (*MG* 3 Feb 1832).

In 1834 and 1835 this latent feeling erupted in large-scale conflict. The violence in 1834 accompanied an Orange procession from central Manchester to and from the Church of St. George, Hulme, on the south west side of the city, a church often associated with Orange events. As lodge members gathered at various taverns, “decorated with scarves, ribbons or lilies of orange [...] they were first derided and insulted and afterwards jostled, struck and pelted by groups of Irish Catholics.” On their return they were again attacked, but the trouble died away when police and dragoons appeared (*MG* 17 Jul 1834). The following year the police had made extensive preparations to forestall any trouble, and unsuccessful efforts were made to persuade the lodges to cancel the parade (*MG* 18 Jul 1835). The procession itself did not encounter any problems aside from minor scuffles, leading one observer to describe it as “marked by decorum and moderation” (*MC* 18 Jul 1835). However, the following evening a Catholic crowd attacked a beer house owned by an Irish Protestant and displaying a portrait of King William III and had to be dispersed by police (*MG* 18 Jul 1835). This was the last large-scale conflict in Manchester between the Order and local Catholics, aside from an isolated outbreak in July 1888 (*MC* 9 Jul 1888; *MEN* 9 Dec 1888).

Alongside and contributing to the atmosphere surrounding such incidents, curious rumours were circulating at national level in the first half of the 1830s. Catholic emancipation in 1829, parliamentary reform, revision of the tithing arrangements of the Church of Ireland in 1832, and rationalisation of its bishoprics in 1833 seemed to ultra-Tory elements to be a mounting assault on the crown and constitution. This led

to loose talk in some circles about replacing the Princess Victoria as heir presumptive by the Duke of Cumberland, Grand Master of the Order (Haddick-Flynn 266). In this overheated atmosphere the House of Commons set up a Select Committee into the Orange Order, which reported unfavourably in 1835, and in April 1836 the Grand Lodge of Ireland dissolved the Order (Haddick-Flynn 270-271). The movement was further weakened when in 1835 the Grand Protestant Association was formed, partly as a replacement for the Order. Some lodges did affiliate but others stood aloof and the debilitating split was not fully healed until 1876. Additional problems were caused by the Party Processions Act of 1850 banning all parades, and the Party Symbols Act forbidding public displays of partisan iconography. Since processions and the public wearing of regalia were inherent features of the Order's activities, these were crippling blows.

It is highly likely that the Twelfth of July in particular continued to be held in low-profile fashion in private gatherings such as the dinner held in Manchester in July 1851 (*MC* 19 Jul 1851). But overall, the Order is elusive in the middle years of the century. However, a valuable glimpse of the motivations of ordinary members and how they looked upon the Order is provided by the evidence given by two Manchester lodge members during the court cases held following the riot of 1834. Under cross-examination John Hanniford declared: "I have been an Orangeman 17 years; I was made in Armagh [...] I had been in a lodge before I was five years old: it is a charitable society and I call them a loyal body of men [...] I was a purple mark man [...] I belonged to the yeomanry in Ireland [...] It is eight years since I left Armagh". When John Wilson was cross-examined he responded: "I am an Orangeman and was made in Magherafelt, county Derry, about fifteen years ago. I belong to the purple; it is to assist one another, and we admit nobody but loyal men [...] the same Orangeism as in Ireland is practised here."⁷

Significantly, both witnesses stressed the charitable dimension of the Order, and from quite early on Manchester lodges were assisting members who had fallen on hard times. In November 1824, Manchester LOL 8 had paid £2.17s.6d to Thomas Bates for five weeks' sickness, ten shillings to John Marsden for one week's sickness, and £2 to William Robinson for his wife's funeral. Friendly societies were a defining feature of Victorian Britain, and the Friendly Societies Acts of 1855 and 1875 provided mutual aid groups with a firm legal framework. Under its aegis individual Orange lodges came together to form area-wide sick and burial societies. The Manchester Loyal Orangeman's Sick and Funeral Society formed in 1893 had a clear statement of its carefully calculated scale of entrance fees and rates of assistance and the conditions of payment. Sickness payments started at two shillings per week and tapered off entirely after a year. The funeral grant was £12. By the late 1860s there are signs that the Order in Manchester and elsewhere was reviving. One

7 *MC* 13 Sep 1834. There were gradations of rank within the Order distinguished by colour.

reason was the appearance on the political agenda of a series of issues which resonated with its traditional concerns, including the growth of the Anglo-Catholic movement within the Church of England with its emphasis on elaborate ritual, liturgy and vestments. Another was the proposal to disestablish the Church of Ireland. There was also alarm at the growing coherence and strength of the Irish nationalist movement and its coalescence around the Home Rule project. The repeal of the Party Processions Act in 1872 and the reunification of the Order in 1876 also contributed to rising confidence.

Public celebration of the Twelfth of July resumed and a series of large-scale meetings were held in Manchester, especially in the years 1869-75. These were colourful affairs. Regalia were worn, bands played traditional tunes, indoor fireworks ('Kentish fire') were set off, orange scarves, umbrellas, and handkerchiefs were flourished, and there were fiery speeches. In February 1869 one speaker at a meeting threatened that if Prime Minister Gladstone proceeded with Irish church disestablishment he would have to face "200,000 armed Irish Orangemen [...] a great army of English and Scotch Orangemen [...] and a vast number in the army and navy too" (*MG* 16 Feb 1869). In July one speaker was concerned about "the action of the ritualistic party in the Church," which he compared to "the action of dry rot in a ship" (*MG* 7 Jul 1870). In 1871, there was a procession from central Manchester to the meeting place, accompanied by six banners and four bands, with 200 factory girls "flaunting blue and yellow ribbons, and singing snatches of popular songs, chiefly "Rule Britannia"; although they "once or twice came into collision with a smaller number of girls who exhibited green favours," there were no serious incidents. Gladstone was condemned for his intention to "hand over the nation to the dominion of the Pope and priests of Rome" (*MG* 17 Jul 1871).

April 1872 saw one of the most significant events in the history of the Orange Order in Manchester when it played a leading role in the four-day visit of the Conservative leader Benjamin Disraeli. An estimated 30,000-40,000 people marched through the city, one observer noting the presence of the Orange Order, "whose societies formed perhaps the larger portion of the procession." On reaching the meeting hall each organisation was allowed to present two representatives to the leader. During his stay Disraeli had been made an honorary member of Salford LOL 169, and he greeted its delegates with the words "That is one of the greatest distinctions I ever received. I hope I shall be a loyal brother" (*MG* 3 Apr 1872).

The events of these years illustrated the nature of the relationship between the Order and the Conservative Party during this period. The 1867 Reform Act had doubled the electorate and, taken together with the Secret Ballot Act of 1872, had challenged both main parties to devise an appeal to the newly enfranchised, more prosperous element in the working class. The Conservatives developed a theme of loyalty to crown, church, constitution, and empire along with measures of social reform, all of which resonated with many of the traditional concerns of the Order. However, the re-

lationship was never intimate or easy. For Orange leaders the party was not always sufficiently robust in defence of Protestant interests, and the meetings were sometimes marked by criticisms of local Conservative MPs. The party, for its part, gladly used the Order as a useful institution for mobilising a significant section of the new voters, but simultaneously held it at arm's length out of wariness at the adverse publicity in the event of disturbances, its preoccupation with Irish issues, which had only a limited and regional appeal, and a patrician distaste for some of its more earthy manifestations. Conservative speakers at Orange events therefore had to perform a careful balancing act. When in November 1875 the Manchester MP W.R. Callender spoke at an Orange rally, he adopted the tactic of making it clear that whilst not a member of the Order, he shared their outlook on such issues as support for denominational education, opposition to disestablishment, and defence of the role of the church as "the leading, active, ever present representative of Christian truth and social order" (*MC* 3 Nov 1875).

But for the Irish-born William Touchstone (1822-1912) there were no such nice distinctions. Born in Bandon, Co. Cork, he came to Manchester at an early age and worked as a warehouseman. A devout evangelical Christian brought up in the Church of Ireland, he was active in the parish church of Blackley district on the north side of the city, where he became a Sunday school organiser and a regular participant in the Whit walk Sunday School processions. A teetotaler from the age of 17, he served on the Council of the Temperance Society. When Irish Church disestablishment became an issue he helped organise the Northern Church Defence Association, putting in "faithful, untiring and indefatigable labours" as secretary and lecturer (*MC* 17 Dec 1912). He was also a founder of the Warehousemen and Clerks' Provident Association in the 1850s, serving as Chairman for four years and a director for seven (Anon.).

In politics he was a convinced Conservative. In 1866 he found yet another outlet for his administrative energies when he helped found the Lancashire Constitutional Association: "For many years no Conservative demonstration in Manchester was complete without Mr. William Touchstone." In one year alone it was estimated he had travelled – but never on a Sunday – 20,000 miles and addressed up to 300 meetings (*MCN* 21 Dec 1912). One acute observer suggested: "it is not too much to say that to his sturdy advocacy of his principles [...] is due in no small degree the preponderance of Conservative principles in some Lancashire districts and the existence in such large numbers of 'the Conservative working man'" (*MEN* 16 Dec 1912). A cogent public speaker, he was approached to stand for parliament on several occasions and offered a salary to do so, but refused on the grounds that this could compromise his independence of judgement (*MEN* 17 Dec 1912). His political work brought him into close contact with successive generations of Conservative national leaders, but he was particularly close to Benjamin Disraeli and on several occasions was a guest at Hughenden, his Buckinghamshire country home. He played a key role in persuading him to come to Manchester and speak in the Free Trade Hall in 1872, a considerable

achievement since at that time Disraeli's wife was suffering from an eventually fatal illness and mass meetings were never his favourite format (Aldous 221).

Complementing his political work, Touchstone was notably active in the Orange Order, regularly attending and speaking at meetings against ritualism, disestablishment, and Irish Home Rule (*MG* 12 Jul 1886). He served as Deputy Grand Master of England and for 33 years was Honorary Grand Secretary for England, the Isle of Wight, and the Isle of Man. He died in December 1912, but not before signing the Ulster Covenant against Home Rule. At his funeral the only wreath permitted was from the Grand Master of the Loyal Orange Institution of England. His opponents paid tribute to his integrity and sincerity. Even the Liberal *Manchester Guardian* paid tribute: "Church and state and throne were to him more than just symbols. He revered them all" (*MG* 17 Dec 1912). He had clearly found a niche in his adopted city thanks to the institutional frameworks of the Church of England, the Conservative Party, and the Orange Order, which had provided channels for his considerable organisational talent.

This essay has pointed to a definite Irish Protestant presence in nineteenth-century Manchester, has provided some suggestion of numbers in the early decades of the century and has shown that there are traces of the two major Irish Protestant denominations, namely Presbyterians and Anglicans and one major institution, the Orange Order. The personal narratives have demonstrated that Irish Protestants were noticeable in the public life of the region, most notably in business, politics, and church life. In some ways this bears out the long-lived contention that they have been difficult to isolate for study because their religion and outlook enabled them to blend so easily into mainstream British society. Even Henry's support for Home Rule was expressed within an explicitly mainstream British framework, as a Liberal supporting a federal United Kingdom. But there are indications that integration in nineteenth-century Britain was not equally easy for all Irish Protestant migrants. For second-generation people like Henry, the British state was a single commercial and cultural entity in which they could move easily thanks to wealth, family connections, and professional qualifications. However, the sectarian conflicts in the early decades of the century suggest that for some the process of adjustment could be problematic. Here the activities of the Manchester Orange Order and the Touchstone example bear out the contention that the Order could play a key role for lower-class Protestant migrants by providing a familiar framework for fellowship amongst like-minded people, a welfare net in times of difficulty and an outlet for those like Touchstone with basic education but considerable ability.

Many aspects of the Protestant presence remain for investigation. Actual numbers are as elusive as ever, along with denominational breakdown, and work remains to be done on the second generation. Nor is it clear whether Irish Protestants lived in distinct neighbourhoods. It has been shown elsewhere that there were well-marked Irish dominated working-class districts in nineteenth-century Manchester and that

there was a Protestant presence in these areas. But whether Irish Protestants were residentially segregated from Irish Catholics of the same social class is one of the many features awaiting further research.

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LOOKING AT ITALY THROUGH GREEN GLASSES: IRISH TRAVELLERS IN ITALY

Donatella Abbate Badin

In the wake of Edward Said's seminal text, *Orientalism* (1978), one is tempted to employ the term "Italianism" to indicate the study of images of Italy in literature, of how they are influenced by the ideological bias behind them and, more especially, by an idea of cultural hegemony. British, American, French, and German "Italianisms" have been studied extensively, but Irish "Italianism" is still a field to be ploughed. Italy and Italians occupied for a long time a privileged position in English mentalities, and consequently also in Anglo-Ireland. The Irish, like the English, travelled to Italy on the Grand Tour and left accounts of their travels; Irish Gothic tales set their terrors in Italy; sentimental novels found a fruitful terrain there; Italian writers were translated into English by the Irish and some of them had a great influence on Irish writers (e.g. Dante on Heaney, Svevo on Joyce). But for all this, the specificity of the Irish gaze on Italy (what has been jokingly called "looking at Italy through green glasses")¹ has not yet been investigated in a comprehensive way.²

The study of Irish travel to Italy, for instance, is sure to yield many surprises and interesting interpretations. From the eighteenth century onwards, the Irish, who had had in the past a long tradition of journeys of exploration, proselytizing, pilgrimage and exile, also began to take part in the Grand Tour, that great formative experience in which, by testing oneself against the Other and incorporating notions of the Other, the upper classes all over Northern Europe took their first steps towards globalisation. One of the chief destinations of such travels was Italy, a country that was perceived as strange in terms of language, mores, religion or physical characteristics and often viewed suspiciously but also, surprisingly, as bearing an unexpected kinship to Ireland. This at least was the attitude of such nineteenth-century Irish Grand Tourists as Lady Morgan and Thomas Moore or of their twentieth-century heirs, Sean O'Faolain, Elizabeth Bowen and Colm Tóibín, who are the objects of this essay.

Travel to Italy and the related writings were a codified practice in the Anglophone tradition, established by generations of British travellers. Much too often, however, the

1 Julia O'Faolain in an interview about her father said that Sean O'Faolain saw Italy through "a pair of green glasses" (Superbo 113).

2 Apart from many individual studies scattered in journals and miscellanies, there are, however, two publications approaching the question of the interaction between the two cultures in a more organic form. The first issue of *Studi Irlandesi* (2011) contains a 250-page thematic section, "Italy-Ireland: Cultural Inter-Relations," edited by Donatella Abbate Badin and Fiorenzo Fantaccini. Chiara Sciarrino's monograph explores the ways in which Italian culture has influenced Anglo-Irish contemporary literature and drama.

encounter with the Italian Other involved what a scholar specializing in travel has described as “the production of a national mythology emphasizing British exceptionalism and justifying ethnocentric attitudes” (Kostova 19). Ireland, instead, was not, to borrow Peter Denman’s observations on Charles Lever, “a place for travellers to set out from, with the implicit base of a predominant set of cultural and economic values to underpin both an author’s attitudes and a publisher’s sale figures” (Denman 265). Admittedly, many of the upper class Irish travellers who in the age of the Grand Tour set out for Italy belonged to the same milieu as the English travellers and shared their aims and views, yet an ever-increasing consciousness of their Irish identity influenced the perception of the country they visited. The awareness of being themselves the objects of the gaze of a presumed dominant race mitigated the sense of superiority and often resulted in an increased identification with the foreign country. Thus the writings about Italy by Irish literati and travellers, although pertaining to the same linguistic domain as British travelogues, possess characteristics of their own, different from the British, and these characteristics are tied to the images the Irish have of themselves. This, in differing degrees, is true both of the nineteenth and of the twentieth century.

It is an axiom that images of foreign countries are influenced not only by ideological bias but also by the self-perception of the perceiver.³ Irish attitudes towards Italy can, arguably, be tied to some important features of Irishness such as, in the nineteenth century, a colonial status and aspirations to some form of liberation, not to mention the ever-present religious question, and, in the twentieth century, Catholicism and the growing pains of a young, independent nation-state. Italy, too, was a Catholic country that in the nineteenth century had been under foreign rule, frequently attempting to shake it off, and in the twentieth century had been adjusting to its recent independence going through the throes of nationalism, dictatorship, racism, terrorism, separatism, political crises and a rapid economic growth followed in the twenty-first century by a rapid downfall. All these features, then, could justify a special relationship of Ireland with Italy, whose history, traditions and culture were, in fact, often used by Irish writers to construct a parallel Irish discourse. Italy, with its sense of oppression and its struggle for independence, provided, in the first half of the nineteenth century, Irish authors with instances of national unrest, which lent themselves to pointed representations and interpretations alluding in a veiled way to the Irish plight. Twentieth-century Italy, on the other hand, offered more complex and varied distorting mirrors in which the Irish could contemplate themselves. Besides the obvious points of contact, religion and the strictures of morality, another important element in the construction of Italy was the economic question, with the contrast between the earlier disabling poverty and, later on, the prosperity of the ages of the Italian miracle and the Celtic Tiger. And then there was the all-pervading influence of the Catholic Church with

3 For a full treatment of the dynamics between those images which characterise the Other (*hetero-images*) and those which characterise one’s own, domestic identity (*self-images* or *auto-images*), see Beller & Leerssen.

which the modern states and societies of Italy and Ireland had to deal in the twentieth century. Even in the partly post-nationalist, post-Catholic and globalised Ireland of the twenty-first century there is still room (though less than before) for mirroring oneself in an Italy that has gone through a similar process.

The Nineteenth Century

Irish visitors to Italy in the early nineteenth century were certainly aware of similarities between the conditions of the two countries and knew that a portrait of Italy could be read as a metaphor for Ireland. The political component, for instance, was quite important in Thomas Moore's and Lady Morgan's reactions since they came to Italy at a time of great turmoil, just before the breaking out of the 1820-21 uprisings which heralded the Risorgimento. The perception of similarity, whether made explicit, as in the case of Lady Morgan, or covered up because it was felt to be too dangerous, as in the case of Thomas Moore's poems, transpires also from the accounts of other nineteenth-century Irish travellers to Italy.

Lady Morgan's monumental travelogue, *Italy* (1821), by common consent one of the most sympathetic to the country, though not to its leaders, provides copious information on all aspects of early nineteenth-century Italy and of its history and conveys the thrill of the encounter with the foreign and the unfamiliar. Between the lines of the conventional discourse of travel, however, a political subtext surfaces and the rhetoric of diversity is juxtaposed to the rhetoric of sameness as events observed on the Italian peninsula conjure tacit comparisons between the plights of Italy and Ireland. By writing about Italy, Morgan voices her Jacobinism and explores the meaning of national identity, as she was doing for Ireland in her fictional production.⁴

Morgan often uses the dialectical opposition of an oppressing race (the Austrians or the Spanish in different eras and regions of Italy) and of an oppressed race whose lost dignity, she implies, is soon to be regained. One may recognise here the binary structure of her national tales and of two romances, *Ida of Athens* (1809) and *The Princess; or, The Beguine* (1835), in which, under the pretence of writing about Greece or Belgium, Morgan alludes to Ireland. Whenever in her travels she encounters "privilege against the rights of nations" (*Italy* 2: 28) and disregard of a country's claims on one side and "ignorance, degradation, and passive obedience in the vassal people" (1: 49), on the other, she reacts with a passion that owes some of its vehemence to the bitterness she feels about Ireland. Conversely, the resilience and love of liberty in spite of the oppression, which survived in the many Italian states she had observed, calls for the same admiration which she had voiced for her own country in *Patriotic*

4 Parts of the section on Lady Morgan's comparisons between Italy and Ireland are derived from Donatella Abbate Badin, *Lady Morgan's Italy: Anglo-Irish Sensibilities and Italian Realities* and "Lady Morgan's *Italy*: Travel Book or Political Tract?."

Sketches: “That mind indeed must be endued with great native strength [...] which can breathe the spirit of liberty beneath the lash of despotism” (48).

We can notice an Irish reverberation in her observations on several Italian political circumstances. Commenting on Lombardy, she condemns the Habsburg form of government “that insulates the inhabitants of each petty state” and “the illiberal and narrow policy of the present day which knows no means of governing but to divide, and no method of tranquillizing but to degrade” (*Italy* 1: 110). This is the more angrily felt because it matches “the execrable system of ‘divide and govern’” denounced in her romance *Florence Macarthy* (Charles Morgan 1: v). The way the Spanish ruled over Naples by “*the delegated power of foreign despotism*” and without “any legitimate right to reign over a distant land of whose language they were [...] ignorant” (*Italy* 2: 361) suggests that Ireland is at the back of her mind. The disaster of 1798 had killed Morgan’s great hopes that the benefits of the French Revolution would reach Ireland. Her impassioned account of the Jacobin republic of 1799 in Naples and of its bloody repression that fills many pages of *Italy* reflects her sentiments about the 1798 Rising, which had been as ephemeral as the Neapolitan revolution, but, like the latter, had heralded a new awareness and new aspirations.

Italian poverty acts as a continuous reminder of her own people: “Irish eyes might well weep” in gazing on some ‘beggared-looking women’ working in the fields and some ‘loitering men’ and “Irish hearts might feel that human misery, seen where it may, has a constant type in the home of their affections” (*Italy* 2: 153). Morgan also complains about the essentialism of the representations of Neapolitan people: “It has been the fashion to accuse the Neapolitans of an inherent viciousness.” The equally maligned Irish could not have been too far from her mind when she uttered these remarks or when she gave a justification for the negative stereotypes: “Conquered nations are always subjects of slander to their foreign masters, who seek to sanction their own injustice by assuming the worthlessness of their victims” (*Italy* 2: 385). It is in her Irishness that we must seek the spring for Morgan’s transculturation, in other words her identification with, and her integration into, the culture of the Italian Other, which frequently implies disowning her British identity in favour of the victims – Italian as well as Irish – of the colonising country’s hegemonic power.

One of the purposes of *Italy* is to evoke the benefits of the liberal and progressive rule Italy had experienced under Napoleon both during the Republic and the Empire. Morgan’s defence of England’s archrival, considered as a champion of the fight against the enemies of liberty, is tantamount to an indirect attack against England, numbered repeatedly in the text among the tyrants and oppressors of the world. Her enthusiasm for France, “that nation which dared to redress the wrongs, and stem the abuses of a thralldom of ages” (*Italy* 1: 28), is coloured by the strong feelings her countrymen had for what was considered a land of refuge of the exiled and the repository of Irish hopes. Morgan’s Francophilia can be contrasted to her resentment against England and its “disregard of national rights” made explicit in her attacks

against England as a betrayer of Italian hopes. England's role in consigning the proud ancient maritime republics of Genoa and Venice into foreign hands, for one, reveals something the Irish people were familiar with, England's "disregard of national rights" (1: 48).

Clearly many of Morgan's positive or negative remarks are determined by epistemological and political reasons, but so is also her wariness. We must not forget, in fact, that Lady Morgan was a British citizen and that she wrote for a British publisher and British readers. Like Thomas Moore and other successful Irish contemporaries, she had to tone down her perceptions and her criticism of England. In her *Letter to the Reviewers of "Italy,"*⁵ defending herself from criticism, she emphasises that her intention had only been to compare Italian degradation with the model of excellence offered by a constitutional and Protestant Great Britain. While Morgan's British half often flattered by the comparisons that arose from her travel experiences, her other half, the Irish, wavered between sympathetic identification and rational distancing.

Thomas Moore's copious notes of his brief visit to Italy in 1819 collected in his *Journal* were used for the composition of *Fables for the Holy Alliance* and *Rhymes on the Road* (1823), which contain several poems dealing with some specific past and recent Italian events (the fall of Venice, the Neapolitan Revolution, the revolt of Cola di Rienzo). While the general sentiment that inspires the historical poems is that of liberalism, Moore, however, reveals in his journal a hyper-critical, even hostile attitude that confirms his dislike of the country and clashes with what other radical Irish and English writers had to say about the first stirrings of a fight for freedom and independence in Italy.⁶ At the time of the publication of the 1823 volume of poems including *Fables for the Holy Alliance* and *Rhymes on the Road*, Moore was in trouble because of the Bermuda affair. While he could pose as a defender of liberty in an unfocused way, sympathy for an actual liberal rebellion against England's allies might have seemed inappropriate and politically unwise. Too much sympathy for the Italian revolutionary movement could also have been misinterpreted at home and would have been detrimental to the success of Moore's work. Indeed, in the poem "Oh! Blame not the Bard," Moore distances himself from all political involvement, even as regards Ireland, for "'tis treason to love her, and death to defend" (*Poetical Works* 3: 264-265).

In short, by writing about Italy in the nineteenth century, some Irish writers broached familiar and dangerous issues such as the meaning of national identity, the loss of dignity under foreign occupation, the right to rebel and shake off the oppression of that same foreign power. But when the foreign power was a close ally of the United Kingdom it was a more delicate issue than talking of rulers and oppressors in a

5 *A Letter to the Reviewers of "Italy"* was appended to the second edition of *Italy* and was also published as a separate pamphlet by Colburn in 1821.

6 Moore's views on Italy are examined in greater detail in Donatella Abbate Badin's "Lady Morgan and Thomas Moore" and "Thomas Moore in Italy."

vague satirical way. Whether Morgan and Moore took a position or not, the gaze they cast on Italy, however, was conditioned by Ireland's colonial status. The political dimension, even when it was not explicitly confronted, was, indeed, a key element in the constructions of Italy offered by nineteenth century Irish travellers.

The Twentieth Century

Travel to post-Independence Italy from post-Independence Ireland presents other peculiarities, and, on the whole, Italy does not seem to have left its mark on Irish literature in a meaningful way. There are, however, a few important exceptions confirming the thesis that the gaze the Irish cast on Italy is strongly coloured by national identity-formation even if nationalism is no longer a determining factor since, in contrast to nineteenth-century discourse, explicit or veiled political statements are no longer in order in the second half of the twentieth century. The constructions of Italy by more recent Irish writers are guided by a desire to see and understand the new Italy in all its diversity, but the discovery of affinities seems to be inevitable and each encounter ends up in an illumination about the Self rather than about the Other.

Colm Tóibín, in his travel book, *The Sign of the Cross*, uses Catholicism as the prism through which to view Italy and the rest of Europe. The shared religion is, indeed, the ground for a more personalised approach through which, however, the novelist-turned-journalist makes a brave attempt at constructing an Italy free of the usual clichés, balanced between tradition and innovation and viewed per se, independently from comparisons and contrasts with Ireland. He focuses on unusual subjects giving pre-eminence to some figures of civil society that rarely appear in writings on Italy, such as the anti-mafia Jesuits in Palermo or the magistrate, Giovanni Falcone, who attempted to dismantle the mafia and was murdered in 1992 and from whose writings he quotes. At the core of the chapter is the Italy of the beginnings of the Berlusconi era, which Tóibín witnesses on the day of its birth, the 1994 electoral victory of "the media magnate as god": "It was like something out of science fiction, or a dream about television, or a new version of *Nineteen Eighty Four* [...] the brave new world of post-Christian Italy" (Tóibín 279).

The rise of a new media-dominated society is a phenomenon which throws a new light on the descriptions of religious ceremonies, the staple fare of many travel writers in search of local colour. The quaint folklore of Holy Week processions in various cities and the solemnity of Easter Mass in St. Peter's in the presence of the Pope acquire a new meaning in the glare of "hard television lights" and the clicking of cameras (Tóibín 280). Although Tóibín strives to focus on peculiarities that are exclusively Italian, he ends up emphasizing a kind of schizophrenia that was also to take hold of the Ireland of the Celtic Tiger and to which the author is particularly sensitive:

I realised that I was watching a pageant from Berlusconi's Italy, Catholic and conservative, but deeply materialistic too, excited by the possibilities of glitter and wealth which Berlusconi and his empire offered, but holding on to traditions and processions on feast

days, taking part in the great balancing act between the traditional and the venal which Berlusconi had organised. (Tóibín 284)

The new image of Italy that should emerge from these distinctive approaches ends up being another mirror image, a construction biased by the author's national identity. In the end it is the old certainties and similarities that play a major role in Tóibín's construction of Italy, those an Irishman can best appreciate and in which the author can recognise himself. *Midnight Mass* at St. Peter's in Rome offers the novelist an actual revelation:

It was only when the choir and the congregation began to sing 'Gloria in excelsis Deo' that I realised that if I closed my eyes I could be right back in Enniscorthy Cathedral in the early 1960s [...] standing and sitting through this ceremony in St. Peter's brought me back to the half boredom, half attention of long childhood sessions in Enniscorthy Cathedral. [...] Listening to [the Sanctus] now was like walking back into the living room in my parents' house as it was in 1960, lino on the floor, red brocade curtains, a wireless in the corner. (Tóibín 286-287)

In spite of Tóibín's attempt to offer a novel vision of Italy, closer to its modern reality, the writer has to recognise with some disappointment that the Irish vision has prevailed:

This was not what I had wanted or expected. [...] Maybe I had been waiting for some image, some moment, which would illuminate the changes which were happening in Italian politics and the Church. Maybe I had even seen it and failed to recognize it. Maybe it was the strange ordinariness of the ceremonies, how much they belonged to my experience and background. Maybe that was important and instructive. I did not know. (Tóibín 289)

Rather than fashioning a new image of Italy, in recognizing the Self in the Other, Tóibín has ended up with an act of self-fashioning.

For many other Irish travellers of the twentieth century, religion is what makes the two peoples so similar but also so different. Moved by a visit to the Holy Shroud in Turin, Sean O'Faolain highlights the comparison: "The exceedingly large number of Italians who believe in the miraculous will never surprise an Irishman [...] It makes both races poorer hands at politics than at the arts. It encourages steadier races to treat us as dotty, as if this mad world of the rationalists is 'sane' – I hope we are" (*Summer* 29).

However, while irrational aspects make both nations' interpretations of Catholicism similar, Italian moral laws are in O'Faolain's eyes much more flexible: in Italy "sacred and moral love are love confederate." O'Faolain, who had fought many battles in this direction, believed that "we, of this forbidding North, who measure and strain, tuck God away in the Church and Venus away in the bed, and miserably and foolishly drain each part of life of the richness of the other" (*Summer* 22) should take this attitude as a model. Actually, his encounter with Italian Catholicism, a liveable Catholicism, "a sort of Catholicism I had never met before" (*Summer* 160), led to a quasi-conversion which took place in Rome, as is recounted both in his autobiography,

Vive Moi!, and in *Summer in Italy* (1949), one of his two books⁷ on Italy: "Mesmerised by Italy I suddenly felt that I must return to the warm bosom of this Church that some twenty years earlier I had spat out of my mouth for spitting me out of her mouth" (*Vive Moi!* 336).

There can be no doubt about the Irishness of O'Faolain's gaze, who, according to his daughter, Julia O'Faolain, saw Italy, indeed the world, through "a pair of green glasses" (*Superbo* 113). Italy provided the discovery of an enchanting difference that could entice him away from an Ireland that was often perceived as Joyce's 'centre of paralysis' but always present as a yardstick. His motivation, as he stated in a private letter, was, indeed, "to get rid of bloody Ireland through Italy."⁸ Italy came to represent the opposite of everything O'Faolain did not like about Ireland. Leafing through his two books about Italy, his daughter commented: "I can see he's constantly saying 'Yes, it should be like this in Ireland'," while, on the other hand, "his fiction often shows Irish lives as narrow and constricted." O'Faolain himself, in his autobiography, had talked about an "alien Ireland now gone puritanical. Priest-ridden, bigoted, isolationist, nationalistic, mentally starved by Church and Censorship" (*Vive Moi!* 334). In his travel books, Italy's Catholicism, seen as sophisticated and non-sectarian, is set against the fundamentalism of Ireland, and Italian *joie-de-vivre* is opposed to Irish gloominess.

The contrast is best conveyed by the images of bathing beauties exhibited in magazines at a news stand, which welcome him as he is coming out of the church of Santa Cristina in Turin or by the "body glory" of actual bathers in "the golden river" of Turin, the Po. "What do they do about it?," he wonders. "Are these passionate creatures never troubled as the puritanical North is troubled?" (*Summer* 20). Unlike the Irish, Italians do not perceive the conflict between love and religion, he muses. Churches are actually a receptacle for amorous thoughts, as is proven by the graffiti in the porch of Saint Rita of Cascia asking the saint for things which would make D.H. Lawrence blush (*Summer* 21).

Italy, or rather O'Faolain's idea of it, represents not only a non-sectarian religiosity and the ability to reconcile sexuality with morality but altogether open-mindedness, flexibility, a lack of inhibitions. There is in his books an overabundance of clichés such as "The Italians have a gift for enjoying life" (*Summer* 60) or "The Italian's main principle of life [is] the pursuit of happiness" (*South* 52). The midday sun is "a proper metaphor of the nature of Italy itself, so exuberant, so excitingly prodigal, so running-over, so lavish, so unrestrained" (*Summer* 187). The necessity to insist on the hetero-stereotype of an extrovert Italy in order to confirm the auto-stereotype of a narrow-

7 Sean O'Faolain published two books and a number of uncollected articles on Italy, mostly in *Holiday* and other glossy magazines. The twin volumes are *A Summer in Italy* (1949) and *South to Sicily* (1953) (American edition: *An Autumn in Italy*).

8 Julia O'Faolain, quoting from a 1972 letter her father had sent her 'under the sigillum' ("The Irishman Who Stayed" 24).

mindful and priest-ridden Ireland accounts for the rather simplistic views of Italy and Italians offered by O'Faolain, but is also a confirmation of his theory that "one travels inside oneself. It's all done with mirrors" (*South* 16). This quote from *South to Sicily* offers a key to interpret his two travel books as texts through which Ireland is better understood for being observed, as his daughter writes, from a "detached perspective" (Superbo 113). Rather than travelogues they are a sort of "deflected" spiritual autobiography.⁹

Like the *Odyssey*, on which O'Faolain's travelogues are modelled, and, even more pointedly, like its modern counterpart, Joyce's *Ulysses*, his travelogues are governed by a pendulum swing between centrifugal and centripetal aspects: the centrifugal aspect is the discovery of difference and enchantment luring him away from "bloody Ireland"; the centripetal aspect is represented by *nostos*, the return or rather the fixation on homecoming. A visit to Italy becomes an occasion for testing one's identity and discovering one's Irishness even while one succumbs to the charms of the foreign country and its cities. The *figura* of O'Faolain's wanderer fits the model of the Homeric Ulysses as well as that of its two Joycean counterparts, Stephen flying the paralysis of Dublin towards unknown lands and Bloom travelling around the *omphalos* of his native city.

This double movement holds true for many writers but not for another Irish novelist and traveller, Elizabeth Bowen, who for a while was O'Faolain's lover. They both came to Italy, together or separately, several times during the post-WW2 era, during the period of reconstruction, but long before the "Italian miracle" (an analogue of the Celtic Tiger). They both had roots in County Cork, but she was from an utterly different family background, having grown up in a 'Big House,' her ancestral home of Bowen's Court. Consequently, the gaze they cast on the country is quite different, reflecting the polarities of male and female, Catholic and Protestant, nationalist and Ascendancy, although these polarities do not always hold in rigid ways. O'Faolain was sociologically and psychologically oriented, Bowen focused on art and history; his Italy was alive with people, Bowen's with places and monuments. Bowen's *Time in Rome* and O'Faolain's *Summer in Italy* and *South to Sicily* are full of "apparently random and arbitrary interpretations" (Ono 152), being records of states of mind, personal impressions, musings presented in a stream-of-consciousness style.

In Bowen's writing neither the pendulum swing nor the mirror effect are clearly evident. *A Time in Rome* (1959) is entirely focused on the Eternal City, and there is apparently no evidence that the author is Irish or that in writing about Italy she is thinking of home. She seems only concerned in conveying a sense of place throughout various periods of Rome's history. The author focuses mainly on the past of Rome

9 The concept of "deflected autobiography" is illustrated by Taura S. Napier in her study of the strategies used by some Irish women writers to narrate the self in an indirect way and through genres other than autobiography.

and on the stratification of eras, a common *topos* in travel-writing about Italy, as Marie-Madeleine Martinet points out (7). “What we look at is less a city than the long and complex story of mankind,” says O’Faolain, commenting on the images of syncretism presented by Rome (*Summer* 126). But to Bowen, trying to reconstruct an image of what Rome was and how it functioned in the days of the Empire, this stratification reveals instead something closely connected to her own identity: “To recreate, even for an instant, what is laid low, dishevelled, or altogether gone into thin air is exciting,” she writes (*Time* 64). In her excitement we recognise more than simple sympathy and admiration for the Rome she has recreated. Deep down there is a sense of kinship, a kind of response coloured by her Irish identity. In offering a vibrant and lively portrait of a world that has disappeared, Bowen recognises “the effect of something pressed between two forces, ambition and destruction” (*Time* 10), an emotion recognisable also in her evocation of Ascendancy Ireland with its Big Houses. The trope of the Big House that plays such an important role in her Irish writings is, *mutatis mutandis*, exploited in her reconstruction of the Roman past with the *domus* as the ‘ideal unit’ of its civilisation, while her Anglo-Irish gaze falls sympathetically on the Roman Empire.

The technique Bowen uses in recreating ancient Rome is similar to that used in *Bowen’s Court*. In the latter book she brings back to life the history of her family’s Big House in the several phases of its existence; for Rome, she retraces the various phases of its history by dwelling on various sites. The result is a sort of psychological archaeology that goes back to the core of the *domus romana* to which she devotes many pages. The *domus*, the central image of her Roman fresco, is, indeed, the prototype of the Big House of which *Bowen’s Court* had been a shining example. Both were isolated havens, islands of civilization in a rough world. While the *domus* was “palisaded against the outside world” (*Time* 104), breeding “virtues which extended their value outside its walls” (*Time* 107), the Anglo-Irish family homes were “an island – and, like an island, a world” (*Bowen’s Court* 19) from which the “Protestant nation” acted as “the agents” of their times and in the eighteenth century “began to feel, and exert, the European idea – to seek what was humanistic, classic and disciplined” (*Bowen’s Court* 452). Both the values of the Big House and of the *domus* extended “outside its walls.” The description of the *domus* as “the private source of the public character, educated, temperate, disciplined” (*Time* 107) fits her idealisation of Big House society. Indeed the *domus*, like the Big House, was more than “the private house of a single family [...], an infinity of wider meanings attached to it” (*Time* 106). The sanctity of the *domus* was indisputable, but so was that of those Big Houses in which, when “things are done properly,” as she writes in *The Death of the Heart*, “there is always the religious element” (90).

The figure of the *paterfamilias*, “the centre of pressing forces” (*Time* 107), adhering to a strict code of honour and fighting against the possible physical and symbolic collapse of the house, also lends itself to being read as a prototype of those Bowens whose dynasty she traces as if they were emperors, naming them Henry I, Henry II

and so on. *A Time in Rome* was written in 1959, at the time when Bowen's Court, having survived the Civil War and World War II, was sold by Bowen herself, since she could no longer maintain it. The house was razed to the ground by its acquirer. Throughout the pages dedicated to the *domus*, we perceive the poignancy of the attachment to a physical and symbolic place under threat of disappearance, and the misgivings towards the new rising class who might inherit those estates or destroy them – the key notes also of much Big House literature:

Rome now was thronged, however, by a new upstart class who made light of the code, made fun of it or had never heard of it and intolerably threw on its contravention. Freedmen, who had got themselves out of slavery by intelligence, then gone on to carve out careers and amass fortunes, were in particular loathed by the *ancien régime*. [...] Their flashy homes in the newer suburbs contradicted every idea of living stood for by the superciliously modest *domus*. (*Time* 112)

Although Irish Big Houses are not directly mentioned, the description of the *domus* thus allows Bowen to voice indirectly verdicts which concern her class or are otherwise biased by autobiography. Pictured as a fictional character lying sleepless in the night and “seeing in his mind’s eye, as he lay in the dark, the faces of his still blameless children, the *paterfamilias* must have asked himself which would be the one to grow up to sell the fort, and in what manner, and how soon? Or would it be himself – through some inadvertence, blind spot, or moral miscalculation?” (*Time* 112-113). There are moments such as this one when *A Time in Rome* may also be read as “deflected autobiography,” as a text alluding to her father’s forebodings¹⁰ and to her own misgivings, when she could no longer sustain the upkeep of the house.

Bowen comes very close to revealing her autobiographical and sectarian bias when she mentions how much the Ascendancy is indebted to Rome as regards the concept of home: “As for us, in so far and for so long as home is a concept, rather than a container for things and persons, we continue to be in debt to the Romans. With us, lately, the concept has watered itself down, becoming more sentimental, less legalistic. Or at least, that is so with us Anglo-Saxons” (*Time* 106-107). Here then is an oblique explanation of the rationale of her *Time in Rome*. By recognizing that the *domus* is at the root of the mythical or metaphoric qualities attached to Big Houses, she plays down their role as “the cultural and spatial sign of the English colonialist discourse” (De Petris 339), internationalizing and historicizing them.

In the same way, her origins also account for the admiration of Imperial Rome we may deduce from her pages. Bowen’s refusal to find fault with the Roman Empire, as many British travellers had done, is tinged by her political ideas, but also by her national identity: “I am sick with the governessy attitude of our age. [...] In cases of history, we may not be seeing things quite as they were, down in the long perspective” (*Time* 203-204). The revisionist attitude displayed in her analysis of various

10 In a letter of 1921 addressed to his daughter, after the destruction by fire of three neighbouring houses, her father had asked her to be “prepared for the next news, and be brave” (*Bowen’s Court* 440).

figures and events of imperial Roman history would be equally valid for Anglo-Ireland. Her exoneration of the Roman Empire from the clichéd accusations of cruelty, arrogance, and oppression, which, for instance, we find in Morgan, may be rooted in her own sense of belonging to a much maligned dominant class, the Ascendancy, an expression of the British Empire. Although it is never stated, Ireland seems to be at the back of Bowen's mind when she describes the days of the Roman Empire or of its institutions.

Irish travel-writing concerning Italy, then, goes well beyond the climatological clichés that recur persistently in many writers dreaming of escape from Irish wetness and gloom. As Deirdre Madden writes in her novel, *Remembering Light and Stone*, "no one wants to shatter the myth of the warm, sensual, happy south, for if we did not believe in that, where would people go to escape the rigour of the north?" (2). Italy, however, is not only blue skies and clear air, even for Irish writers. There is much more depth and width in the reflections of the authors we have briefly investigated. Whether self-referential like O'Faolain's or Tóibín's texts, or other-referential like Bowen's, whether containing hard facts like Morgan's, or a poetic vision like Moore's, Irish travel-writing constructs Italian 'Otherness' on the basis of original investigations and familiar concepts, known facts and personal experience, but also draws on a corpus of interior images generated by the subjectivity of the author. In other words, it conveys hetero- and auto-images alike. One defines one's own culture in the same way as "the self defines itself by defining the other," as Manfred Pfister writes, "each description or definition of the other culture implies a self-description or self-definition" (4). Since the most important component of auto-images is the author's cultural frame and national identity, his or her being Irish (even with the proviso that Irishness means different things at different times), we end up gaining a clearer vision of what Ireland represents or has represented when reading about Italy. There is, indeed, a green tinge in the images of Italy constructed by Irish writers.

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“A BIT OF BUSINESS”: NEW DEPARTURES IN ECONOMICS AND THEATRE IN SEAN O’CASEY’S *TIME TO GO* (1951)

Michelle Paul

Theatrical criticism of Sean O’Casey’s work continues to focus on the so-called “Dublin Trilogy”. But O’Casey wrote twenty-six other plays, including eight one-act dramas, which have received virtually no critical attention at all. Yet these one-act plays offer two areas of interest for O’Casey criticism. First, they indicate O’Casey’s sharp analysis of contemporary politics, and, secondly (and of particular interest to O’Casey scholars), they offer early insights into key ideas which are often developed at greater length in his subsequent three-act plays.

Time to Go,¹ his one-act play from 1951, for example, offers an analytical commentary on the arrival of a potentially new approach to the system of economic exchange and the departure of the tired business practices of a capitalist economy. Such a rethink of the local approach to trade is timely today, especially in the light of the global repercussions upon trade as a consequence of excess profit and greed in corporate banking systems: the ‘Occupy’ movement would surely be interested in this O’Casey work. In 1951, it was prescient indeed, but its theatrical unpopularity suggests that both in form and theme the concerns were too innovative to appeal to a post-war audience. This is partly because of the way O’Casey’s later work has been consistently misunderstood by his critics, and – partly as a result of this critical misunderstanding – because contemporary audiences did not know how to receive and interpret O’Casey’s original approach to theatre. Many critics and audiences alike thought O’Casey was still trying, and failing badly, to write realist drama.

Time to Go considers the consequence of a new kind of approach to economic exchange at an individual, national, and international level. The play looks beyond the straightforward dramatic presentation of the impact of daily economic hardship upon individuals to consider the origin of the economic system that produces such inequality and imbalance nationally. *Time to Go* examines the ideology behind Western capitalism theatrically, questioning the cultural reach of a system driven by the markets, underwritten by the language of accountancy and the tyranny of the bottom line. Using satire and myth, symbolism and theatrical experimentation, *Time to Go* suggests that the false logic of the market economy is destructive, not developmental, and offers an outright rejection of the business model of exchange for profit. The play demonstrates concern about the moral creep of economic ideology in a way which is

1 *Time to Go* was written in 1949, largely in manuscript by December and completed by spring 1950. The play remained unperformed, but was published in 1951, when it was printed in Volume 4 of the Macmillan series of O’Casey’s *Collected Plays*.

far ahead of its time. In the reconsideration of the “medieval theory of the just price,” as Bernice Schrank sees it, the play is linked both to on-going socialist economic policies in both England and Ireland: “In the nineteen thirties and nineteen forties, some left-wing English scholars viewed the theory of the just price as a form of primitive socialism not too different from the social changes then being introduced by the British Labour Party” (Schrank 236). For Schrank the play is a response to De Valera’s vision of the rural idyll of Ireland: “*Time to Go* is O’Casey’s critique of De Valera’s policies and pieties: O’Casey’s Ireland is a parochial backwater, mean-spirited, narrow-minded, money-grubbing and self-defeating” (235). De Valera’s vision of Ireland, typified in his famous 1943 St Patrick’s Day address, sets the nation in opposition to commercial, urban England. But O’Casey’s play suggests that Ireland does not escape the capitalist ideology of profit and exchange as easily. O’Casey’s exploration of the reach of the damage of economic ideology is to point to the way this approach has begun to permeate interaction between individuals in their personal relationships and to sour social connections between communities and nations.

Economic Setting

The setting of *Time to Go* does not immediately suggest a critique of international economic policy, since it is a fantasy set in a rural rather than an urban environment outside Dublin.² But arrivals and departures are used in this play to mark the appearance of a kind of speaking moral conscience, leading the audience to the consideration of an approach to economic policy, which, if adopted, would have repercussions upon the ethics of international trade.

Two characters, the Widda Machree and Kelly, return to a small town the day after the local annual Fair, trying to find one another. As they search they meet some of the town’s occupants, who we see represent the economy of the town at a local level – Flagonson, the innkeeper, and Farrell, owner of the General Store, as well as a group of businessmen and farmers going about their usual trade. Flagonson and Farrell’s dialogue opens the play – they discuss the loss of the town’s energy and dynamism now that the Fair is over. The event was their annual opportunity to attract crowds and make significant profit. This possibility of net gain over, their tone is elegiac. As prominent tradesmen both would have a significant responsibility toward the community and, instead of a conversation celebrating the social value of the Fair for communal well-being and as a means of enhancing social contact between people of

2 It may seem odd that O’Casey did not allude to George Russell’s (AE) comments on rural economies which would show some sympathy with O’Casey’s theme in this play. However, despite AE’s early amicable support for Jim Larkin’s Women and Children’s Relief Fund during the 1913 Lockout (which O’Casey set up and ran), O’Casey rapidly turned against AE when he initially refused to publish the correspondence with Yeats over *The Silver Tassie* (AE agreed with Yeats’s assessment of the play at first). O’Casey probably satirised AE’s metaphysical beliefs via the character of Bentham in *The Plough and the Stars*; see Murray 204-205.

the town, the men comment only on economic loss and decay: for them, the loss of the potential for profit has outweighed any other effects of the Fair on the community. Flagonson comments, for example, that the flags put out for the Fair are now “woebegone,” and Farrell bemoans: “[...] with [...] the shoutin’ of buyin’ and the sellin’ [...] gone with th’ crowd [...] it’s a bit lonely like” (O’Casey, *Time to Go* 262).

This first verbal exchange of the play is thus about the economic loss brought by the Fair, rather than the social significance or value of the event. The men are more interested in whether the minimum effort they made to decorate their businesses – “a *tiny string*” (262) of bunting hangs over the door of each – was worth their economic outlay, rather than the aesthetic impact of the decorations. Farrell is so focused on the subject of profit that he dismisses the flags and decorations outside Flagonson’s tavern as a “waste of time; waste of money” (262) and argues that his own zero expenditure on decoration has achieved just as good a financial result. The men are not concerned with the creation of a genuinely celebratory ethos through the decoration of their premises and thus potentially a good profit from happy customers, but only with its impact on their profit margin.

This opening one-upmanship of the two businessmen raises a series of questions for the audience about the value of money in aesthetic terms, questions that economists such as Michael Sandel, in his recent book *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets*, continue to raise as pertinent to the markets today. What is it that money can and does buy? What function and value does money have in a community? And perhaps the most important consideration – what is the impact of money on the way men and women think about themselves and their society? As Sandel comments:

Economists often assume that markets are inert and do not affect the goods they exchange. But this is untrue. Markets leave their mark. Sometimes market values crowd out nonmarket values worth caring about.³

Sandel is alert to the gradual erosion of community values and social responsibility effected by the increasing reliance on capitalist models of exchange and thought. The ‘goods’ are not only material here, but psychological. If, as Sandel claims, “markets leave their mark,” we will all be affected by the way we do business. Perhaps unconsciously at first, we develop an attitude towards trading practice which can encourage a monetary outlook on every aspect of our existence. O’Casey, however, is not primarily concerned to engage in a strictly economic discussion with contempora-

3 Sandel, Introduction to *What Money Can't Buy*. See also Chapter 1, where Sandel considers the problematic nature of some market practices, for example, paying children to read. Sandel questions whether this creates the ‘right’ attitude to education for the future generation or whether we are presenting education as another commodity. Similarly Sandel considers the American practice of “scalping” – where the low-paid or homeless are paid to queue for free theatre tickets for those who are monetarily rich but time-poor – and asks whether this is a sensible use of market economics, since some members of society can and do put a higher price on their time. Sandel also looks at the ethically fraught implications of the ‘market’ in body parts: “Consider kidneys,” as he puts it; see Chapter 3.

ry intellectuals on such questions, but to raise the issue theatrically as a means of encouraging wider critical debate about the impact of economic practice on the political, social, and psychological outlook of a nation-state.

O'Casey's play shows just how pernicious a change in our philosophical approach to economics can be for a local community and leaves the audience to make the link between this kind of local attitude and similar approaches towards the national and international economic markets. Farrell is happy, for example, to display his own decorations because "they cost me nothin'." As the stage directions point out, Farrell "*gloatingly*" (263) states that the Papal flag now displayed above his shop was stolen from a child – the goodwill the decoration brings is an unequal bargain, because it is achieved even without the balance of spending money to attain it. Because Farrell's only nod towards decoration afforded him no financial outlay, he can enjoy it all the more – only potential gain at no cost gives him real pleasure. And it is the narrowness of the relation between decorative display and money exchange that strips bare the economic relations at play here. It is this mean enjoyment of something for nothing that suggests a moral deficiency – arguably it is an ideological disposition that the play presents as morally pernicious and destructive, and it demonstrates at a very early stage the kind of spiteful, individualist, and self-serving attitude towards money that Sandel remains anxious about in attitudes towards the markets today. O'Casey was already suggesting in the 1950s that similar attitudes prevailed in Ireland and, internationally, wherever capitalism took hold of the economy.

Economics Through Myth

It is at this point of mean-spiritedness in the play, as if in mythical⁴ response to the realities of such iniquitous trading practices, that the Widda Machree first arrives at the Tavern seeking Kelly. The audience listens to her reason for returning to the town: she announces that she is compelled to travel the road like a marooned soul "because of a sin, gentlemen; an ugly, mortal sin an' a mean one too [...] I'm but a wandherin' cloud o' conscience" (269). This female Ancient Mariner confesses to Flagonson and Farrell that her sin is one of economics – her "thransaction" with Kelly for the sale of her cow is the source of her error: "I thought I could rise above the temptation but I sank below it" (269). This temptation is another unequal bargain, paying Kelly too little for the animal that was worth far more.

The Widda characterises her fall from grace in sacred terms as a moral and a mortal sin. She presents her temptation into financial gain for profit in the same linguistic terms as a sexual temptation in moral terms, linking capitalism to a kind of moral pro-

4 I am using 'mythical' both in the sense of O'Casey's re-cycling of some aspects of an Irish myth in the creation of Kelly (a version of the Celtic God Manannán mac Lir; see Murray 329) and as the creation of characters with a sense of the hyper-real in both the Widda and Kelly.

stitution. Yet though the Widda is repentant, she remains 'matter of fact' about her sin "yous musta shot a gay lot o' rogueries into th' world in your time" (270). She addresses the businessmen about her moment of madness as if she was talking to men who would understand, since it must be within Flagonson's and Farrell's usual daily economic business to choose such a betrayal of the self.

As the Widda watches a couple leave Flagonson's Tavern complaining of "daylight robbery" (271) for their meal, O'Casey structures a very specific moment of "short silence" (272), which functions as a silent tableau to draw the attention of the audience to such daily inequities. The silence is golden in the most satiric way, for the audience does hear one sound during this moment of quiet, which O'Casey has specifically chosen for its ironic potential. The stage directions make clear: "During the silence the sound of coins jingling together is heard coming from the Tavern and the General Stores" (272). This pseudo stage silence, punctuated only by the chime of the coins, allows the audience a moment's pause to reflect on what they have seen and heard. Stopping the action like this is a particularly important dramatic decision in a one-act play. The pause not only interrupts the fast tempo of a one-act piece (and would be recognisable today as a moment of reflection and irony in contemporary physical theatre or a postmodern dance show), but is unusual in a piece which, until this moment, might have been considered a traditionally realist play. The moment offers a change of style for the audience and jars them into a specific moment of attention and focus – as if a large red arrow had descended and was moving up and down to point to a moment of significant meaning in the work. This sound-stop also provides a proleptic aural link to the repeated sound of coins jangling later in the play, when the audience are invited to think back to this incident of "daylight robbery" and reflect upon other kinds of economic robbery being practised in wider national and international economic contexts as well. O'Casey's approach is one we might now associate most strongly with Brecht, but O'Casey's style is more subtle and arguably more theatrical.

After being pursued by the local police the Widda and Kelly do meet again and their reunion is heartfelt and sincere. Though this might appear to offer a return to verisimilitude, their language of communication remains at a heightened level and their exchanges of dialogue thus retain the link with the complex moment of spiritual reflection just created for the audience. A complex exchange then inflects the business principle of profit and expansion they promote. The play suggests that the moral gains from their approach to business transactions will bring them more than either could begin to comprehend. The Widda and Kelly are depicted as united through a spiritual union, a connection which is beyond the confines of ordinary human relationships and which, it seems, connects them on a pseudo-divine level. As the Widda sees Kelly she exclaims, "My brother!," while Kelly replies in kind, "My sister!" Their conversation then develops beyond the principle of exchange for profit. Kelly, significantly, offers the Widda a purse, with this request: "Take all I kept from you; and take th' cow back, too, for I gave less than I should when I was buying" (288).

The Widda echoes his physical gesture and his replies, also offering him a purse in return, with the comment: "Take back all you gave, an' keep th' cow, for I asked more than I should when I was sellin'" (288). As the stage directions instruct, they utter the word "Forgive!" together and as "*They enter each other's arms*" they comment to one another, "More than a sister! /More than a brother!" (288). As they have entered into non-selfish economic exchange, they have enhanced the physical and spiritual connection between themselves. Their closeness cannot be approximated in meaningful words, so they simply have to add expansions to conventional terms of sibling relationships. Capitalism, it seems, while it states its terms, does not give us the linguistic terms to undermine its own existence. Their 'profit' here is to be a greater than human relationship; their loss is only of financial gain.

But this new kind of spiritual connection is seen as unable to be tolerated by the state. As soon as the Widda and Kelly have plighted their new moral economic troth in this way, the forces of the state – here represented by the police – arrive to physically remove them both from the town. As the police try to arrest them, the Widda and Kelly decide of their own accord that it is time to depart. They can see that the police, as representatives of the state, are working to collude in the maintenance of the capitalist system. The reviewer in *The Daily Worker*, writing about the only known production of *Time to Go* in 1953, also places the police on the side of the capitalists:

[...] they must capture and silence the people to whom money means nothing and less than nothing: the people who will ask too little for the goods they have to sell and who refuse to pay too much for the goods they buy [...] The man and woman who represent this un-commercial ideal are, indeed, captured and taken away in handcuffs. (Donald)

The play shows how the forces of the state will always work in such ways as to maintain the capitalist approach as one which is reasonable and right, while those who question and undermine the economic system of exchange must be removed, since they pose a danger to the way that society can continue to operate.

The closing song of the Widda and Kelly, in which they share two lines each, helps to remove them from the realm of the human and even supernatural to an idealised place not yet recognised by human conscience, in which their new approach of non-competitive, non-profit-seeking exchange of goods and services will thrive and bring them an intense human connection, combining sibling and romantic love. As *The Daily Worker* review concludes, the spirit of defiance in the play is strong:

But the end is joyous for the heretics escape. And across the persistent noise of jingling gold comes the free call of the men and women who can never be silenced; the men and women to whom honour and truth and the joy of life are the real standards. (Donald)

The escape of the Widda and Kelly cannot be explained in rational terms. Their escape is a spiritual one of overcoming the limitations of the ideology that governs the society they have visited and decided to leave. As the Widda and Kelly depart, they begin to sing – always a clue in O'Casey for a moment of transmutation or connection with a world other than the real. They say goodbye to one another first as brother

and sister and then as lovers – “fair sweetheart” and “my love” (289) – emphasising that their spiritual connection can now best be described as a combination of sibling and beloved. Their shared refrain shows that they are completely removed from the specifics of the normal human constraints on co-operation and detaches them from all divisiveness and human alienation that the business ethic has caused.

Time to Go thus offers not only a comment on De Valera's politics of conservative isolationism (Schrank 236), but also a critique of the specific capitalist economic principles of profit, growth, and development. The play's alternative to the capitalist ethic posits a model of a culture of exchange, or even “degrowth,” that would not be out of place in the work of political philosophers such as Serge Latouche or André Gorz. As Latouche points out:

[...] degrowth can only mean the contraction of accumulation, capitalism, exploitation and predation. The point is not just to slow accumulation down but to challenge the process of accumulation itself so as to reverse the destructive process. (Latouche 90)

Time to Go presents just such a “challenge” to capitalist economics, not as a tract of propaganda or a peroration in the style of *Das Kapital*, but as a moment of theatrical fantasy. The vision of an economic exchange between the Widda and Kelly is not predicated on expansive capitalism, but, instead, challenges the notion of “accumulation” through the rejection of the principle of monetary profit in the way that Latouche's approach suggests.

Form and Transformation

At the end of the play, as the sound of the “Jingle Coins” returns, the refrain grows louder and is accompanied by a trumpet; we return to the sight of the two trees, glimpsed barren at the beginning of the play. The stage directions instruct that after the Widda and Kelly have departed from the town, “*The two barren trees in the background suddenly flush with blossom, foliage, and illuminated fruit*” (291). The men all fall down in surprise and the businessman Cousins declares of the Widda and Kelly, “They musta been saints!” (291). Whether Beckett ever read this O'Casey play is a moot point, but we can read the flowering tree as an opportunity for change immediately lost. Mrs Flagonson appears to remind her husband to come back into the tavern “an help me tot up th takin's” (292). The stage directions note that the “*glowing trees begin to fade as soon as Mrs Flagonson prods her husband in the back with her forefinger.*” Her gesture ironically echoes the pointed forefinger of Kelly, as he literally stopped the businessman Conroy in his tracks with the same gesture earlier in the play. Kelly asks Conroy how he can square his weekly attendance at Mass with the inequitable business deals he makes each week, and as Conroy moves to hit Kelly in response, he is inexplicably frozen to the spot on stage. Together these two uses of the gesture offer moments of questioning and reflection for the audience, and here the potential for change that is lost is further emphasised. Mrs Flagonson's prod in her husband's back is destructive to the moment of realisation that the departing fig-

ures offered a new means of human engagement through the arrival of their fresh approach to trade, but her pointing finger is not only prodding her husband, it is figuratively prodding the audience as well. In the final moments, the men return to their previous economic practices, Flagonson to count his money, Conroy to settle his inequitable deal for cattle, and Farrell to refuse a neighbour in penury any phosphates for his land on account. The jabbing finger, though not directly prodding at the audience (O'Casey does not want to lecture his audience, as Shaw might have done), nevertheless raises questions. What would you do? Would you take the opportunity to change your approach trading for profit? Would you recognise the value of such an approach to human interaction, even if you saw a tree bloom in front of you, just as this town did?

Properly staged, with the full length of the pause and the moment of expectation, this moment of the blooming trees showing the sense of paradise lost could create a theatrical epiphany. This potential moment of change, thwarted through self-interest and greed, is a perfect theatrical representation of the destructive power of capitalist individualism. Who knows what a moment of magical revelation a contemporary physical theatre company such as Knee High, Propeller, or Shared Experience might be able to conjure with the events that O'Casey constructed for this scene? Current physical theatre practice would understand O'Casey's approach to drama far more than his contemporary audience could. Writing to the American theatre critic George Jean Nathan about his latest work, O'Casey explains that he thought *Time to Go* "is good, though I am not sure. It is, again, realism touched with fancy,"⁵ and it is this blend of theatre styles that physical theatre now understands so well.

Arriving at a New Form

The play thus offers an examination of a new approach to capitalism through a new form of theatre or, rather, a departure from O'Casey's most usual form of the three-act play in favour of a one-act play. Secondly, it blends a range of styles, structures, and techniques to jolt the audience out of a complacent reaction and to wake them up to the newness of the ideas contained in the innovative form: shifts in time, dancing, ironic songs – a mash-up if you like of traditional and familiar tunes –, characters in freeze-frame, those who arrive and depart without explanation, extravagantly costumed in ways far beyond their realist reach. Today's theatregoers, used to fractured narratives of postmodernism and familiar with devised work featuring diverse styles throughout a performance, would now find O'Casey's innovative theatre completely comprehensible. But O'Casey's use of the theatrical possibilities of a compressed time-frame of the one-act play may not have been popular with his 1950s audience. *The Times* review of the triple bill of O'Casey's one-act plays, when *Time to Go* was first staged, suggests there was more work to be done to persuade audiences to rec-

5 O'Casey to George Jean Nathan, 1 Mar 1950 (*Letters* 2: 684).

ognise the one-act play as a worthwhile evening at the theatre: "If every triple bill could be depended on to be as lively we might eventually see the great playgoing public at large abandoning its prejudice in favour of the full-length play" (Anon.). As Robert Lepage, whose own theatrical style offers a blend of narrative, symbolism, projections, experiments in lighting, music, and dance comments:

In Western theatre the success of a play is often seen to rely on how seamless the whole thing appears. For the Japanese, the overall style and individual performance don't have to match; richness is found in diversity, in the meeting and shock of styles [...]. For a Western audience, it's difficult to be confronted with so many different codes. (Lepage 46)

It is such a desire for richness in diversity that O'Casey was keen to attain and is particularly evident in his later plays. The arrival of this "shock of styles" that he often used in his later work, including *Time to Go*, was an opportunity to alert his audience to the radical ideas and approaches to social change and development in his plays through the medium of form. If Lepage is correct and Western audiences of physical theatre even just over a decade ago had difficulty accommodating differences of approach in the same piece of theatre, then O'Casey's blend of stylistic innovations may have been less enjoyable for his contemporary audience to watch. O'Casey's view of theatre is that its primary function is to allow the audience to enjoy the process of watching the production. Theatre "should be full of colour and excitement and gaiety. That's what it is *there* for! To bring colour into people's lives!"⁶ Contemporary audiences have learnt through the work of Lepage, Complicité, Cirque du Soleil, and contemporary physical theatre companies to enjoy such dramatic 'colour' and to feel energised by Barthes' "blend and clash" of theatrical genres and styles: satire, realism, symbolism, and myth used alongside one another, as in *Time to Go*, may no longer seem so odd or inexplicable. Now that we have been educated as an audience in how to read O'Casey's later work, we can re-visit and examine the imperatives behind his insistence on stylistic innovations as a theatrical means of highlighting the immorality of capitalist economics.

Conclusion

The play closes with the opportunity for change lost; the tree fruits and is plentiful, the sense of a lush fecund paradise is offered and dissolved at the moment the woman, the re-imagined figure of Eve, chooses the sin of returning to the ways of the capitalist world. The woman has lost the potential paradise seen briefly as the colourful and figuratively rich alternative to the barren landscape. We can begin to imagine the visual spectacle of this scene in the hands of a contemporary physical theatre company such as Complicité – perhaps a use of stylised projections, music and lighting to suggest the idyllic potential of the potential vista dissolving in front of the audience. Certainly, Simon McBurney shares O'Casey's discomfort about the power of the

6 Sean O'Casey to David Plethean (qtd. in Murray 418).

capitalist system, openly declaring that his theatre was formed out of a “resistance to ‘the blind almost fundamentalist adherence to a consumer capitalist society’” (Costa). Both McBurney and O’Casey share a strong idealism, and O’Casey’s drama uses physical motifs to suggest the potential benefits of a radical economic rethink via lyrical moments of fantasy. The potential “profit” to the audience would be the “loss” of adherence to capitalist ethics and potentially a moment for re-growth, just as the tree seemed to offer, not decline and retrenchment as the town had experienced to date. O’Casey has offered an alternative to an international economic system. His play might be overly idealistic, but there is a sense that O’Casey himself recognises this. He is not using his drama in a self-righteous or self-indulgent manner to put the world right. Rather than that he is offering his audience alternative possibilities, different aspirations, and new ideas. As Lionel Pilkington points out,

theatrical performance is not just the enactment of a literary script but also a playful public intervention, a testimony to the resilience of alternative ways of thinking, remembering and imagining action, and wholesale stretching out of what a society thinks might be possible. (Pilkington 10)

Time to Go offers a sense of what “might be possible” if the international economic system could be re-imagined in a way that concentrated on fairness and equality rather than exchange for profit. It is not an economic tableau, but it is an imaginatively expressed dramatisation of possibilities. As Barney, the landowner, comments to Cousins about the fruiting tree in the closing speech of the play, “If I seen anything, an’if you seen anything, what was seen was only an halleelucination!” (292). The apparition was fleeting, it may even have simply been imagined. The play shows the possibility of an alternative approach to financial responsibility, much as Sandel’s work shows today, but without any conviction that such change can actually happen. The play suggests that it is time for the departure of capitalism, but recognises that only the actions of the audience in the space outside the theatre can make that ideal vision a reality.

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ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES IN THE WORK OF OWEN MCCAFFERTY

Brigitte Bastiat

In *Irish Writing in the Twentieth Century*, David Pierce identifies the main issues debated in twentieth-century Irish literature: history, politics, religion, the city and the countryside, culture and identity, colonialism and post-colonialism. He also mentions a certain number of sub-themes including violence, Northern Ireland, popular tradition and tales, gender, homosexuality, childhood, and homecoming. Many of these tropes can also be applied to the four plays by Owen McCafferty that I have chosen to study here: *The Waiting List*, *Mojo Mickybo*, *Closing Time*, *The Absence of Women*. Indeed *The Waiting List* (1994) and *Mojo Mickybo* (1998), both set in Belfast, deal with history, politics, violence, identity, and childhood. *Closing Time* (2002) deals with violence and gender; *The Absence of Women* (2010) deals with working abroad, returning home, and repressed homosexuality. In fact, the Belfast playwright often portrays characters who are stuck in a situation that they have not really chosen. At the end of *The Waiting List* the main character is afraid of the arrival of loyalist paramilitaries who might come to his house to kill him. He is contemplating the idea of fleeing Belfast at the time of the random murders of the 1980s, a period that I will examine in detail later. In *Mojo Mickybo*, the two boys fantasise about running away to Bolivia like their heroes Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, and also to Australia like Mickybo's uncle; however, their outdoor games lead them nowhere and they run in circles, always ending up back home. In *Closing Time* and in *The Absence of Women*, the characters are stuck behind the counter of a pub or a table; they dream of leaving but cannot find the energy to do so and keep rambling on while drinking beer or tea.

Emilie Pine has written that "Irish playwrights are unanimous in their attempt to dismantle the harmonious or heroic myth of return; Ireland is an idealised and therefore impossible destination" (Pine 319). In this essay, I will examine this question and focus on how the characters experience their feeling of dislocation when living and working abroad (in England), as in *The Absence of Women*; how they navigate between "here" and "elsewhere" in their dreams or in reality, as is shown in *Closing Time* and *Mojo Mickybo*; and how the only character of *The Waiting List* experiences a process of self-acceptance while waiting for a possible attack by paramilitaries in his home. In so doing, I will illustrate how Owen McCafferty creates the atmosphere of isolation and a craving for departure in his characters.

Dreams of Departure

In the 1970s Belfast was a divided city. Although McCafferty does not consider his work as part of “Troubles Theatre,” the four plays studied here are dealing with the legacy of this period. In fact, from the nineteenth century, and especially at the time of the Great Famine, many Catholics arrived in the West of Belfast to look for jobs, thus creating rivalry with the established Protestant community. As mixed marriages were extremely rare, the different quarters became exclusive territories to be defended at all cost. Throughout the nineteenth century an incursion into the others’ territory led to riots. What are known nowadays as “interfaces” comes directly from the mapping out of Belfast at that period (Hutchinson 105). In the late twentieth century, Belfast remained a patchwork of well-defined enclaves and nowadays to know someone’s address is still to know, with a fair degree of certainty, whether this person is Protestant or Catholic (Taggart 67). In the 1970s certain Protestant paramilitary organisations were held responsible for the violence which reinvigorated the IRA campaign. According to Barry White, “with their siege mentality, common to most extreme Unionists or Loyalists, they [the Protestant paramilitary groups] regarded any challenge to the status quo – even a political one – as subversive, and a cause for retaliation” (White 182). This led to openly sectarian attacks to terrorise the Catholic population, but direct action also reminded the authorities that they were opposed to radical political change. One of the most notorious groups of that time were the *Shankill Butchers*, who used to kidnap their Catholic victims at night and kill them after torturing them.¹

In the four plays selected all the characters are confronted with violence (fear of kidnapping and murder in *The Waiting List*; killing of the father in *Mojo Mikybo*; a bomb blast in *Closing Time* and mention of the sectarian and violent city of Belfast in *The Absence of Women*) and they have all been traumatised to some degree. About the four plays one can also say that almost all the characters dream of changing their lives by either leaving a place or a person. The powerful, albeit frustrated desire for departure in all the characters appears to work as a trope similar to the frustrated desire for Moscow in Chekhov’s *Three Sisters* (1900). This comparison may be surprising at first sight, but, in fact, Chekhov has had a great influence on many Irish playwrights and spectators. At first it took a while for theatre-goers in Ireland to appreciate productions of Chekhov, but at the end of the twentieth century there had emerged the Chekhovian homage play, with contributions to the genre from Brian Friel, Thomas Kilroy, Frank McGuinness, and Tom Murphy. Friel once declared that provincial Ireland resembled provincial Russia as described in Chekhov’s plays (Tracy 64-77) and remarked:

1 Their chief, Lennie Murphy, joined the UVF in 1970 and was arrested in 1976. When he was released in 1981 the random murders immediately started again. He was finally killed later that same year. It is estimated by Malcolm Sutton (*An Index of Deaths*) that 670 Catholics were assassinated by Protestant paramilitaries and 151 Protestants were murdered by Republican organisations between 1969 and 1993.

I'm not sure why I find nineteenth century Russians so sympathetic. Maybe the characters in the plays behave as if their old certainties were as sustaining as ever – even though they know in their hearts that their society is in melt-down and the future has neither a welcome nor even an accommodation for them. (Friel 179)

Some of McCafferty's work also seems to be pervaded by the Russian writer's ideas and style. Without going so far as to say that an explicit parallel can be drawn between the Belfast playwright and Chekhov, one can say that in the four plays under consideration ideas and specifics of atmosphere are nonetheless reminiscent of his work. Although McCafferty's characters usually come from the working class, as opposed to those of Chekhov, who are *bourgeois*, the behaviour, preoccupations and dreams of McCafferty's characters have many affinities with Chekhov's more educated *bourgeoisie*. Both dramatists find poetry in everyday life, portray characters in a vacuum, between two worlds or two loves, and have developed their special form of tragicomedy. However, "laughter through tears" is a tradition of Irish theatre that one can trace back to Synge and O'Casey.

In *Closing Time*, Robbie, the owner of a pub, and Vera, his partner, both dream of going away, but they blame each other for not doing so, as the following extracts indicate:

VERA: my case has been packed more than once/I've one lyin in the back a the wardrobe from years back – packed an all/nothing in it bloody fits me now/but sure what would he do/he'd be in the gutter – left on his own/couldn't leave 'im – couldn't bring 'im with ya. (*Closing Time* 3)

And later:

VERA: big plans Robbie an still stuck here/must be hard for you is it
ROBBIE: the four corners a the earth dear – only a had you on my shirt tail. (10)

Vera, whose name ends with an 'a' like that of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* (Olga, Irina, Masha), finds all kinds of excuses not to leave her partner Robbie, whom she does not really love, and the pub where she works. Like Irina, she expresses her profound dissatisfaction with her life and her work but cannot act alone, because, in fact, she expects her other lover Iggy to help her. Since Iggy rejects her as a possible long-term lover, she lacks the courage to go away. She needs a man in the same way as the men in the play need alcohol – for moral support or to add spark to their dreary lives.

Escaping Trauma

In *Mojo Mickybo*, Mickybo's father dreams of emigrating to Australia like his brother-in-law in order to escape the violence of 1970s Belfast and says to his son that that country "would be better than this fuckin kip" (*Mojo* 25). Mickybo's mother also wants to see her family safe, but the way she talks about leaving the city remains humorous and imaginative. She tells her son that spacemen have talked to her on the radio and that "they're shipping them to a planet where there's no dishes the stew makes itself

sky rains beer and the hills are made of bubbies” (31). Mickybo, who is afraid that his family, his friend Mojo and he himself may be murdered in their beds, wants to shelter them in a hut that he has built with Mojo in the park. Mickybo and Mojo, who are children and only have a vague notion of geography, also suggest different possible destinations. For example, Mickybo says to Mojo that they could move to Australia or Bolivia, just like their cinematographic heroes Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid.² That is the reason why they go on a bus journey to Newcastle, County Down, a place they believe could be Bolivia. Mojo would prefer to move to America and says it would not matter if Mickybo were in Australia because “they are connected by a bridge or something” (34). In fact, the only person who manages to go away is Mojo’s mother, who eventually leaves her unfaithful husband for a while. After his father’s death Mickybo is with his former enemies in the hut he built with Mojo. From heading the ball against the wall, as shown in the opening scene, he ends up in a place surrounded by walls: from playing alone, but still free to choose his friends, he has become a prisoner of prejudice and hate. In between, he embarked on a journey with Mojo, based on friendship, energy, and hope, which led them from Belfast to Newcastle and allowed them to dream about leaving Ireland for Bolivia, Australia, or America. In the end, Mojo and Mickybo both return to the confines of their own communities; Mickybo is not alone, but his “friends” are just vicious liars. The feeling of protection he may feel in the hut while being with them is fragile, like the timber used to build it. Mickybo’s father has been killed by Protestant paramilitaries, and Mickybo has been running in circles. However, the play does not end there. Owen McCafferty adds an imaginary scene in which Mojo and Mickybo are back in the hut together again. Instead of the ending described before, they prefer to die together like their heroes Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. They challenge and face their enemies, shouting the name of a famous footballer of the 1970s. The last stage direction reads: “As in the last scene of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid we hear a call to ‘Fire,’ followed by a volley or rifle shots. Another volley of shots. Louder. The sound of the rifle shots becomes deafening” (50). The word “rifle” is repeated twice, the word “shots” three times within only two lines. The author implies here that violence has taken over and at that point there is no going anywhere for the people of Belfast stuck in a dead-end place where communication between both communities has become impossible. The play stops at the beginning of a conflict which is going to separate the communities for about 30 years.³

In *The Waiting List* one character expresses his present anxieties by plunging into his past to try to find the trace of events that could explain why paramilitaries would want to kill him. His speech is jerky and nonlinear; in fact, McCafferty often uses lists of

2 See the film *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969), directed by George Roy Hill.

3 It is interesting to note that in *Quietly* (2012), premièred at the Abbey Theatre in November 2012, McCafferty examines how characters that could easily be those he left as enemies at the end of *Mojo Mickybo* are involved in a difficult process of reconciliation some 40 years later.

words that produce tragicomic effects, but may also have another function: they show how memory filters images or events and how trauma recreates them, that is to say bit by bit, sometimes by referring to absurd and ridiculous ideas. In this text we move seamlessly from the trivial to the brutal and vice versa. The first lines of the monologue set the tone of the story, when the character begins to question the list: “they have a list – a shopping list for taigs fenians popeheads pan-nationalists republican catholics” (*Waiting List* 53). The author compares the list of people to be killed to a shopping list in which Catholics are treated like different brands of the same perishable commodity. This phrase also indicates that despite the threats and the danger to be felt in some parts of Belfast, there exists “a business as usual mentality.”⁴ What the character in the play remembers is mainly some of his previous actions that he imagines could be the cause of his possible condemnation by loyalist paramilitaries. It awakens memories of his youth and eventually unearths a thought related to a love affair with a Protestant girl that was treated as antisocial behaviour at the time (the late 1970s); or, as the Republican hardliners, who seem to monitor everybody, put it: “We’ve been told you’re seeing an orangewoman – please refrain from this anti-social activity” (57). In this play, the only stage directions at the beginning of the text indicate “an empty stage except for the frame of a pram. The actor should be in his mid-thirties and wearing either a dressing gown or pyjamas” (53). The simplicity of the stage directions was reflected in the first staging of the monologue by David Grant in 1994, as it creates immediately a feeling of solitude and seclusion, the pram being used as a barricade behind the door and to recall some objects or situations from the past. The on-stage vacuum suggests the impossibility of escape from a confined and narrow entrance for a character experiencing his worst fears, but also immersed in memories and thoughts which are at times amusing. Through the often sarcastic and ironic ruminations of this unique character McCafferty paints a disturbing picture of paramilitaries, whether loyalist or republican, because it seems that their violence is not really fuelled by the political or social injustice that they may feel but by absurd and petty details of everyday life such as the way you dress, the colours you wear, your name, the place where you live, the persons whom you frequent, or what you buy. At the end of the play, the protagonist has assessed his life and invited the audience to share his memories of some of the places of his youth. After a trip to the United States, he is once again in Belfast. Therefore, he is the only character in these four plays who returns back home to Belfast. However, the picture he gives of its inhabitants is that of people who prefer to ignore what is going on as best they can, especially since the situation is totally beyond their control. “I’m thinking this place isn’t so bad so long as you stick to a routine”; “it’s like you can be here and not really live here – you look but you don’t see – you hear but don’t listen – and you think but don’t question – it’s great” (61, 62). Of course, it is not a matter of the indifference of the Northern Irish population *vis-à-vis* the “Troubles,” but such attitudes suggest sur-

4 David Grant, first director of *The Waiting List*, personal e-mail communication, 5 April 2010.

vival reflexes. Nonetheless, it is possible that McCafferty is denouncing some kind of cowardice, too. However, what choice did the population in this region have between 1969 and 1998? McCafferty's characters suggest that whether they stayed or came back to Belfast they felt alienated, a feeling expressed by the character of *The Waiting List* in the last sentence: "this is my community – but it's not – i don't feel at ease here – my whole life hemmed in – jesus what a waste and now there's a list" (62). The play ends with a sense of unease increased by the irrational decisions made by paramilitaries on all sides. Humour seems to be the only way out.

Homecoming or Not Homecoming?

Having long been a country of emigration Ireland in the 1990s became a country of immigration. Irish people from the diaspora and also people from several European countries, especially Poland, came to try their luck in the Celtic Tiger economy. It has to be pointed out, however, that the North, in the early years following the Belfast Agreement, sat rather at a tangent to this (temporary) economic growth in the Republic. *The Absence of Women*, set in the first decade of the twentieth century, is a play about two men who, after a working life spent in England, are considering going back to live in Belfast. However, if Gerry wants to return to Belfast it is not because it has become an economically and socially attractive place, but because he wants to die in his home town with his friend Iggy. Both being alcoholics turned teetotalers, Gerry knows that one last drink would kill them and he says "one last drink in Belfast – tha'll do the two of us – one last crack at it – finished – over – done" (49). Iggy does not want to go back on the drink and is also scared to be left alone in Belfast if Gerry dies and he does not. Unlike Gerry, he has neither nostalgia nor curiosity for the city where he felt unhappy because, as a homosexual, he was rejected. Since then Iggy has repressed his sexual orientation and never confessed to Gerry his love for him, perhaps because he is afraid of his reaction and prefers to keep him as a friend rather than risk losing him completely. He is not tempted to go back either, because he believes the mentality of Belfast people has not developed.⁵ When Gerry suggests that it would be good to see what is different about the city since it had been blown up, Iggy answers: "people don't change – it was a small place full of small people when a left it – they won't have changed" (53). After forty years of living in England working as a navvy, Gerry still has some kind of attachment to his home city, whereas Iggy has none, as the following extract underlines:

IGGY: then stop – just stop – it's not my city – there's no point in this.
GERRY: where is then – here

5 At the end of 2002 two homosexuals were assassinated in Northern Ireland because of their sexual orientation. Homophobia is such that some gays prefer to emigrate. Paramilitaries are partly responsible for this homophobic violence, but they are not the only ones. Following an enquiry, conservative attitudes within Northern Ireland have been highlighted (see Jarman & Tennant).

IGGY: no – nowhere – I belong nowhere – and so do you – you have no one and you belong nowhere – that's it – that's who we are. (56)

With his character of Iggy one cannot say that McCafferty is guilty of repeating the mythologisation of Ireland. On the contrary, he hints at the fact that Belfast – he is not talking about the whole of Ireland – has not changed and the city is still as sectarian as ever. Only here the divide is not between Catholics and Protestants but between heterosexuals and gays. However, the causes of the division seem to be the same. According to the playwright, they are arising from a narrow-minded and violent construction of identities and masculinities that inhibit Belfast people – especially men – to talk. However, masculinities vary, both historically and culturally, between societies and between different groups of men within any one society. But is there a connection between the biology of men and their behaviour? John McInnes argues that masculinity does not exist as the “property, character trait or aspect of individuals” but should instead be understood as an ideology related to what men should be like and developed by both men and women (McInnes 2). Susan Speer has shown how, in talking about sport and leisure, young men draw on a range of particular cultural models of masculinity and thus give a gendered account of themselves. Therefore, when McCafferty accuses Belfast men of not talking he does not mean that they are silent but that they may talk about sport, work, politics or leisure and not about personal problems or traumas. What really matters to them is carefully avoided in order to project the image of a strong man who can endure and live with his problems. With the violent backdrop of these stories male characters are expected to be tough but they are, in fact, trapped in a binary way of being. Actually, McCafferty often shows them bragging one minute, and the next they are lost. Thus, Iggy in the play says that Belfast is “a city built on the notion of not really saying stuff – the main part of it anyway – an then you're kicked out with not enough words in your pocket” (*Absence* 57). Therefore, the playwright seems to suggest that men – and probably women, too – would benefit from escaping gendered and stereotyped behaviour and that men should learn to talk about personal things.

After a trauma, talking is often part of the healing process, and this idea has been developed in McCafferty's recent play *Quietly*, in which a Catholic man and a Protestant man confess to each other how they experienced their side of the conflict (one killed the other's father during the “Troubles”). According to Neil Jarman from the Institute of Conflict Research, much remains to be done to transform the peace process into peace (“Building Peace”). For example, only 7% of pupils go to integrated schools in Northern Ireland, the working-class areas remain highly segregated, and there are 100 security barriers in the peace lines, which create tension. Moreover, governments seem to hope that the conflict will simply go away, and there is no clear strategy on their part to deal with the past: for example, unlike in South Africa, no Peace and Reconciliation Commission has been set up. Now, can the theatre play a role in society to prompt debate? Owen McCafferty's *Quietly* certainly is a step in the right

direction in order to reconcile the two communities. The play ends with a handshake, a gesture men can offer after a fair fight.

In the introduction I mentioned Emilie Pine's comment that Ireland was "an idealized and therefore impossible destination." This statement may be true for the Republic, but does it apply to Northern Ireland? In *The Absence of Women* McCafferty imagines a character who has never idealised Ireland and who does not feel that being Irish makes him any different, as the following dialogue implies:

GERRY: that's no excuse – we're irish – we're meant to be different

IGGY: no different

GERRY : i'm different

IGGY: different what way

GERRY: different

IGGY: you came over here to work – ended up an alcoholic that's lived most of his life on the street – how's that different – every irishman in this place tell you the same thing

GERRY: you're the same – you're no better

IGGY: i wasn't sayin i was better – it's not a competition – i'm just sayin we're no different. (45-46)

In fact, Iggy is also scared to go back home because he feels ashamed that he has not been more successful in England: "i'd rather people knew nothing about me than know the real story" (51). This is a feeling that sometimes stops many immigrants from returning home, even when they lead a miserable life in their adopted country. The two characters of the play won't make the journey back home, but we also know that they have never felt at home in England either. Their sense of homelessness and dislocation is shown in the play by the setting, composed of a table and four chairs in the middle of an unfinished road. There are shovels about the place, too: tools that can be used to build things as well as to bury things or people. These props reinforce the idea that they have never settled down, never bought any good furniture but always lived in shacks on building sites. Now they are middle-aged men almost at the end of the road reflecting on their lives. Their dialogue is made up of simple words, working men's words, and although their sufferings have been great, their feelings are deep but remain unspoken. The play ends with Gerry reciting the names of streets in London that are similar to the names of streets in Belfast symbolizing his split life: "walked the same streets in two different cities – walked them as two different men" (62).

Other examples of not coming home can be found in *Closing Time*, which takes place behind the closed doors of a grubby pub/hotel in Belfast. There are only two exits, one to the hotel, one to the street, and only two means of communicating with the outside world: through a public pay phone and a television set, the sound of which has been turned down. The first scene opens with Robbie, the owner of the pub, slumped over a table, and Joe, a customer, asleep at the counter; the other two main characters, Vera and Iggy, are coming down the stairs from the hotel. The staircase leading to the bedrooms is the only possible escape for Vera and Iggy: a space allowing a little freedom and sex. When the play starts everybody has spent the night

inside the pub/hotel. The atmosphere is suffocating from the start and we can also imagine the stench of the place. Half-way through the play we learn that Joe has left his house opposite the pub to live in the pub/hotel and has not been back there since his wife left. A few years before the pub had been blown up and only his wife survived. When Joe came back to the pub to look for her she came out in shock and looking haggard. She left him shortly afterwards unable to handle the consequences. Joe, who seems to have enough money to support himself without working, spends his life drinking in the pub vaguely waiting for her. The day he realises that she will not come back he leaves too, but does not return home. In fact, he even arranges with Alec, a secondary character who has lost his wits because he was shot in the head – maybe another victim of the random murders of the 1970s and 1980s – to burn down the place. Later we learn that Joe is leaving, but we do not know where he is going:

JOE: no/bigger than that/has t'be done/right thing t' do/can't go home/has t'be fuckin done/something has t'be done/ exiting/
 VERA: over t'watch the flames Joe
 JOE : no
 VERA: where you goin then
 JOE: don't know
 ROBBIE: that door's getting shut/am closing up
 JOE: doesn't matter/not comin back. (*Closing Time* 59)

By the end of the play Robbie forces Iggy, his partner Vera's occasional lover, who has been left by his wife and kids probably because of his drinking and escapades, to leave the pub. Iggy has lost all sense of dignity and courage and begs Robbie to let him stay, because he cannot bear the thought of going back to an empty house. Robbie is inflexible and Iggy exits. The reader doubts that he will ever return home. Finally, the barcounter which separates Robbie and Vera from the others serves as a kind of rampart against the dangers of the outside world: the seducers, the crooks, the people turned mad because of the consequences of the conflict. In fact, the people who leave the public house do end up totally mad or lost. Robbie, who loves Vera more than he would want to admit, wants to keep her by his side and protect her from herself and her disillusionments. He is like the pillar of the house, the representation of a protective, solid, forgiving and generous male.

Conclusion

In these four plays the characters do not arrive anywhere, but as we saw previously, they almost all dream of departure. What hinders their departure? It is death for Mickybo's father, although one may wonder whether alcohol would not have prevented him from leaving anyway, adding physical weakness to his lack of courage, just like Iggy in *Closing Time*. It is sectarianism for Mickybo and Mojo, who are caught in their narrow-minded communities. It is madness and loss in *The Absence of Women*. In fact, Gerry, who was dreaming of a last binge in Belfast, is left alone begging on the

streets of London and reciting the names of the streets after his friend Iggy has disappeared: we do not know whether he has simply left him or died. It is money and lack of love and courage for Robbie and Vera in *Closing Time*: they end up staying in their grubby pub because they do not have the money to do it up or leave. Joe and Iggy eventually leave the pub: the former because he has finally understood that his wife is not coming back, the latter because Robbie strongly asks him. However, we sense that Joe may commit suicide and we do not know whether Iggy will manage to return home. It is fear in *The Waiting List*: the single protagonist pretends to choose to stay in Belfast at the end of his monologue, but he is also scared to head into the unknown. Despite their desire to leave and get away from it all the characters in these plays either go back to square one, wander around endlessly or disappear. As I have already mentioned, there is something Chekhovian about McCafferty's characters inasmuch as they are definitely not heroes and are sometimes aware that they should adapt to a changing world but are unable to act. However, the feelings of inadequacy, melancholy, and frustrated desire often felt by Chekhov's characters are definitely of a different calibre in McCafferty's work. Indeed, in these plays something more brutal and stronger paralyses the characters: perhaps fate, as in Greek tragedy, or apathy which may be caused by historical and political circumstances but also by alcoholism. Also, pride may play a role in this stalemate and, as Iggy says in *Closing Time*, confusing stubbornness with courage, "shouldn't fuckin leave/people should stick with it regardless a what the fuck's goin on" (50). Despite their craving for departure, the characters in these plays are immobile, isolated from one another, dissatisfied with their lives and alienated from their dreams, on the verge of madness, suicidal or ending up being murdered.

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IMAGING AND THE ROLE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Sylvia Grace Borda

Visual Arts Panel: A Summary of Voices

To launch the inaugural Visual Arts Panel at the 8th EFACIS conference an artist, a photographer, an academic, and a cultural director were invited to discuss their own experiences about art, imaging, and imagination as it resides within a contemporary and post-conflict Northern Ireland. As a Canadian artist, leading this panel, I had my own direct experiences in Northern Ireland, having come to the country to lecture via an academic position at Queen's University Belfast. I was invited in the autumn 2006 to lead the new MA in Photography course as part of the Visual Studies Programme offered through the Film Studies Department at Queen's University Belfast. I held that post until April 2009. Through my appointment at Queen's I realised early on that the range of voices and views about Northern Ireland are often complex and can easily be misunderstood beyond the boundaries of the country. As such I proposed in late 2010 to offer a Visual Arts panel focusing on the Northern Irish arts scene as a platform from which speakers could speak directly with their audience about their own cultural experiences and in relation to their own studies and projects that they have led.

The panel included Pauline Hadaway, Director of Belfast Exposed, who spoke about the history of Northern Ireland's only contemporary photography gallery which commissions new work, maintains an image archive, and publishes its own theoretical and photo-illustrated titles.¹ The artist Rita Duffy, considered one of Northern Ireland's foremost practitioners, has been working on projects that embrace and comment on the political, domestic, figurative, and narrative traditions both within the country and elsewhere. Rita spoke openly about the development of her own practice and her experiences as an artist born and raised in Northern Ireland.² Dr Shane Alcobia Murphy, Senior Lecturer at the School of English Language and Literature, University of Aberdeen, examined how his research offers a broader definition to the role of film and duration in Northern Irish art-film-making. Lastly, I also spoke about my own direct experiences of having resided, worked, and later returned to Northern Ireland as an artist in order to conclude a large-scale photographic project touching

1 Pauline Hadaway has published numerous articles on the development of the gallery and the evolution of photography in the context of Belfast's particular historical experience, exploring often tensions between political engagement, community and autonomy; see also Long.

2 For a complete biographical and illustrated catalogue of Rita Duffy's own practice, see "Rita Duffy."

on the country's recent socio-political histories. This project was drawn from my experiences leading the Photography Programme at Queen's University Belfast; there, I gained an opportunity, not only to deliver a new arts programme, but equally to learn more about the visual vocabularies and complex relationships that have defined the country through the Troubles to the present.

Overall, the panel concluded that there was a gap in such visual arts discussions and that further debate, writing, and inclusion of voices from Northern Ireland would assist in the development of synergistic study areas.

A Canadian Artist's Response to Northern Ireland

In order to contextualise how my project began in Northern Ireland, I must first explain that in relation to my own artistic practice I started creating contemporary conceptual art whilst in Vancouver in the 1990s and that I continue to produce large opuses of work about the built environment. Whilst at Queen's University I also worked as a guest MA & PhD Convener at the Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning over a two-year period.³ Through this post, I brought to the University a cross-cultural dynamic as a Canadian citizen, with no past experience or personal relationship tied to the political conditions that have shaped Northern Ireland over the last forty years. While I am conscious of what has arisen in Northern Ireland, I was unable to build on this platform directly, as it is not an immediate part of my cultural or social fabric.

Rather than adopting a misguided stance about the significance of the Troubles (1960-1998) and the cultural arts developed during this time, I have sought advice and guidance from senior artists and institutional representatives. In most cases these are the same people who have been actively defining and promoting Northern Ireland's artists and cultural venues over the last 30 years. It should be noted that there have been numerous organisations which, through the efforts of individuals, collectives, and boards, have worked tirelessly during the Troubles to present a platform for the arts to be seen and experienced by the public and visitors to Northern Ireland. These include: Belfast Exposed Gallery for the promotion of photography; Ormeau Baths Gallery, and Millennium Arts Court Centre in Portadown for the promotion of contemporary fine art display, Golden Thread Gallery, Belfast Print Workshop and Gallery, Black Box, Catalyst Arts Gallery, Crescent Arts Centre, Engine Room, Queen Street Studios, and other venues.

3 For the Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) Sinead Morrissey, School of English, and I delivered *Picture Text*, an MA programme that addressed semiotics and visuality (see "Picturetext"). Of note, when CETL was launched, it offered the first-ever comprehensive consolidation of the University's creative programmes, which assisted in Queen's University later establishing the School of Creative Arts in 2011.

The Northern Ireland contemporary art scene was also the result of graduate students during the early 1980s working together to form the Artist Collective of Northern Ireland. Among the activities of the group was to publish and distribute the art magazine CIRCA, to create Queen Street Artist Studios, and to deliver alternative partnerships for art production across Belfast City. All of these efforts collectively assisted in creating a 'scene' for the visual arts. Indeed the work, vision, and commitment of this community nearly 30 years ago led to a dynamic art scene which is present in Northern Ireland today and recognised across Ireland and elsewhere.⁴

The context of how art is delivered and developed within a country can assist greatly in recognising how other artists respond to their own visual heritage. In particular, one artist – Victor Sloan – might be considered the 'grandfather' of contemporary arts in Northern Ireland. Victor has been generous with his time in dialogue and in offering advice as I developed my own work. He has held the roles of educator, honorary curator, and cultural promoter often concurrently since his appearance in the 1960s. In terms of his practice, Victor may be initially identified in terms of his photographic-painting and assemblages that depict and isolate figures shown at Orange Order marches and meetings: *The Walk, the Platform and the Field* (1985), *Drumming* (1986), *The Birches* (1988), and *Walls* (1989). In these works there is a heavy surface treatment so that the events form a new photo image in which the whole construction and the artist's marks across the surface become a focus for the viewer. Unlike a documentary image where the viewer is left to examine an account, in Sloan's work the artist enacts or inserts other events. For the viewer, and particularly for native residents, the images "bring to the very surface of the image the tensions underlying the apparent normality of life in Northern Ireland" ("Victor Sloan"). To some extent, one could argue that the real, abstracted and forlorn images at the base of Sloan's photographic images of Northern Ireland extend an uncertain narrative. Since Sloan's works are often a response to socio-political and religious concerns, his proposed narratives can only fulfill themes based on the experiences with which viewers come equipped.

As already noted, the 1998 Good Friday Agreement and Northern Ireland Act allowed for the establishment of a devolved legislature for Northern Ireland. By creating a power-sharing Assembly, an independent parliament for Northern Ireland to manage itself with representation from all parties, the activities associated with the height of the Troubles came to an end. In observing how the peace process has been remembered, I have noted that most Northern Irish residents past their 30s speak about it in an animated way, whereas for younger residents in their mid-20s the significance of this process experienced during their younger years has pushed these experiences

4 Over the last decade, Peter Richards, curator of Golden Thread, has invited guest curators to stage exhibitions which reflect on the recent production of art from the Troubles to the present. The exhibition and essay series, entitled *Collective Histories of Northern Irish Art*, is an invaluable source and should be referenced to provide further context in regard to the development of contemporary art within the country.

into a more distant past. In a post-conflict recovery period, these younger artists have let the voice and the tension of the Troubles become an arena of expression best left to their parents' generation. In a similar manner I have followed this path of other younger Northern Irish artists, since my own experiences are not directly tied to the Troubles. This said, I am interested in turning the lens onto cultural events that have both defined and restricted dialogue about Northern Ireland – these do not represent conflict openly but allude to them through other visual systems.

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In my work I use visual research as a driver to define how I will systematically treat or respond to a subject.⁵ When I moved to Northern Ireland, I was struck by how early Modernist buildings, particularly those prior to the Troubles, aspired to embrace new architectural ideas. The Modernist structures I saw both in Belfast and throughout the country were monumental, lofty, and transparent – reaching for the Heavens while also becoming features forming significant sight lines on the horizon.

I also noted that while *The Festival of Britain* is understood in terms of its legacy in the creation of the Arts Hub at London's Southbank, virtually nothing is known about its counterpart staging in Belfast. *The Festival of Britain in Northern Ireland* (1951) was designed, according to Craft Northern Ireland historian and Lecturer in Design History, Joseph McBrinn, "with the hopes that the exhibition would demonstrate the North's contribution to Britain's economy and thus help reaffirm the province's place within collective national identity. The exhibition further suggested that the North's vernacular material culture was the root of its modern industrial achievement" (McBrinn). Modernist architectural structures were built and encouraged in Belfast in order to illustrate the country's ability to adopt highly industrial processes while also producing architectural legacies. The impact of Northern Ireland's own vernacular Modernist architecture and its utopian ideals of creating architecture without division or class was overshadowed though by the commencement of the Troubles.

In particular it is this Modernist incubator time within Northern Ireland from the early 1950s to the mid-1960s that holds my fascination. The global and pan-modernist concept of building together for the future, liberating the past, and serving the present needs of the citizen came to fruition in Northern Ireland. As the country grew, the need for extended social amenities increased. Architects embraced the idea that across faiths there should be egalitarian treatment in the use of materials and construction. In this way church building faithfully subscribed to Modernist ideals. Newly commissioned faith buildings took on board the Modernist ethos of new methods of production (such as steel, glass, and concrete assembly) in order to serve humanity with the liberation of the latest technological progression. Overall what remains most

5 For visual documentation, please see Hunter and Magarrey as well as "Sylvia Grace Borda: Artist Website."

unusual in regard to Northern Irish Modernist design is that with faith buildings, overt signifiers were specifically reduced so that the building did not impose associated faith values across the landscape. This masking of buildings through a Modernist idea of creating openness or free social movement creates a paradigm in which it is only by knowing in advance what area of a city or town you are entering that you can guess the faith orientation associated with the neighbourhood. In this way, the Modernist Northern Irish faith buildings ultimately defy their own religious roots or purpose.

For my work *CHURCHES IN-NI* (Churches in Northern Ireland) I have selected to document Northern Ireland's Modernist churches. The project functions in an ironic manner. It subtly plays with the realisation that for most outside of the UK the easiest way to define the country is through the Troubles and its religious divide. In this manner the project offers the viewer the visual symbol of this divide – “the church”; however, since the buildings are Modernist and were originally designed to be undecipherable in terms of faith association, the viewer is left confounded.

The churches form a contemporary portrait of Northern Ireland and its unchronicled Modernist past. Most residents will be able to identify their own local churches within a 15-mile radius, but beyond this range they are left to second-guess the faith associated with the documents. For non-Northern Irish audiences the series fuels an obvious association and desire to see represented the divide, yet the words and histories used to describe the country through on-going media reports about sectarian divisions are defied in the series.

As a conceptual artwork, the series borrows and extends ideas associated with the creation of a typology. In the creation of a photographic typology, documents are created of buildings with similar physical characteristics. Through the placement of the images together the individual characteristics of the building start to illustrate similar forms or patterns. The Düsseldorf Academy, through the husband-and-wife team of Hilla and Bernd Becher, promoted the systematic photography of functionalist architecture organized in picture grids. My work *CHURCHES IN-NI* is an ode to this style of conceptual photography. Furthermore, my consolidation of images of faith buildings throughout the entire country creates both a conceptual and historical archive of pre-Troubles Northern Ireland and traces a development of Modernist buildings erected right up until the Good Friday Agreement.

Ultimately, in this work I am working with cultural identity as the subject. My subjects are situated and only available within the country. For an external audience, unfamiliar with Northern Ireland's landscape or architectural heritage, the photographs have been composed, printed, arranged, and left unnamed in order to become iconic through this editing process. More importantly, the images playfully invite viewers to consider what is 'iconic' or 'stereotypical' in the definition and visualisation of national identity and image-making. While I am interested in assigning new recognition to faith spaces that define for many the everyday living circumstances within Northern Ire-

land, my work sets up a paradigm for the viewer to recognize the subject of the church, while equally seeing it as an independent and sometimes indefinable cultural motif. This process of editing and arrangement is not an easy task, given that most of the imagery that so far has defined Northern Ireland is associated directly with reportage and/or the representation of the Troubles.

The creative capacity to imagine Northern Ireland through a quasi-scientific and systematic approach of photographing 'every Modernist Church' challenges viewers' own perceptions of how to understand the concept of home.⁶ Hence, rather than exhibiting large scale photographs of the Modernist Churches, which might privilege one faith over another, I elected to reproduce the Church series as a set of ceramic plates. Critically, the ability to frame the work in a domestic environment, I hoped, would enable viewers to be more open to relate to the work and consider the series' narrative.⁷ Subsequently, the commemorative plates of the Churches are immediately banal, tactile, and fragile. Of note, ceramic plates themselves have a unique position within Northern Irish histories. The traditional souvenir plate was popular as a token of remembrance and was often associated with travel and the depiction of picturesque locales. A number of ceramic dishes can be found associated with souvenir tokens of visits to Northern Ireland's numerous seaside towns. Up until the Troubles, Northern Ireland supported a domestic ceramic industry, producing many of its own home-wares. In this way, I created my own 21st-century grand tour souvenirs of Modernist faith destinations.

In naming the plate series "Coming to the Table," I further explored the notions of a dinner table as a place of gathering and exchange of conversation. By illustrating the range of Modernist Churches found in Northern Ireland through the plates, I also alluded to the country's shared tabling of power in order to overcome the Troubles and to establish its own devolved legislative institution. The photographic dinnerware thus becomes symbolically a powerful reference representing Northern Ireland's faith buildings, whilst also alluding to wider histories beyond those of the sectarian divide. While the commemorative plate as souvenir offers a sense of orderliness and decorum as laid out on the table, it can also underline a sense of fragility that extends to Northern Ireland politics and cultural identity. Ultimately, "Coming to the Table" acts as a conceptual and reflective work alluding to the broader conditions that are defining Northern Ireland's contemporary landscape, and at a literal level it mimics the viewer's own entrance and approach to the table that completes the title's self-proclaimed invitation.

6 The notions of how to respond to this work through the urban built environment are discussed by Paige Magarrey ("Church Lady").

7 According to Belfast Exposed Gallery, "CHURCHES", exhibited from 20 January to 2 March 2012, proved to be one of the most popular displays ever launched by the organisation, gaining a wide audience following from younger artists to seniors and non-arts audiences.

Lastly, "CHURCHES IN-NI" is complemented by a film loop depicting 100 individual Modernist Churches for viewers to observe. This cumulative time-based work lasting just under four minutes in duration indirectly provokes viewers to locate the Churches within the country borders. There is a subtle question at stake about the viewer's ability to identify these fairly anonymous churches or even the whereabouts of these faith-buildings within their own country, and the ensuing notions of identity and difference that may result. Arising as an outcome of this series, it is my hope that a debate about contemporary photography and imaging art production can begin to emerge.⁸ This exhibition piece is not just about a geographical place or time period in Northern Ireland; it is first of all about creating a work that resonates and reflects multiple points of origin and study. Furthermore, the work has been designed with an opportunity for the public to bring on board their own sense of place, a place they may or not have experienced first-hand, whilst also having an opportunity to reflect on it and question it.

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FINDING THE 'ELSEWHERE' NEXT DOOR: BORDER CROSSINGS IN ANNE ENRIGHT'S WRITING¹

Hedda Friberg-Harnesk

At Gatwick airport – that “postmodern and global space” (Fogarty 146) – Veronica Hegarty in Anne Enright’s *The Gathering* (2007) is hailed by departures boards. Place names – Palma, Barcelona, Mombasa, Split – “beckon” to her “like streetwalkers” (258), promising escape to spaces of an exotic elsewhere. Torn between the pull of the elsewhere and the realization that she will never abandon her much-loved daughters, she recognizes that she is “going nowhere, but home” (259). Although Enright has spoken of “the road to the airport as ‘the most important road in the country’” (qtd. in Ewins 134), the road back from the airport evidently counts, too. That said, it is nevertheless the case that Enright’s fiction does not primarily turn on the issue of national identity, an issue regarding which, as Heidi Hansson has suggested, Irish writers and critics of Irish writing sometimes find themselves on divergent tracks: “Although Irish writers may be looking beyond Irish subjects in their works, it seems that canonization processes” privilege “literature that can be connected to questions of cultural identity. As far as a national literature is a part of nation-building, identity matters are indeed crucial, but in an age of globalization, other questions should also receive attention” (Hansson, “Beyond Local Ireland” 53). To my mind, such other questions include global connectedness, translation, and the crossing of borders – issues at the centre of the following discussion.

Contemporary Irish writers then – driven perhaps by a “globalist” impulse” (Villar-Argáiz 180) or, as Liam Harte puts it, by a need “to break free from the wearying binaries and mystifications of nationalism” (Harte 209) – increasingly focus on the interweaving of peoples and cultures, on what Michael Cronin has described as “our essential connectedness” in the current “era of mass transportation, global tourism, significant migration and the relentless time-space compression of economies driven by information technology” (Cronin, *Translation* 9). Among major Irish writers, Anne Enright seems exceptionally committed to the motion implicit in the new global connectedness. Interested as she has said she is in “work that keeps moving [...] in things that are not static” (Bracken & Cahill 32), it is not surprising to find her fiction moving between the local and the global, the Irish and the Continentally European, and – as is a partial focus here – the Irish and the American.² In the process of such

1 An earlier version of this essay was first presented at the 2010 IASIL conference held at NUI Maynooth.

2 Her novels, notably, move between the Dublin of *The Wig My Father Wore* (1995), the Dublin-New York-London triangle of *What Are You Like?* (2000), far-away Paraguay of

fictional motion, the characters figuring in the work by Enright explored here – the novel *What Are You Like?* (2000) and the short stories “The Bad Sex Weekend” and “Switzerland,” collected in *Yesterday’s Weather* (2008)³ – cross metaphorical, geographical, and national borderlines and meet people of various nationalities. In the rich material that my slim sample provides, I have, primarily but not exclusively, zeroed in on meetings across Irish/American borderlines – a choice inspired by Salman Rushdie, as we shall see. This essay, then, glances at Enright glancing at Ireland and America and at the intersections at which they rub off on each other.

Theoretically, my study stands on three legs, formed by Salman Rushdie’s ideas on border crossings, Susan Bassnett’s on translation, and Michael Cronin’s on cultural complexity and diversity. Cronin’s concept of “micro-cosmopolitanism” – described in *Translation and Identity* (14-17) – is relevant to what follows, and his suggestion that our investigation of the world is likely to reveal that the “elsewhere is next door, in one’s immediate environment” (17) has been a point of departure. Applying such ideas to the texts selected, I claim that in Enright’s work – laced as it is with arrivals and departures, border crossings, and exchanges between the local and the global, and exploring as it does states of dislocation as well as complex connectedness – the need for thoughtful negotiation of crossings undertaken comes to the fore. Moreover, the need for recognizing complexities in spaces of elsewhere and for responsible translation of the encountered Other – including the American Other – is highlighted. This essay will argue that, if the subject acts as an ethical translator, smooth crossings are facilitated and the elsewhere is allowed a space next door.

A Tripartite Theoretical Paradigm

Journeys, across whatever borders and for whatever purpose made, involve translation, and, as Susan Bassnett has stated, “linguistic activity” alone does not suffice for translation, but other processes as well as “extra-linguistic criteria” are needed (Bassnett 21). Granting that “part of the business of the translator is to understand what people actually say in a particular location and to bring this knowledge to another location” (Cronin, “Languages of Globalisation” 5), the translator is crucial to the enhancement of understanding in an ever more fragmented world. The translator is also, as Michael Cronin points out in *Across the Lines*, “a traveller” (Bassnett 1). The contemporary traveller, perceiving the world through proliferating global imagery,

The Pleasure of Eliza Lynch (2002), and the Dublin-London pendulum of *The Gathering* (2007).

3 In a useful comment on Anne Enright’s short fiction, Elke D’hoker finds that the thematic development in Enright’s stories “can be viewed in the light of Enright’s personal experiences” as well as “in the context of the changing face of international feminism, with the attack on patriarchy giving way to an attention to otherness and difference” (48). In my essay, it is the “attention to otherness and difference” that is of particular interest.

risks becoming distanced from lived experience “by abstracting and subtracting us from our local attachments and responsibilities” (Cronin, “Inside Out” 23). Although it goes without saying that it “is the capacity to look beyond the immediate interests of the clan or village or ethnic grouping” that clears the path for “broader definitions of belonging” (24), the extent to which local lives may be radically – perhaps disastrously – transformed by events taking place in a distant elsewhere should be recognised in a globalised world. Thus, according to Cronin, it is essential not to “substitute distance as a physical fact for distance as an economic reality” or to see the world as a smaller place because planes fly faster or computer messages are delivered at greater speed” (Cronin, “Languages of Globalisation” 7). If the traveller fails to translate – his or her gaze may fall unseeingly on the Other encountered at the border crossing – then no cultural knowledge is gained. Tempted to believe in the promise of “instant, limitless connectedness” offered by globalization or to give in to “the easy sweep of the comparative cartographic gaze” (6), the traveller fails to acquire a knowledge of complex local realities that is as essential to fluid border crossings as is an openness to the elsewhere. In order to fully see and translate the Other, it is necessary to recognise cultural complexity. According to Cronin, this can be achieved “by situating diversity, difference, exchange at the micro-levels of society” (Cronin, *Translation* 16) and by seeing that “no matter how infinitely small or infinitely large the scale of investigation” (17), cultural complexity “remains constant from the micro to the macro scale” (15). As Cronin points out, this is a modification of a line of thinking introduced in *Across the Lines* (see 16-21), which links micro-cosmopolitanism to what he has termed “fractal differentialism” – the idea that “the same degree of diversity is to be found at the level of entities judged to be small or insignificant as at the level of large entities” (*Translation* 15). An example is the “traces of foreignness, of other languages and cultures” existing in the “reduced spaces” of the Aran landscape, presumably most authentically Irish.⁴ Thus, the local can be honoured when “informed by diversity and difference” (16) and the “elsewhere” can be found “next door, in one’s immediate environment” (17).

In an exploration of the interconnectedness of peoples and cultures, rather than their separateness or the national demarcation lines between them, Salman Rushdie can sometimes be an insightful guide. His statements, in *Step Across this Line* (2002), that “we are frontier-crossing beings” (408) and that we “know this by the stories we tell ourselves; for we are story-telling animals, too” (408) have been a lodestar for what follows. A champion of frontierlessness, especially with regard to a nationalism that “seeks to close what cannot any longer be closed” and to “fence in what should be frontierless” (67), Rushdie nevertheless defines us by our border crossings: we become “the frontiers we cross” (410).

Moreover, pointing to the etymological origin of the word ‘translation,’ which is to be found in the Latin word for ‘bearing across,’ Salman Rushdie, in *Imaginary Home-*

4 Cronin is referring to Tim Robinson’s *Stones of Aran*.

lands (1981), describes himself and others who have “been borne across the world” – presumably including transnationals who move “between cultures and differing allegiances” (Fogarty 147) – as “translated men” (*Imaginary Homelands* 17). According to Rushdie, such a state of translation need not be entirely negative: “It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; I cling, obstinately, to the notion that something can also be gained” (17). As another touchstone, I insert here an observation, made by Rushdie in the wake of the attack on the Manhattan Twin Towers in 2001, concerning Euro-American crossings. Although not generally hesitant to criticise the United States,⁵ Rushdie seems taken aback by the vehement outburst of anti-Americanism he notes among Europeans after the 9/11 disaster. Writing in February 2002, Rushdie suggests that at that time non-American westerners seemed to assign extreme otherness to US citizens:

Anybody who has visited Britain and Europe, or followed the public conversation there during the past five months, will have been struck, even shocked, by the depth of anti-American feeling among large segments of the population, as well as the news media. Western anti-Americanism is an altogether more petulant phenomenon than its Islamic counterpart, and, oddly, far more personalized. Muslim countries don't like America's power, its 'arrogance,' its success; in the non-American West, the main objection seems to be to American *people*. Night after night, I have found myself listening to Londoners' diatribes against the sheer weirdness of the American citizenry. The attacks on America are routinely discounted ('Americans only care about their own dead'). American patriotism, obesity, emotionality, self-centeredness: these are the crucial issues. (Rushdie, *Step Across the Line* 400)

The quotation illustrates the need to recognise the complexities of the Other and responsibly translate them, even if the latter represents or is claimed by a politically dominant state. This is despite the fact that, as Rushdie puts it, “great power and great wealth are perhaps never popular” (400). In the next section, I will turn to considerations of border crossings, responsible translation, and encounters with spaces of the elsewhere – including an American elsewhere – in Anne Enright's “The Bad Sex Weekend.”

“The Bad Sex Weekend”: We All Live in Dewey, Wisconsin

Accepting with Salman Rushdie that we are frontier-crossing beings, we might agree that early crossings made by most – in addition to the one made by being born, to which we will return with *What Are You Like?* – are across the threshold of a childhood home and across the town line of a home town. Another one is “crossing the frontier of [one's] land” (Rushdie, *Step Across* 408), granting, that is, the continued presence of nations trying to close the unclosable. Thus, before the young man of

5 One example is his lashing out at the US, in the essay “In God We Trust,” for presenting a false picture of itself and for covering up the truth about its divergence “from its self-image as the guardian of freedom and decency” by turning to “cosy simplicities (God, patriotism), in order not to see itself too plainly” (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, 392).

Anne Enright's "The Bad Sex Weekend" ever steps away from the good town of Sligo – his home town – he tugs at the elsewhere. He is shaped, perhaps, by his childhood home – "one of those houses that nobody likes; a big bungalow hacienda stuck out in the middle of a field" on "the bog out along the road to Strandhill" (*Yesterday's Weather* 117) – a house which in itself seems an undesirable effect of globalisation. The games he plays near this home take on a global dimension as he performs "Aztecs with pyramid stacks of turf, or staging the entire siege of Stalingrad all by himself, running through the trenches. Rat-a-tat-tat. Much slaughter" (117). As reflections of Mexican culture and warfare on the banks of the Volga inject fragments of the elsewhere into a local Sligo boyhood, the boy's games thus substantiate Cronin's observation that a place can "be shaped by influence from elsewhere, even if people do not move" (Cronin, "Languages of Globalisation" 6).

Crossing the frontiers of his land, the Sligo youth encounters, or pretends to encounter, spaces of the elsewhere: Bangkok, "where he had never been" (113), Tijuana (114), and New York. In Dublin, in the present time of the short story, he has a weekend affair with the young woman narrator, who also functions as narratee for his trail of travel tales. As Rushdie puts it, in *Step Across this Line* "stories are the tracks we leave" (419), and this young man is indeed a story-telling being. The girl, clear-eyed enough, sees a bleak prospect in him: "Chaos. That was what was on offer" (114). Nevertheless, she listens for a while, and in what follows, it is she who conveys his tale of America.

Having visited New York, which he translates as a rat-infested place, "sinking in a sea of cockroaches" (113), where the unwary risk having their organs stolen in their sleep, the young Sligo man goes west. He recounts how he drove "halfway across America [...] ran out of gas, ended up empty in a place called Dewey, Wisconsin," where, turning a blind eye on the complexities of this space of elsewhere, he "got out of the car and looked at the people on the sidewalk and he wondered what the hell they were doing here" (115). Finding work, however, in the local mine with "two old guys and a big Italian called Alfie" (115), he stays in what for him is the "middle of nowhere," and he begins to acquire local knowledge. Invited to a "potluck barbecue" one weekend, he knows enough to bring along "a mix of Jell-O and whipped cream" (116) and joins the people of Dewey on a front lawn, where family life goes on: "a bunch of guys" are "cracking open too many beers. The wives are there, the kids squealing and running, and there is a smell of ironed cotton off these people, even in the open air" (116). Recognizing difference here, he translates Dewey on the basis of concrete, extra-linguistic criteria – the fragrance of ironed cotton fabric. Straying from the lawn, however, he finds Alfie's wife in a car in the garage, lying seductively by herself and considers having sex with her: "He knows he could just drive her out of there [...] across the summer lawn, down the kerb and away" (116). The kids would scatter and family life would be smashed. Having recognised diversity in Dewey, becoming favourably impressed perhaps "by the fact that All This could happen in Dewey, Wisconsin" (115), he decides not to make love to the wife of his Italian

Wisconsin friend, not to run away, and not to leave this next door for another elsewhere – at least not for the moment.

The decision to stay in Dewey seems prompted by an insight on the part of this Sligo man: this “garden, this potluck bloody barbecue” was “all there was” and, ultimately, “we all lived in Dewey” (117). One implication of this is that the degree of cultural complexity found in cities such as Bangkok and New York might be the same as that of small and allegedly insignificant entities such as Sligo and Dewey. Moreover, considering that, as Michael Cronin has stated, “concentration on one particular place” may become “an opening out rather than a closing down, a foregrounding of a complexity of connectedness rather than a paean of singular insularity” (Cronin, “Languages of Globalisation” 12), the young man of Enright’s story may be seen as opening up the town of Dewey for himself and connecting it back to Sligo again. In doing so, a fluid Irish-American border crossing has been established and the elsewhere can be brought next door.

“Switzerland”: “The whole world is about America, these days”

In Enright’s “Switzerland,” issues surface of what Michael Cronin calls “our essential connectedness as global producers and consumers” in an “era of mass transportation, global tourism, significant migration and the relentless time-space compression” of IT economies (Cronin, *Translation* 9). The central characters, a young Irish woman called Elaine and her friend Tim, “the American” (*Yesterday’s Weather* 91), step across national borderlines and embrace global tourism as they travel from Ireland to Italy and Central America. In Mexico, their intercultural explorations include meetings with Mexicans and visiting Europeans alike.⁶ In their struggles to translate meetings with the Other – in spaces of the elsewhere as well as next door – Elaine and Tim are in themselves an Irish-American border crossing.

Living on the North Circular Road in Dublin, the Irish-American couple explore – physically and imaginatively – the spaces between their own cultural and individual identities. For them, the exploration began the moment Tim arrived in Dublin and seemed, to Elaine, to come not so much out of an American elsewhere as freshly made, as if born crossing the border: “He was so healthy and new, with his recent blond hair and his fresh white teeth. He might have been made in the airport. He might have materialized in the hum of a security door frame” (91). Possessing insufficient knowledge of Tim, Elaine struggles to translate him. She finds him “so full of himself. That was the way he arrived in her life, a cup that was brimful” (91). The ‘brimfulness’ that Elaine ascribes to Tim seems akin to the self-centeredness that

6 In Mexico, Elaine meets a Swiss group, working for FIFA, the international football organisation, who callously comment on the sight of Mexican workers “laboring uphill with sacks of coffee beans on their backs” (Enright, “Switzerland” 97-98). Although apparently competent in intra-linguistic translation, the Swiss, displaying cultural blindness, fail to translate responsibly the meeting with the Mexicans.

Salman Rushdie includes in his list of objectionable qualities that non-American Westerners associated with American citizens in the wake of the 9/11 disaster. Ascribing such a quality, without fully recognizing the specificity of the Other, Elaine is translating irresponsibly.

Apart from Tim's 'brimfulness,' Elaine also observes in him a pull to "Be An American – a man who looked at the movies and saw his own home up there on the screen" (97). Prone to performing the stereotypes of his nation, perhaps, Tim nevertheless wants Elaine to truly see it, or at least see the segment of America that is his. Apparently attempting responsible translation of his experience, he says: "You have no idea what my high school was like. Everyone had a car. Everyone crashed their car. It wasn't enough to score a girl, you had to score the girl's coked-up mother" (97). He also picks up on the stereotypical image of American football players as lacking in intellectual powers: "I went to school with guys so stupid, you look at them on the football field and you think, Why don't we just eat them? The whole herd of them. That might be more useful" (97). Unable to identify "the Otherness that resides at the heart of the known and intimate," to use Anne Fogarty's phrase (Fogarty 146), Tim, an American himself, seems blind to the individuals among these American football players of past high school days. Less than responsibly, then, he translates them as a "beefy" – perhaps borderline obese, to echo Rushdie's choice of words – unintelligent, humanoid collective.

If Tim is reluctant to idealise his American home town, he is more prone to do so with Ireland. He particularly idealises Irish women. Thus, he tells Elaine that what he likes about them is "the way they still call themselves 'girls'" and he continues, "and I like the weather in their hair. Which is romantic of me, but I am Irish too, you know" (93-94).⁷ Moreover, he idealises Irish families: "So I like your big family; all those brothers and sisters bubbling up, like the froth on milk. And, I hate to say this, but I love your accent" (94). Exoticising Elaine's Irish accent, he simultaneously projects authenticity onto her. In the end, Elaine has had enough of all of this and, attempting to deflect his gaze to force him to recognise her specificity, she says: "The whole world is about America, these days. It's not a country, it's a fucking religion. And I don't mind. I am perfectly happy with you as you are. I am perfectly happy with you as an ethnic *product*. But can we, from now, for ever, forget the froth on the milk and the weather in my fucking hair?" (97). She acknowledges the global reach of his America and jokingly accepts him as a commodity, but she rejects the exoticizing gaze through which he constructs her.

Back in Ireland, the impact of the narrowly local, of what Elaine sees as everyday Irishness, descends on her. She feels oppressed and wants to help strip Tim of his idealised view of Ireland: "This fucking country, she said. You have no idea" (100). So

7 Tim claims Connemara ancestry. As in "The Bad Sex Weekend" it is, as Kristin Ewins has noted with regard to "Switzerland," not always clear "what parts" of tales told are "made up" (137).

she wants him to come down to Cork with her, to meet her family: “That will change your mind” (100). Her plan fails, however, because once Tim meets her family,

he loved them all, and they loved him. Her brothers bringing him down to the local for a pint and her father talking about tornadoes in America, and was he ever in one, at all? And it was all the Big Yank in the front parlour, and no one asked them about Italy, or Mexico, or the North Circular Road for that matter. No one asked anything, except would he like a cup of tea. (100)

Questions, it turns out, are impolite in Elaine’s home, and the layering of its specific history out-of-bounds. Without questions though, the family recognises Tim’s difference and accepts him as a manifestation of the elsewhere into their local lives. Moreover, Tim turns out to be “better at this game [of unasked questions] than any of them – not looking at the tablecloth or at the cup in his hand, or at any of their sad, accumulated objects” (100). Incorporating their micro-level experience in a macro-level one, he engages the family “in a vast discussion about all kinds of weather, from the ice on Lake Michigan to the storm in Bucharest that made your hair stand up with the static” (100). In the reduced space of the Cork home, the local is honoured – to paraphrase Michael Cronin here (Cronin, *Translation* 16) – but it is a version of the local that meets and incorporates difference. Also, Tim’s gaze may be sweeping, but it does not blind him to the specific reality of the family he encounters at this crossing. Acting as a responsible translator, Tim helps clear the path for fluid Irish-American crossings that allow for the elsewhere to be next door.

What Are You Like?: Is the Shoreline of Manhattan Next Door to the Coast of Ireland?

In Enright’s *What Are You Like?*, modes of travelling, borders crossed, and spaces of elsewhere negotiated and translated, are different in kind from those of the two short stories. This section will analyse struggles with border crossings involving pregnancy, death, separation, being born and giving birth, and patterns of mental travelling that are triggered off by such crossings in Berts Delahunty and his daughter Maria.

In being born, an infant crosses a first momentous frontier – that between self and mother, the first Other. Pregnancy, too, is a border crossing that unsettles the mother-to-be. As Susan Cahill suggests in an analysis of Enright’s *The Pleasure of Eliza Lynch*, “pregnancy inherently destabilises any notion of a unified self as well as disturbing conventional distinctions between self and other, inner and outer” (Cahill, “Gender and History” 209).⁸ Anne Enright, too, comments, in *Making Babies*, on the realignment inherent in giving birth: having “thought childbirth was a sort of journey that you could send dispatches home from,” she discovers, once a mother, that it isn’t – “it is home” and “everywhere else now, is ‘abroad’” (47).⁹ Thus, in giving birth,

8 Cahill is referring to Iris Marion Young’s thinking on pregnant embodiment here.

9 As Ewins has pointed out, the birth of Enright’s first child coincides with the publication of *What Are You Like?* (128).

Enright sees the uncharted elsewhere that was her unborn baby move across a borderline to settle next door to the maternal self.

In *What Are You Like?* – set in Dublin, New York, and London in the years 1965-1987 – Anna Delahunty's pregnancy is doubly destabilizing in that she is carrying twins while dying of cancer. Borderlines between maternal self and the selves of the unborn twins blur – the “outside shape[s]” of unborn babies are after all the “inside shape” of the mother (Cahill, “Gender and History” 209) – as a tumour of the brain transforms Anna's personality, making her unrecognisable to herself and to her husband. Moreover, borderlines between life and death dissolve through the nearly simultaneous crossings Anna makes from life to death and the twins from a prenatal state to a neonatal one. As neither Anna nor the twins are capable of translation, no fluidity can be achieved in these complex crossings – they are tragically untranslatable.

Berts Delahunty is devastated by his wife's death and frightened by the prospect of crossing into fatherhood. Unsettled by the encounter with the Other in his newborn children, he is blind to their specificity, fails to translate and rejects full responsibility: “Well, I can't take them both” (87). As identical twins, his children are a self-similar repetition of a pattern – so similar they appear as one to their father. Yet, he selects one infant and names her Maria, but turns from the other, leaving her to be sent across the Irish Sea to be raised by adoptive parents in England (93). Imperfectly recognised at birth, the adult twins – part of the Irish diaspora as they are (Ewins 128) – will cross frontiers to reconnect and reinvent themselves, but as infants they are thus brutally separated.¹⁰

In bereavement, Berts Delahunty struggles with the crossing of lines necessitated by the painful loss of his wife. Although physical escape from misery by plane or by train is not a viable alternative for Berts, as it might have been for Veronica Hegarty of *The Gathering*, escape somehow he must. So he travels by mind, every night, around the coast of Ireland: “I need to go away,” he thinks, “imagining a journey where he travelled the coast all the way round and back to the house again” (10). His voyage of the imagination is made, as Susan Cahill states, in order to “make the absence of his wife fully absent” and he worries about the “potential accuracy of the cartographic process” (Cahill, “Dreaming” 95) that will help him achieve this. His travels and his cartographic concerns seem intended to resist death – and perhaps insanity – by re-affirming the concrete outlines of *terra firma*. Issues of what Cronin has termed fractal differentialism seem to suggest themselves to Berts here. Transposing French mathematician Benoît Mandelbrot's famous question, “How long is the coast of

10 Heidi Hansson has analyzed the twins within a postnationalist paradigm (“Anne Enright and Postnationalism” 223-229).

Britain?” (Cronin, *Translation* 16),¹¹ to an Irish context, as it were, Delahunty seems to recognise the possibilities of infinite length in the finite space of his mental travels. He ponders the choice of paths:

It would be important, he thought, to keep to the very rim of the land, his journey shorter when the tide came in, the sea hungering for him, then slipping away, over and over, from Wicklow Head to Valencia to Malin Head. The trip was so fresh and real in his mind it exhausted him. Night after night he scrambled over rocks and took paths along cliffs and down to the sand, seaweed cracking and slipping under the sole of his shoe. [...] He worried about piers. Should he travel the length of them, going up the near side and coming back by the far? [...] He would travel from Bray to Wexford then, a straight flat coast. A right turn for Cork; he would twist his way around the headlands of Kerry, then loop his way around Loop head, after he had jumped the River Shannon. (10)

Thus, the potential length of the distance travelled, around the finite coast of Delahunty’s imagined Irish coast, is infinite. Regardless of the length of the journey, however, Berts ends up in his house, “the exact place he started out from – this bed, and this side of the bed” (11). His ultimate worry, however, is how to avoid one particular border crossing, that across “the space left by his wife” (11):

Night after night, he set out in his mind, from one side of the bed to the other, edging around the inside walls of the house, with the room to his right or the room to his left. But he got mixed up going from the bedroom to the bathroom, or he crossed the line coming down the stairs. (12)

Following the death of his wife, Delahunty makes an extreme effort of the imagination to incorporate, into the confined specific space of his grief and his house, the diversity of the coastline of the island of Ireland. His mental travels resemble, according to Anne Fogarty, the “obsessive” trips that Veronica Hegarty makes “in her car at night” in *The Gathering* – trips that “allow her to move between and uncover the meaning of” painful sites of trauma connected to childhood abuse and the death of her brother Liam (Fogarty 145). Likewise, Berts’ travels seem designed to uncover the meaning of his wife’s death and the painful and disorienting separation it entails for him. In the light of the loss of foothold that this separation brings for Berts, a purpose of his travels is also to chart a territory, to trace but not cross the borders of a territory within which life may go on. As such, his travels aim to resist the threat of insanity, which appears concomitant with his loss.

Maria Delahunty, the twin raised by her father in a Dublin locality, leaves the Irish capital as a young adult. The year is 1985, and, crossing the Atlantic, Maria steps across Irish-American borderlines and heads for New York City. Making this journey, Maria exemplifies the pull of the elsewhere, that “desire to know” that “draws us to investigate the world around us and the people who inhabit it” (Cronin, *Translation*

11 According to Cronin, the shapes, or fractals, in Mandelbrot’s new geometry allowed “infinite length to be contained in finite space” (Cronin, *Translation and Identity* 16). Incidentally, Mandelbrot died in October 2010 (Bojs 25).

135).¹² Once in Manhattan, though, she soon grapples with an elsewhere that is difficult to translate. As a result of a love relationship, which has led to separation and grief,¹³ she is driven by a cartographic compulsion, similar to that of her father at the time of his loss, to trace geographical borderlines. Thus, she repeats in her New York location certain patterns of her father's earlier mental travelling around Ireland. Sleepless like he was, she travels by mind and by night, tracing the shoreline of Manhattan, but also attempting to cross and re-cross its frontiers:

Nights, as she tried to sleep, Maria wove her way over and back across the bridges of New York, from Brooklyn Bridge to the Triborough Toll. The idea was to end up back on Manhattan itself, but she always lost her way up by Harlem [...]. She shuttled across the nameless bridges of the north all the way round to the wide Hudson and the George Washington Toll. (*What Are You Like?* 111)

Having travelled the bridges, she goes on to make crossings, underground and on river surfaces: "Then she started over again, including the tunnels. Then she started over again and took the ferry rides" (111). Travelling by mind, then, Maria imaginatively incorporates the infinite variety of the Hudson and East River crossings into the reduced space of her Manhattan flat, to chart a territory the borderlines of which she needs to cross and crossings she needs to translate in order to make sense of separation and loss. Underlying Maria's recent loss of a lover are, we understand, the long-ago loss of a mother and separation from a twin sister, which aggravate her sense of disorientation and increase the need for translation.

The city of New York that "hums" (55) outside Maria's window in the daytime, is of course one of the great global metropolises that will likely gain importance in the future, "at the expense of nation states," as nodes of renewal and diversity and in which "different cultures, languages, identities" meet (Cronin, *Translation* 17). For Maria, the high degree of diversification in this city, which holds "every social class, every people, every language" (17), is concretely and, to some extent, alarmingly, manifested by the people she meets in the street. The New Yorkers Maria encounters, as she walks down steaming sidewalks at 6 a.m., "on new streets, full of different people" (*What Are You Like?* 57), strike her as being of a different kind than herself. Failing to recognise individuals, she sees them as homogenous despite their diversity, and although she does not actually think of them as "weird," she thinks they exude sheer physicality. Observing people hurrying to work, she notes "their faces heavy with the night before. They seemed so real and automatic [...] all those brute human beings, with their muscle and lymph and bone. They walked down a street in Manhattan like a herd of bison, quiet and astonishing in the fact of themselves" (55). The foreignness she ascribes to them approaches that "sheer weirdness" (Rushdie,

12 She also exemplifies the connection that Ewins has noted between the "alienating psychological urge that divides children from their parents" and the "idea of the Irish diaspora" (Ewins 127).

13 In a complex pattern of connectedness, the lost lover is later revealed to have been involved, at an earlier time, with Maria's twin in London.

Step Across 400) which, as we have seen, Rushdie thinks non-American Westerners attributed to US citizens after the Twin Tower disaster. Much as Tim in “Switzerland” does not see the individual among the players in the football fields back home, Maria, from a worm’s-eye view here, is blind to the individual “brute” human being. What she sees is a “herd of bison” – a humanoid collective. As they muscle into her solitary walk with all the force of their ‘brutish’ and – to her evidently specifically American – collective identity, Maria fails to translate them in an ethically responsible way.

In her closed, but diversified urban space, Maria moves on to encounter individuals who are excluded by that “herd” of presumably well-adjusted, hard-working, purposeful New Yorkers she encountered earlier: the social outcasts. As Maria’s perspective shifts to a bird’s-eye view of Manhattan, she observes – without taking the cartographer’s superior position, as it were – Americans of another kind:

other people, stalled or stopped, who stood there and wanted the crowd to wash past them. A man endlessly studying doorbells under the swelling stone breast of a sphinx. A regulation drunk, sitting on the sidewalk, his face working in slow motion, as though every emotion was a puzzle to him, and the solution always a surprise. [...] They were everywhere – a small man with a chair strapped to his back walking down Varick Street, a woman in the middle of Broadway, going through the contents of her handbag as the cars swerved past. It was a parallel world. It was just over the other side. Maria had always known it was there, but, now she was in it, she did not know how to get back out again. (57)

Here, Maria recognises the specificity of the Americans she meets and translates them responsibly. However, her meeting with these individuals seems to trigger a dangerous border crossing: Maria steps across a frontier into a zone – a social reality as well as a “parallel world” of her mind – which threatens her sanity and the difference of which she fears to recognise. In the end, the young Dubliner realises she must leave New York. Struggling with the crossing, she has difficulties extricating herself from that city. When she eventually manages to re-cross the Atlantic and return to Dublin, scars on her wrist are visible signs of a near-fatal crossing into a lethal zone.

Back in Dublin, Maria – having partially recovered, physically and psychologically, from her experience in a New York elsewhere – feels that she is still not “actually home” (63), but “half in the country and half out of it” (68). In an apparent attempt to straddle this borderline, she tries to find work at an airport. There, she hopes to be at home *and* not, simultaneously next door *and* elsewhere. As yet unaware of and thus unable to recognise the presence of that Other – her sister in diaspora – who, ghost-like, resides “at the heart of the known and intimate” space that is the grief-stricken remnant of the Delahunty family, Maria is unable at this point to step across the line that will allow her to bring her Manhattan elsewhere successfully into her Dublin next door. The mistranslations made at the time of the birth of the twins are not addressed until the twins are reunited. Thus, no fluid crossings are made and no ethical translations are possible.

Conclusion

In the processes of the fictional motion – between the local and the global, the Irish and the American – in which the characters of Anne Enright's short stories "The Bad Sex Weekend" and "Switzerland" and her novel *What Are You Like?* engage, borders are crossed and spaces of the elsewhere encountered. In "The Bad Sex Weekend," the young Sligo man whose travels take him to Dewey, Wisconsin, stumbles on the insight that in one sense, we all live in Dewey. The implication is that the degree of cultural complexity found in Dewey, or Sligo, might be the same as that found in the large cities of the world. Not always able to recognise complexities, Elaine and Tim in "Switzerland" struggle to 'translate' across the Irish-American borderline that they themselves constitute. In *What Are You Like?* border crossings involving pregnancy, death, separation, being born, and giving birth are prominent. The mental travels of Berts Delahunty, tracing the imaginary coast of Ireland, seem designed to uncover the meaning of death and separation and, finally, to resist the threat of insanity. In New York, Maria Delahunty repeats her father's patterns as she travels by mind and by night, tracing the shoreline of Manhattan. Her translation of New Yorkers are of two kinds: on the one hand she translates working New Yorkers as a brute bovine collective, failing to recognise their specificity; on the other, she responsibly translates the people from the "parallel world" of outcasts as individuals. This latter meeting, however, triggers a dangerous border crossing for Maria and on her return to Dublin scars on her wrist are visible signs of a near-fatal crossing into a lethal zone. No fluid border crossings are possible for Maria at this point in the novel. Thus, as the characters of the three texts struggle with border crossings, the degree to which they recognise the complexities of the Other and of the spaces of elsewhere encountered fluctuates. Moreover, their tendency to act as responsible translators varies and, with it, the extent to which fluid border crossings are facilitated and the elsewhere incorporated next door.

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TERROR AND REDEMPTION IN COLUM McCANN'S *LET THE GREAT WORLD SPIN*

Eoin Flannery

9/11 – Art and Politics

The encounter between 9/11 and literature brings into focus the triumphs and deformations of language and representation since the acts of criminal terror unfolded over a decade ago. 9/11 has evolved a symbology and a semiotics all of its own. The term itself has entered linguistic circulation as a universal shorthand for murderous terror and noble resistance to unseen terroristic agencies. But, equally, dissent has arisen about the moralistic mobilisations of 9/11 as a legitimisation for surveillance, violent interrogation, and illegal invasion. Heated exchanges have cohered around the ethics of employing 9/11 as a political lode-stone and/or as an emotional default in the invocation of national identity in the United States. When we come to consider artistic responses to, or reflections on, 9/11, we enter battle-worn ground on which politics and culture have colluded and competed. And at the epicentre of these debates is language, and how it has been competitively utilised as a means of cultivating jingoistic assent or, less often, non-partisan critical reflection on 9/11 as an act of terror. This is also the case when matters revolving around the performances of a morally endowed national identity in the US are brought into play. In many respects, instead of provoking lateral constructive argumentation on global relations – political, economic, and cultural –, institutional responses to 9/11 have more often recoiled at the prospect of polyphonic debate in lieu of patriotic consensus. Simply put, there has been a degree of ‘anti-intellectualism’ afoot in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks and the intervening duration of the “War on Terror.” For Susan Sontag, there is “the suspicion of thought, of words,” and “hiding behind the humbug that the attack of last September 11th was too horrible, too devastating, too painful, too tragic for words, that words could not possibly do justice to our grief and indignation, our leaders have a perfect excuse to drape themselves in borrowed words devoid of content. To say something might be controversial [...] Not saying anything is best” (Sontag 121). There is a passionate political criticism and consciousness to Sontag’s diagnosis. But her argument also dovetails with the actions and reactions of writers after the events of 11 September 2001. 9/11 might have been a “mute act” requiring subsequent narrative coding in Susan Buck-Morss’ view (Buck-Morss 23). But the dominant narrative patterning of 9/11 has been univocal, by and large, and has striven to quell critical questioning. The popular call for unity from within the US – that reached across and was accepted by the ‘West’ – is matched and abetted by cultural agents that do not defy, but affirm simplistic, binary thinking on East/West relations – historical and contemporary. Difference and diversity, long mainstays of American popular

culture, are now watchwords of new idioms of paranoid and xenophobic legislation and monitoring. Political and cultural differences are not the basis for pluralist or multicultural inclusiveness, but are now markers of potential menace. Indeed it is not an exaggeration to speculate that the political and cultural climate of the 'West' has entered the frames of dystopian literary history for many of its narrative figurations in the years since 9/11.

In this intensified state of political and cultural sensitivity, it is worth posing the following questions, as Daniel Lea does in his essay on literary responses to 9/11. Lea inquires:

Why are the views of writers, and in particular novelists, deemed so worthy of collation and dissemination? Why, in the aftermath, were novelists sought out to air their opinions on the traumatic character of events? What, in other words, does the novelist have to offer that cannot be provided by reportage or political commentary? (Lea 4)

Lea's series of questions centres on the role of the novelist in relation to 9/11 and asks what the exceptional abilities harboured by the literary artist are that might enable them to mediate such shocking events for a general readership. The premium placed on the writer, as opposed to the narrative conventions and content of media and political opinion, is not difficult to explain. There is an assumption that the rhetoric of news coverage and political newspeak are blighted by evasion, slant, or outright misinformation. In contrast, the explanatory fictions of the novelist are deemed to express and to possess truths and consolations for the reader. Clearly, Lea's point coheres with the broader issue of the appetite for narrative and explanation after the 9/11 attacks, but it also touches upon other critical issues. In summoning writers to respond to these catastrophic events, it seems as if there is an explicit acknowledgement of the capacity of the literary artist to provide guidance out of the silence and the clamour attendant to 9/11. Likewise, the possibility that literature itself might be a source of succour or solace is implicit in Lea's speculations. This is not to locate the literary artist as a kind of renovated seer in the light of September 11, but there has been a renewed weight placed on the literary as a medium of consolation and resolution in many critical interventions since 9/11.

Let the Great World Spin and 9/11

9/11 can be located in a specific set of geographical locations, and the abbreviated nomination indicates the calendar date of the attacks in 2001. Through the labours of policymakers and media agenda-setters, 9/11 has outgrown any sense of itself as a mere temporal marker; the event has transcended historical time and has entered epochal time. As other literary critical volumes amply illustrate, literature, and in particular the novel, has responded variously to 9/11, though much of the literary output and pursuant literary criticism has tended to reflect on American legacies and experiences of 9/11. In a recent literary critical survey, Catherine Morley notes a suite of trends in 9/11 fiction:

While many of the initial reactions to the events of 11th September were notable for their uniquely subjective emphasis, with writers discussing what the attacks meant to them, to their art and to their writing, what many writers have also been integrating into their fiction has been the American response to the attacks. (Morley 83)

The present article strives to depart from domestic, subjective reactions to 9/11 in literary fiction and essays by looking at the National-Book-Award-winning *Let the Great World Spin*, which deals with 9/11 in an elliptical way. Colum McCann's novel is set, like much of his previous fiction, in New York, but principally unfolds in 1974 and deals with, in figurative fashion, themes of trauma, loss, and redemption. *Let the Great World Spin* is initiated by the narration of a high-wire walk between the towers of the World Trade Centre on 7 August 1974, and McCann's imaginative performance reverberates forward in time to 11 September 2001, as a utopian act of creation. But rather than re-create a world-historical universe in 1974 McCann prefers to navigate the margins of a profoundly troubled metropolis. *Let the Great World Spin* gestures to the accumulated grief of 9/11 and to the symbolism of the attacks by way of Philippe Petit's walk, and McCann spotlights the possibility of redemption and recovery in the recessed spaces of New York's cityscape. Grief is not confined to this date and this event, and neither is hope; the novel is, then, an allegory about all human suffering and how that suffering can be alleviated or endured.

Let the Great World Spin cannot but be considered a political and social novel given its embrace of criminality, destitution, addiction, and class division. Set in 1974 in New York, the narrative primarily spans downtown and uptown Manhattan, as well as the South Bronx, with interludes in Ireland and upstate New York. Gathered within its plotlines are characters of different nationalities, races, and class locations: the anonymous high-wire walker, the Irish monk, John Corrigan, and his brother Ciaran, Tillie and Jazzlyn Henderson, mother and daughter prostitutes, who are friends with John Corrigan, a wealthy couple grieving for their son lost in Vietnam, Claire and Solomon Soderberg, and Gloria, who lost three of her sons in the same war, a teenage photographer on the hunt for new subway graffiti, and a young artist, Lara, who is involved in John Corrigan's death and begins a long-term relationship with his brother after that accident. From the outset, *Let the Great World Spin* clamours with diversity and pulses with the tensions and insecurities of its cast. The narrative reprises the familiar negotiation of the national and the international, the local and the global, characteristic of much of McCann's earlier fiction; he develops further his situation of Ireland, and Irishness, within the macro-networks of global identities. While the narrative action is initiated by the funambulism of the French acrobat – and this action unfolds across the turbulent cityscape of New York – the central moral force within the narrative is that of the Irish monk, John Corrigan. Thus, in one way we see a 9/11 novel that is significantly inflected by the affective force of this Christ-like Irish migrant missionary. Contrary to critical voices that suggest McCann's work represents a necessary transcendence of national identity, *Let the Great World Spin*, together with many of McCann's other works, is neither a globalised rejection of Irish-

ness nor a celebration of borderless global identity.¹ Rather, McCann's works consistently bring Ireland and Irish identities into productive dialogues with international geographies and histories.²

The novel acknowledges both the material and the symbolic as forces within daily life and traces how, as McCann puts it, "the accidental meets the eternal" (McCann, "Q&A"). A fraction of its political engagement is, of course, its concern with 9/11 as a material and a symbolic event. McCann accepts the immense symbolic trauma of 9/11, but he is equally keen to stress the lateral material sufferings that nourish, and are often subordinated to, the public emphasis on symbolic victimhood or symbolic violence. It is a forceful, though tangential, artistic-political response to 9/11, but there is more to the work than this neat summary may suggest: "9/11 was the initial impetus for the book [...] But I am aware of the pitfalls of labelling it a '9/11' novel [...] 9/11 is certainly part of the book's construction, but it is not limited to that [...] I really wanted to lift it out of the 9/11 'grief machine'" (McCann, "Q&A"). While he acknowledges the symbolic threads that link *Let the Great World Spin* to 9/11, it would be reductive to define McCann's novel as one that is exclusively trained on these events. It is a novel that responds to 9/11 without ever becoming obsessed by the immediate repercussions in 2001 in any direct way. McCann does not 'enter' the world of 9/11 or post-9/11 in a sustained fashion, nor does he imagine characters or events implicated directly in this contemporary tragedy. Tellingly, he implies that 9/11 might actually compromise his work; that 9/11 as a "cultivated" event could contract the interpretive scope of his narrative. All of these issues, though, cannot disavow the fact that 9/11 is a thematic and ethical point of departure for *Let the Great World Spin*. But it is equally the case that the novel's visions outstrip the political and cultural agons surrounding the 2001 attacks. As McCann stresses, "it's a novel that tries to uncover joy and hope and a small glimmer of grace...a novel about creation, maybe even a novel about healing in the face of all the evidence" (McCann, "Q&A").

Returning to Lea, is there an inevitability to the prominence of writerly responses to 9/11 and other such extreme public events of violence and spectacle? Ian McEwan's locations of empathy in the imagination and his belief that this is where morality begins centre literature as a primary political agent after 9/11 (McEwan, "Only Love"). There was little that was empathetic or imaginative about many institutional political responses to the attacks of September 11. But it seems from these combined reactions that literature houses utopian possibilities towards political and cultural critique and towards the cultivation of empathetic feeling beyond the local. Post-9/11, novels and other works of art are not solely concerned with eliciting sympathy or empathy for the victims of the hijacked planes, though this is important; this sub-genre of contemporary fiction is also cognizant of the need for narratives that complicate our understandings of the 'other.' These 9/11 fictions can help us to see hope in place of

1 See, for instance, Bolger, "Introduction" xx.

2 On this, see Fogarty as well as Flannery (1-11).

an insistent rhetoric of vilification and retribution, and they can impress the possibilities of redemption through empathy rather than through violent purging. The brachiated and democratic structures of *Let the Great World Spin*, in tandem with one of its central themes, creative daring, allow McCann to address these questions. McCann's literary intervention is a 9/11 novel, and it attempts to loosen the grip of the 9/11 grief industry, which tries to stage-manage the cultural digestion of 9/11. *Let the Great World Spin* is a political and social novel that looks aslant at the attacks of 9/11; McCann suggests that it is an allegory on human suffering which partially speaks to September 11. Nevertheless, the novel de-monumentalises the suffering of the victims of 9/11, without denigrating their memory. Instead, McCann showcases the longevity and the breadth of human suffering and resilience across races, classes, and nationalities in New York City. It is a novel that is stalked by menace and violence, but one that rises to moments of grace and hopeful anticipation.

Speaking in interview after the publication of *Let the Great World Spin*, McCann admitted to a certain confusion as an author dealing with 9/11, particularly as a resident of New York City. He confessed that he "began to wonder, Who's going to write about this?" and that as responses of various forms and political persuasions began to proliferate, he remarked that "every piece was poignant [...] And everything had meaning: it was like the whole city was infused with meaning" (McCann, "Q&A"). The everyday is transformed into the sacred, as figuration and suggestion engulf the brute realities of a debris-strewn and ash-thickened atmosphere. As the force of the reality of 9/11 manifested itself, understandings of its 'meaning' only became admissible through figuration – symbols and metaphors were drafted in as explanatory buffers: "You couldn't help thinking that everything had importance. Even the child's painting of the two buildings holding hands was a powerful image" (McCann, "Q&A"). McCann's point re-iterates the fact that even this event, perhaps especially this event, cannot escape "the reach of symbol and metaphor" (Versluys 3). Whereas many saw recourse to narrative and figuration as routes out of aphasia and grief, towards a semblance of healing, it is equally true that 9/11 became part of a dominant semiotics in the geopolitical imagination. In other words, 9/11 became a symbolic agent of neo-conservative politics and acted as a guarantor of moral legitimacy for physical and cultural violence across the globe. Its cultivated mythology has seen it conscripted into narrow and heavily politicised commemoration.

Re-Imagining Space and Performing Hope

Mobility and exile are defining preoccupations of McCann's previous two novels, *Dancer* (2003) and *Zoli* (2006), and this makes them much more obviously 'spatial' in their concerns. Yet *Let the Great World Spin* asserts the locality of spatial politics; its topographies are, principally, those of New York City, but exile and mobility remain prominent. There are other geographies present: Ireland figures at the outset and at the conclusion, and California enters the narrative via telephonic communication. Al-

lusions are made to Guatemala, Cleveland, Ohio, England, Brussels, Naples, New Orleans, Little Rock, Arkansas, Vietnam, and Genoa. Yet, as suggested above, McCann centres this literary response to 9/11 on Irish characters, with episodic returns to Ireland. We receive first-hand impressions of the Corrigan brothers' upbringing in 1950s and 1960s Dublin from the younger Ciaran, but at the close of the novel McCann returns us to the contemporary, and to the last days of the "Celtic Tiger." While these closing summary descriptions of Dublin hint at the country's embrace of global capital and its attendant indices of identity, they are not presented in any way that might be construed as celebratory. Jaslyn, one of the daughters of Corrigan's friend, the deceased prostitute Jazzlyn, arrives in Ireland to visit Ciaran, and her impressions of the country and the city of Dublin reveal the country's contiguity with the architectural and economic contours of her homeland. Having alluded to the complicity of the Irish State in the American wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the narrative ensues with a portrait of the thriving city and with Ciaran's active role in this period of economic buoyancy:

Dublin was a boomtown. Neon along the river. The seagulls embroidered it. Ciaran was in his early sixties with a small peninsula of hair on his forehead. Half an American accent – his other office, he said, was in Silicon Valley. He was impeccably dressed in a suit and an expensive open-necked shirt. Grey chest hair peeking out. They sat in his office and he talked her through a life of his late brother, Corrigan, a life that seemed rare and radical to her. Outside the window, cranes swung on the skyline. The Irish light seemed lengthy. (341)

From this compact description, we can intuit the complexities of modern, contemporary Irish identities within the relations of the Corrigan family; Ciaran's financial security is juxtaposed to the altogether alien altruism of his late brother. The local space of Dublin is pockmarked with the edificial monuments of/to global capitalist modernity, which links the city, the country, and its population to the primary site of *Let the Great World Spin*. New York City is the localised global space of McCann's narrative, and the twin towers, looming in their pristine newness, foreshadow the later attack as well as the politico-economic conjuncture that will impact so forcefully on contemporary Irish society.

New York City is the spatial main stage and it is the endpoint of all of these vectors of travel and displacement. Within the city, and the novel, McCann juxtaposes terrestrial and air-borne spaces, which are figurations of hope and despair as well as reminders that life at ground-level can be as precarious as life on an elevated tightrope: both demand balance that is often threatened and uncertain. This is one of the possible interpretations of the wire-walker's funambulism, as an acrobatic correlative of the fragile precariousness of daily living. At the same time, his act is an outrageous seizure of urban space, an act, apparently, with no constructive end other than the outstanding beauty of the act itself. The twin towers and the references to the Vietnam War unfolding at this time are affronted by the vision of the wire-walker's spatial creativity. Both the war and the buildings are parts of the same capitalistic continuum and are complicit in the spatial appropriation of the globe. Empire-building was, and is,

founded on the basic contestation of, and appropriation of, space, and both the towers and the war are internal and external signs of this politics.

Though he is never named in the novel, *Let the Great World Spin* opens on the morning of Philippe Petit's tightrope walk between the twin towers of the World Trade Centre on 7 August 1974. Immediately, McCann gestures to the agency of the visual as both a universal cultural medium and as a core motif of the novel. Vision, spectacle, and sightings provide a link between the opening act of funambulism in *Let the Great World Spin* and the brute spectacular of 9/11. Indeed, the "walker's" preparation to step out onto his high wire is met with similar silent awe and trepidation by the congregation of confused viewers on the streets of Manhattan below: "Those who saw him hushed [...] Others figured it might be the perfect city joke – stand around and point upward, until people gathered, tilted their heads, nodded, affirmed, until all were staring upward at nothing at all" (3). The grouped crowds may be witnesses to the "walker's" actions, but there is nothing besides suspicion and uncertainty in the accumulated speculations. There seems to be a disjuncture between vision and comprehension in the presence of this acrobatic feat, yet curiosity persists among the viewers:

He could only be seen at certain angles so that the watchers had to pause at street corners, find a gap between buildings, or meander from the shadows to get a view unobstructed by cornice work, gargoyles, balustrades, roof edges [...] It was the dilemma of the watchers: they didn't want to wait around for nothing at all [...] but they didn't want to miss the moment either [...] Around the watchers, the city still made its everyday noises. (3)

In this opening set-piece, McCann corrals fantasy, illusion, and reality, the expectant silence of the watchers and the commotion of the city morning, and the minute vulnerability of the human body amid the domineering concreted scale of the city. The repetitions, the habits of the everyday, are intruded upon by "a dark toy against the cloudy sky" (3) – the "walker."

The build-up to the moment when the "walker" steps off the edge of the tower captures the heteronomy of sounds and sights as the working day in Manhattan commences. McCann's description evokes the mobility, even the transience, of the city: "Ferry whistles. The thrum of the subway. The M22 bus pulled in against the sidewalk, sighed down into a pot-hole. A flying chocolate wrapper touched against a fire hydrant. Taxi doors slammed [...] Revolving doors pushed quarters of conversation out into the street" (4). Snatches of urban sensuousness form the backdrop to the "walker's" defiant artistic performance high above the street-level bustle. Yet the fragmented sensory chaos of Manhattan is somehow nullified by the "walker's" gesture; his presence on the sky-line unifies the disparate lives into an integrated audience. His brazen act is received with reverent silence as the watchers mingle and convene in pockets on the pavements: "Doctors. Cleaners. Prep chefs. Diamond merchants. Fish sellers. Sad-jeaned whores. All of them reassured by the presence of one another" (4). The improbability of the sight and the rumours that it generates – "he was

some sort of cat burglar, that he'd been taken hostage, he was an Arab, a Cypriot, an IRA man, that he was really just a publicity stunt, a corporate scam" (5) – creates a tangible level of community between the gathered watchers. The slow, methodical preparations of the "walker" allow time for the pedestrian audience to intrigue about his motivations, but more importantly, this period of silent viewing must be and is filled with expectancy and mystery. For those at street level, "the waiting had been made magical [...] shared. The man above was a word they seemed to know, though they had not heard it before. Out he went" (7). Given the historical context in which the novel is set, a period during which New York City was rife with violent crime and drug addiction, as well as facing the prospect of financial bankruptcy, the image of the "walker" perched on the highest building in the world is a signal utopian moment. The significance of using Petit's daring in this fashion, and in a 9/11 novel, is touched upon in these exact terms by McCann. The moment of physical transcendence became a powerful symbolic act for McCann in the wake of 9/11, what he calls "a spectacular act of creation" (Johnston). The private sufferings and griefs of ordinary people, which exist side by side with faith in possible recovery, are primary thematics of the novel, and Petit's walk catalyzes this possibility of redemption. Equally, this emboldened creative act assembles disparate individuals in Manhattan, however briefly, and allows them to share a unique spectacle. In this sense, the "walker's" gesture facilitates an instance of belonging and restores faith in the possibility of solidarity; it is suggestive of the numinous touching upon the banalities of the everyday. The "walker" is apparitional on the Manhattan sky-line, a spectre on the horizons of the visible and of the possible. But he is, most importantly, an agent of hope in the allegorical structure of the novel. His decision to step out onto the high wire is the ultimate act of faith: faith in oneself. It is an inspirational, generous act offered to those who stop, wait, and watch his sky-borne performance.

The wire-walker's feat is an imaginative re-calibration of spatiality; it is an unforeseen subversion of the logic of capitalist space. The hubris and the rational architecture of the World Trade Centre are challenged by the wire-walker's re-casting of the twin towers as objects of acrobatic beauty. The implications of the wire-walker's actions are consummately expressed in the novel by the grieving Claire Soderberg: "And an attempt at beauty. The intersection of a man with the city, the abruptly reformed, the newly appropriated public space, the city art. Walk up there and make it new. Making it a different space" (103). Claire's description has implicit references to Ezra Pound's Modernist injunction to "make it new!" and to Karl Heinz Stockhausen's provocative statement that the World Trade Centre attacks were pieces of high art. Her reaction on hearing of the wire-walker combines space as art, the redefinition of urban utility, and the aesthetics of violence, in particular in relation to 9/11. In this emotional processing of the wire walk, McCann touches upon 9/11, the pursuit of arresting innovation in art, and the rousing utopian dynamism of the spatial re-conceptualisation of iconic capitalist edifices. The twin towers were the concreted and glazed embodiment of a set of economic, political, and cultural abstractions, and there is no gainsaying

the symbolic violence of their destruction. But rather than dwell on the destructive levelling of the towers in 2001 as an act of incommensurable violence, McCann urges us to appreciate the imaginative spatial assault on the towers in 1974. The wire-walk is, of course, a temporary performance, but no less affective for its brevity; it is a jolting act of faith and creativity. The achievement, with its possibilities, is apprehended by Claire's husband, Solomon, who is the judge assigned to try and to sentence the wire-walker after his arrest. For Solomon Soderberg:

The tightrope walker was such a stroke of genius. A monument in himself. He had made himself into a statue, but a perfect New York one, a temporary one, up in the air, high above the city ... He had gone to the World Trade Center and had strung his rope across the biggest towers in the world. The Two Towers. Of all places. So brash. So glassy. So forward-looking [...] The glass reflected the sky, the night, the colors: progress, beauty, capitalism. (248)

The wire-walker not only stills and silences the gathered urban crowds, but he carves a monument out of thin air. The spectacle of the walker undermining rationality as he draws his audience skyward re-imagines the potential use of the twin towers. These other monuments to financial functionalism are alternatively deployed by the wire-walker's performance. His act and his art are highly impractical, and they are, in fact, treated as criminal. But the brazen creativity displayed infects the lives of those that witness the walk first hand and those that hear of it subsequently. The walk may not change the ways in which spatiality is conceived of and produced in New York City, and it does not alter the spatial employment of the twin towers. But the wire-walker's gesture opposes 9/11 in pre-emptive fashion with an act of daring creation. The tight-rope walk defies belief, but is equally motored by the belief and the faith of the walker, and, again, flags the roles of faith and belief in the overall narrative. The wire-walker, then, performs a utopian spatial act that strikes one of the thematic keynotes of *Let the Great World Spin*.

In this context, then, art is seen to embody a redemptive moral value system in contradistinction to the destabilizing values of murderous terrorism. Art facilitates a reflective, even temperate coming to terms with 9/11 – in contrast to impulses of rage or blind hostility. This is the context in which we should finally read *Let the Great World Spin*. As a work of art the novel advertises and embodies the durability of human creativity as a utopian resource. This literary fiction is exemplary of what Gilles Deleuze calls “the realm of the possible,” a realm neatly defined by Elleke Boehmer and Susheila Nasta as “the visionary territory of the imagination, a world situated between the political and cultural borderlines of national/international struggles, a realm where it is the artist's imperative to keep speaking, to keep writing, to keep interrogating, to keep making art even in the face of terror itself, counter-insurgent or otherwise” (1). It is a multivocal, democratic text that braids diverse narratives and lives together in varying patterns of unity and empathetic understanding. To the dominant U.S.-centric narratives, McCann tenders a disjunctive counter-narrative that expands the horizons of what can be stabled as 9/11 literary fiction.

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ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES IN THE NOVELS AND SHORT STORIES OF JOHN MCGAHERN, COLM TÓIBÍN, AND CLAIRE KEEGAN

Claudia Luppino

A constant and distinctive trend in the political, economic, and cultural history of the Republic of Ireland has been a hovering between opposing poles, variously identified as: tradition and modernity, colonial subjugation and independence, city and rural or small-town life and mentality, institutionalised religious practices and pagan rites, emigration and immigration, local values and global markets. The recent collapse of the Irish economy and the country's need for an EU-sponsored bailout, only a few years after the unprecedented economic growth and cultural and political confidence brought about by the Celtic Tiger, encourage a reflection on these radical oscillations and on their impact on people's lives.

Contemporary Irish novels and short stories translate, or refract, the tensions and the implications of these polarities into physical and mental fluctuations of the characters, who revolve between different locations and temporal dimensions. Fictional men and women move in space – from the countryside to the city, from one's house to that of a neighbour or a relative, from the family home to the university or a job abroad – and in time – through the different stages of their lives, from present experiences and perceptions to memories that anchor them to the past and dreams that project them into the future. Arrivals and departures, thus, provide crucial structural devices for plot-building, as well as poignant metaphors of the country's social, cultural, and economic instability.

This essay will concentrate on the paradigmatic use of arrivals and departures in the fiction of three important contemporary Irish authors and will suggest a reading of their characters' individual mobility and instability as a symptom and a symbol of Ireland's complex attempt to come to terms with its historical legacies, to mediate the encounter between the old and the new, ultimately to define and to accept its own identity. Attention will be paid to the importance of history and commemoration and to the simultaneity or the contamination of past and present, which characterise contemporary Irish cultural discourse.

Though belonging to different generations and coming from heterogeneous personal backgrounds, John McGahern (1934-2006), Colm Tóibín (b. 1955), and Claire Keegan (b. 1968) present striking similarities at the level of artistic concerns and narrative techniques. Following their characters' trajectories in space and time, in McGahern's *Amongst Women* (1990) and *That They May Face the Rising Sun* (2002), in Tóibín's *The Heather Blazing* (1992) and *The Empty Family* (2010), and in Keegan's *Antarctica* (1999) and *Foster* (2010), I shall explore the deeper significance of these

cultural products of the two decades that have witnessed the Republic of Ireland's free fall from boom to bust, from glamour to gloom, from confidence to shame, a stretch of time that these novels and short stories partly predate but certainly – though perhaps indirectly – express.

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The recent past of the Irish Republic constitutes a favourite and recurring concern of contemporary Irish fiction writers – as the object of the characteristically retrospective look that they cast, through their works, on the years of their childhood and adolescence (Patten 259). The centrifugal and centripetal forces that bind the individual to his or her family and homeland also emerge as of paramount interest for contemporary Irish novelists and short story writers. The structural and symbolic relevance of arrivals and departures in these narratives, therefore, can easily be appreciated. John McGahern's acclaimed novel *Amongst Women* (1990) tells the story of a veteran of the War of Independence who lives with his family in a small farm ironically called Great Meadow. The narration of this patriarch's slow decline, attended to by his wife and daughters, frames the extended flashback that recounts the growing up of his children, their departures for Dublin or London to study and work, and their frequent trips back home at weekends and in the summer. These visits tellingly reveal that, while living at home, Moran's children feel an urgent need to disentangle themselves from the claustrophobia and the oppression of their father's household, but once they leave, they seem to be drawn back by very strong pulls. From the distant and anonymous city, in fact, Great Meadow and the annual haymaking take on an idyllic aura (Quinn 88), and the intertwined feelings of fear and love inspired and demanded by Moran all blend and blur (Kennedy-Andrews 3). As for the sense of superiority he instils in his daughters, it can only function within the boundaries of his small kingdom, therefore their return home also acts as a therapeutic ritual through which these young women see their sense of identity and belonging confirmed and validated:

For the girls the regular comings and goings restored their superior sense of self, a superiority they had received intact from Moran and which was little acknowledged by the wide world in which they had to work and live. [...] within [their father's] shadow and the walls of his house they felt that they would never die; and each time they came to Great Meadow they grew again into the wholeness of being the unique and separate Morans. (*Amongst Women* 93-94)

Old Moran himself fluctuates, but his movements are not so much in space, as in time: once the leader of a flying column of guerrilla fighters, highly respected and admired by his soldiers for his strategic ability, he is now embittered and disappointed by the ways in which the country for which he risked his life has evolved and by the diminished role of farmer and father that he has tailored for himself in that country:

'What did we get for it? A country, if you'd believe them. Some of our johnnies in the top jobs instead of a few Englishmen. More than half of my own family work in England. What was it all for? The whole thing was a cod.' (*Amongst Women* 5)

Moran's alienation does not derive from geographical exile, from a physical distance from known and cherished places; it is, rather, the manifestation of his emotional displacement, of his psychological detachment from, and inability to cope with, what he perceives as a disappointing present. As a result, he tries to resist the inevitable process of change, in the typically human effort to arrest the flow of time, desperately clinging to his authoritarian power at home (Sampson 224) and to the thrilling memories of his times as a military leader.

A similar alternation between different spatial and temporal dimensions can be observed in Colm Tóibín's novel *The Heather Blazing* (1992). The protagonist, Eamon Redmond, is a Supreme Court Judge who tries to come to terms with the rapidly changing mores of the society around him, having to deal with the inadequacy of the Irish Constitution to reflect and regulate a nation that has undergone a radical transformation since the writing of its fundamental laws in 1937. In a similar fashion, he is confronted with change within his own family, particularly through the relationship with his children, an activist for civil liberties and a single mother. The traditional Irish trope of the conflict between tradition and modernity is thus investigated both in the public and in the private sphere, while the erosion of the Wexford coast significantly provides an intense topographical analogue and a penetrating metaphor of the "dualities of concealment and exposure, fixity and change" that permeate Eamon's life (Harte 65).

The use of a double setting, both in geographical and in temporal terms, powerfully reflects these frictions, translating them into a complex structure, with some chapters set in Dublin and in the present, others set in the town of Enniscorthy and in the coastal village of Cush and focusing on Eamon's childhood and adolescence and on his holidays. Interestingly, two different versions of the protagonist are associated with these two scenarios, namely the authoritative and self-confident public figure who masters the law and public speeches as opposed to the private man, hurt and made aphasic by early bereavement and unable to communicate with his wife and children. His very name, alluding simultaneously to both Éamon de Valera and the Wexford-born MP John Redmond (Patten 262), has a double resonance. The fate of this one individual is finally connected to the broader historical and political development of his nation by means of the backdrop of strong nationalism and personal commitment against which Eamon grows up, his grandfather and his uncles having taken an active part in the Easter Rising and in the Civil War and his father having been a history teacher and a Fianna Fáil activist. Such a link is further reinforced by the numerous references, throughout the narrative, to important events in Irish nationalist history, such as the 1798 rebellion, the Easter Rising, and the IRA activities in the 1970s, and to prominent Irish politicians like Éamon de Valera, Seán Lemass and Charles Haughey.

Arrivals and departures also feature insistently and significantly, both as spatial and temporal movements and as metaphors for change and conflict, in the fiction pro-

duced in the late 1990s by that younger generation of Irish authors of whom Claire Keegan is an outstanding representative. That paradigm can be identified and explored in some of the short stories from her debut collection, *Antarctica* (1999), and fruitfully applied to the analysis of the generational and gender conflicts and of the rites of passage from childhood and innocence to adulthood and disenchantment, with which her subtle and sensitive fiction engages. The protagonist of “Quare Name for a Boy”, for example, is a young Irish woman who lives in England, where she is working hard to make ends meet and to be a writer. An unplanned pregnancy pushes her to go back to Ireland – possibly for good – and to confront the women in her family. Unlike them, she refuses to give up all her desires and ambitions; she has no intention to marry the father of her child, whom she barely knows. Her arrival back home and in her homeland will not interfere with her search for personal fulfilment and independence, nor will it plunge her back into the domestic, caretaking, and subordinate role traditionally imposed upon women that she has so carefully departed from: “I will not be the woman who shelters her man same as he’s a boy. That part of my people ends with me” (*Antarctica* 101).

In “Sisters” we are presented with two women who grew up together, but whose lives took very different routes: Betty, the eldest, never married and dedicated her life to caring for her father and for the family farm and land; Louisa, the younger and the better-looking, lives an apparently perfect life in England with a wealthy husband and their two children. Louisa’s return home every year for the summer holidays upsets the balance and routines of Betty’s unpretentious life and triggers off a confrontation between the two women’s destinies, unfulfilled desires, and hidden jealousies. Once again, the characters fluctuate between love and resentment, between common memories of the past and very different lives in the present, without ever finding a balance or a compromise.

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In the works of fiction published in Ireland at the beginning of the new millennium, when the Celtic Tiger arguably started to lose momentum, arrivals and departures continue to provide effective structural devices and metaphorical representations of the characters’ and of the nation’s condition of instability and uncertainty. John McGahern’s last novel, *That They May Face the Rising Sun* (2002), portrays a year in the life of a small community in north-western rural Ireland. The main characters are the Ruttledges and the Murphys, two elderly couples who live on opposite sides of a small lake. Their frequent visits to each other and to other neighbours around the lake, their trips to a nearby small town or to the local pub, even their phrases and gestures in conversation, reflect the circular and cyclical character of nature, of farming, and of the liturgical year, in a perpetual repetition of the same which is never boring or redundant, but, on the contrary, promises, as it were, regeneration and eternity. To mention but one significant example, the opening lines of the novel are repeated

in the second half of the narration with only slight variations: “Easter morning came clear. There was no wind on the lake. There was also a great stillness. When the bells rang out for Mass, the strokes trembling on the water, they had the entire Easter world to themselves” (*That They May Face* 251). The echo produced by this repetition of the exact same words marks the passing of yet another year by the lake, while those slight variations reinforce the sense of renewal associated with the regeneration of nature brought about by spring and by the belief in resurrection that underlies the Catholic rites of Easter.

Several characters in this novel left the lakeside community where they were born and went to look for better jobs elsewhere: this is the case, for example, of Jamesie and Mary Murphy’s son, who lives in Dublin, or of John Quinn’s children, who all live and are successfully employed in England. Though marginal in the overall economy of the novel, such figures provide an insightful reminder of the long-standing tradition in rural areas of poverty and emigration and of how that tradition stretches, sadly, up to very recent times. As for Jamesie’s brother Johnny, his departure was connected, interestingly, with a troubled love story, and, like Moran’s children in *Amongst Women*, he goes back to Ireland every summer; the excitement and the preparations that precede his arrival are as intense as the relief that follows his departure at the end of his holidays. Joe and Kate Rutledge themselves have also moved, but in the opposite direction, from the city of London to a remote corner of the countryside in County Roscommon. The theme of the returned emigrant, already hinted at by McGahern in his previous novel through the figure of Moran’s second wife, Rose (who spent several years working in Glasgow before returning to her native soil in rural Ireland), is a frequent thread in recent Irish fiction and one that offers interesting insights into the cohesion and the processes of identity-formation of a small community. The figure of the returned emigrant is a challenging one, in that he or she partakes of both the insider’s and the outsider’s perspective and sensibility, and jeopardises the notions of home and identity (Geffer Wondrich 9-11; Smyth 146-147; Ryle 127-136).

Another negotiation of the theme of arrivals and departures in *That They May Face the Rising Sun* can be detected in the contiguity and coexistence of Catholic and pagan practices and beliefs, which is particularly evident in the decision to bury Johnny according to the ancestral custom of putting the dead in the ground with their heads in a westward position so that, when they wake on Judgement Day, they will face the rising sun – hence the novel’s title (Kiberd 173; Maher 128).

Colm Tóibín’s latest collection of short stories, *The Empty Family* (2010), provides yet another perspective, demonstrating how contemporary Irish fiction, though often remaining formally anchored to traditional modes and techniques of writing, proves ready to tackle and to incorporate current issues and ideas in its contents. The stereotypical image of the traditional Irish family, fixed by literature and by the broader cultural and political discourse of the newly independent state, is questioned and revisited

by Tóibín's recent short fiction through the inclusion of gay partners, absent mothers, and foreign caretakers. The very notion of home is expanded and interrogated by his narratives, which appear to accept the possibility of a happy existence abroad (as opposed to the more conventional alienation and homesickness of the exiled or emigrant) and the fact that affection for friends and acquaintances can sometimes be stronger than that for family members.

In several stories, arrivals and departures represent crucial moments in the characters' lives. In a fashion that is reminiscent of the double geographical and temporal setting of *The Heather Blazing*, the people who populate these fictions also stir restlessly, both physically and mentally, back to the places of their childhood, and however much they try to escape from their past, they are always inevitably forced to confront it (Delaney 9-10). Both "One Minus One" and "The Empty Family" focus on middle-aged gay Irishmen who live in the U.S. but have a problematic or, at the very least, an unresolved relationship with their homeland. The protagonist of "One Minus One" remembers his trip back to Enniscorthy six years earlier to witness the death of his mother. Mentally addressing a former partner of his, he reflects on his lack of an intimate relationship with his mother and on his related decision to live far from her and her country, and concludes:

Maybe that is why I am here now, away from Irish darkness, away from the long, deep winter that settles so menacingly on the place where I was born. I am away from the east wind. I am in a place where so much is empty because it was never full, where things are forgotten and swept away, if there ever were things. I am in a place where there is nothing. Flatness, a blue sky, a soft, unhaunted night. A place where no one walks. Maybe I am happier here than I would be anywhere else, and it is only the poisonous innocence of the moon tonight that has made me want to dial your number and see if you are awake. (*The Empty Family* 10)

In the title story of the collection *The Empty Family*, the main character's visits to his native Wexford are more regular and frequent. While living abroad, he is homesick sometimes: "I missed home. I went out to Point Reyes every Saturday so I could miss home" (33). He has held on to a house on the southern Irish coast, near "my own forgiving sea, a softer, more domesticated beach, and my own lighthouse" (34), and every time he arrives there, he feels that "this space I walk in now has been my dream space; the mild sound of the wind on days like this has been my dream sound" (29).

In both stories, however, Ireland is associated with troubled relationships with one's family and with an unhappy love story, and the decision to live abroad appears permanent. As for the famous set designer who is at the centre of "Two Women", her return to Dublin for a temporary job similarly confirms that her real home are her house in Los Angeles and the couple from Guatemala who look after her. In all three stories, emotional bonds and the feeling of belonging are shown to be troubled and often independent from one's places of origin and biological relations, and the traditional notions of home and family are ultimately updated.

Claire Keegan's long story *Foster* (2010) is set in 1980s rural Ireland and focuses on a young girl who spends the summer with her relatives. Initially unsure of what to expect of these new places and company – "But this is a different type of house. Here there is room, and time to think. There may be even money to spare" (*Foster* 13); "I feel at such a loss for words but this is a new place, and new words are needed" (18) – the girl soon becomes very fond of her foster parents and of their busy but quiet lifestyle and affectionate behaviour to her and to each other, to the point that her departure at the end of the summer will prove a very painful leavetaking.

As a final notation, some elements of folklore can be detected in *Foster*, which give this long story the feel of a traditional tale, making the narrative depart, at times, from its contemporary setting and reach backwards, towards ancient beliefs. Two instances are particularly noteworthy in this respect, namely, the description of the girl's first entrance into the Kinsellas' house, which is reminiscent of a birth-scene (the alternation of darkness and light, of coolness and warmth, of smells of food and detergents, and the woman and the child sharing the novelty of being alone together – it is the girl's second birth, as it were, to a new life); and the recounting of the girl's walks to a nearby well with Edna Kinsella as a baptismal ceremony or cathartic rite:

I go down steps until I reach the water. I breathe and hear the sound my breath makes over the still mouth of the well so I breathe harder for a while to feel these sounds I make, coming back. The woman stands behind, not seeming to mind each breath coming back, as though they are hers. [...] For a moment, I am afraid. I wait until I see myself not as I was when I arrived, looking like a tinker's child, but as I am now, clean, in different clothes, with the woman behind me. I dip the ladle and bring it to my lips. This water is cool and clean as anything I have ever tasted: it tastes of my father leaving, of him having never been there, of having nothing after he was gone. I dip it again and lift it level with the sunlight. I drink six measures of water and wish, for now, that this place without shame or secrets could be my home. Then the woman pulls me back where I am safe on the grass, and goes down alone. (22-24)

The girl reflecting herself in the water and drinking some of it, like a baptismal rite, marks the beginning of something new, the woman as godmother, in a sublime mixture of fear and pleasure.

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This brief analysis of fictional works produced during the Celtic Tiger years and in their immediate, catastrophic aftermath – in hindsight, the so-called "Begrudgers" seem to have been right in their distrust of the quick and easy success celebrated by the "Boosters" (*Foster* 8, *passim*) – has demonstrated that Ireland's attempt to mediate between its complex historical legacies and the challenges of the global world is still ongoing. In this respect, the distinctive, conspicuous, and profuse focus on the past in contemporary Irish fiction, both on national history and on individual histories, even at times of radical changes, and despite the gradual broadening of many writers' narrative concerns towards current debates and events, speaks volumes.

Scholars otherwise expressing very diverse and, in some cases, diverging opinions on most other issues appear to move along similar lines with regard to Irish fiction's typical hovering between past and present. If Eve Patten reads the prominence of history in Irish novels of the 1980s and 1990s as a result of "their proximity to a revisionist historiographic culture, and [to] a *fin-de-siècle* interrogation of causality and grand narratives" (Patten 260), Scott Brewster highlights the importance of commemoration throughout the 1990s and connects it to the many anniversaries of that period.¹ Derek Hand has suggested that Irish novelists' frequent "retreat into the past can be seen both as a desire for a simpler, less complicated time and as a means of displaying – by virtue of making the past utterly strange, foreign and disconnected – the absolute originality of the contemporary moment" (Hand 258). Joe Cleary's diagnosis is not dissimilar (Cleary 210). David Lloyd, for his part, identifies the "split" or "double temporality" of Irish culture as a typically postcolonial feature, which derives from the survival of ancient or traditional elements alongside more modern traits as signs of an alternative mentality, as residual traces of a different way of living and working (Lloyd 1). Other commentators have reflected on the continuity and discontinuity that contemporary Irish fiction writers experience simultaneously by applying Homi Bhabha's notions of "timelag" and of "in-between space", as well as Freud's theories about the "return of the repressed" (Peach 38), ultimately pointing out that "the encroachment of the 'new' upon the 'traditional'" does not by any means guarantee the success of the new; on the contrary, the new "is prone to contamination by the traces of the past" (Herron 168).

At the structural level, the works by McGahern, Tóibín, and Keegan analysed in this study as well as much contemporary Irish fiction are characterised by a frequent alternation between linear narratives and circular patterns: as a consequence, the chronological progression of their storylines is interrupted and counterpointed by flashbacks (memories) and – though less frequently – by flash-forwards (desires, hopes, imagination). This entails movement, on the reader's part, throughout the narrative. Similarly, the numerous intra-textual repetitions and extra-textual allusions that punctuate these works subtly guide the reader along the lines of the rich network that connects a story or a novel with other fictional and non-fictional works by the same author, with his or her own life (through the repeated, almost compulsive, literal or imaginative return to the same few places, themes, actions, and characters' names), and with a broader literary tradition.

The images of a "transition" (Kearney 15) or a "conversion" (Foster 37), variously used by scholars to describe the major changes undergone by Irish society and culture over the last few decades, read as strikingly appropriate metaphors for the country's recent evolution. The continuous fluctuation of the characters of Irish novels

1 Notably, the 75th anniversary of the Easter Rising, the 150th anniversary of the Great Famine, and the 200th anniversary of the United Irishmen's 1798 rebellion (Brewster 24).

and short stories between different spatial, temporal, and psychological dimensions does not only translate and transpose the instability of the Irish cultural experience into the fictional realm, but also confirms and validates the paradigm of arrivals and departures as a highly symbolic pattern and an effective hermeneutic tool to look at contemporary Ireland.

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ENGAGING THE IRISH DIASPORA ELITES IN IRELAND'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD?

Anne Groutel

In recent years, the role of diasporas in the economic development of their homeland has been a growing area of interest for research and policies.¹ Even though the nature and the scope of diaspora contributions can vary significantly, it is overwhelmingly accepted that their input in their homeland's economic development has been positive. Little attention has been devoted, however, to the possible downsides of such processes. Indeed, the case of Ireland shows that involving diaspora business elites in the homeland's economic affairs can be two-edged. In September 2009, a year after Ireland had entered a major economic crisis, the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs organised the Irish Global Economic Forum with a view to getting the advice of Irish diaspora business elites on how to reposition the Irish economy for the upturn. The decision to consult the *crème de la crème* of the Irish diaspora on economic matters was not without precedent. At the start of the 1990s, the Irish government set up the Ireland-America Economic Advisory Board, which was entrusted with a similar mission. Nevertheless, the substance of the recommendations they made to the Irish government was quite different from those offered by the 2009 Forum. We will also see that Irish diaspora elites have been willing to help in the context of the Forum and its follow-up, but this is not without strings attached.

The Global Irish Economic Forum: Taking the Contribution of the Irish Diaspora to the Economy One Step Further

To ask the Irish diaspora business elites for advice on the economy is not a novel idea. In 1992, the Irish government set up the Ireland-America Economic Advisory Board, a little-known group of very influential Irish-American businessmen (DD 13 Oct 1992, col. 866).² At that time Ireland was one of the poorest states of the European Union, but the Irish authorities were striving to lay the foundation for national economic recovery after a decade marked by high unemployment, emigration, and the steady worsening of public finances. Ireland's economic take-off eventually occurred. Subsequently, the country experienced over a decade of outstanding growth. Regrettably, this growth did not prove sustainable in the long term, and Ireland is now

1 See, for example, Aikins; Aikins, Sands & White; Brinkerhoff; de Haas; Kuznetsov, ed., *Diaspora Networks*; Kuznetsov, "Why Is Diaspora."

2 The following sigla will be used throughout and with reference to the list of works cited: DD (Dáil Debates), DFAT (Depart of Foreign Affairs and Trade), DAFF (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food), DF (Department of Finance).

in the throes of an acute economic crisis. Identical ills call for identical remedies, hence the decision to turn anew to the Irish diaspora elites for help (Brian Cowen in DFAT, “2009 Report” 48). In September 2009, the Irish authorities organised the (first) Global Irish Economic Forum to which a large number of Irish diaspora elites were invited. This clearly signalled the Irish government’s intention to tap deeper into the potential of the Irish diaspora, thus taking the involvement of the latter in economic development one step further. The invitation met a positive response, and over a hundred Irish diaspora overachievers attended the Forum.³

There exist some similarities between the “assignment” that was given to the Ireland-America Economic Advisory Board (DD 13 Oct 1992, col. 873) and the one the participants to the Forum were entrusted with. Both groups were asked to act as a think-tank whose mission would be to give advice and new ideas on particular policy questions. In the early 1990s, revamping the country’s image abroad or “branding” Ireland was part of the Board’s initial task (DD 12 Oct 2005, col. 795). More recently, the participants to the Forum were asked “to develop and renovate that brand to give us [Ireland] a competitive advantage in a globalised world” (Brian Cowen in DFAT, “2009 Report” 49) and to suggest ways to restore the country’s reputation worldwide (17-20), a challenging task given the various scandals in which some Irish banks have been involved. The participants to the Global Irish Economic Forum were also assigned to reflect upon the repositioning of the Irish economy for the upturn.

Despite the similarity of the assignment given to the Ireland America Economic Advisory Board and to the Global Irish Economic Forum, there is a fundamental difference between the two groups. The Ireland America Economic Advisory Board has remained a very inconspicuous network, operating as a sort of *éminence grise* behind the scenes. Even if the regular updates of its activities, presented to the Dáil, provide us with an insight into some of the main recommendations that have been put forward over the years, the list of its members has never been made public, and its reports are classified. In contrast, the Global Irish Forum was a highly publicised event. Even if most of the sessions took place behind closed doors and the Chatham House Rule applied,⁴ some comments made during the sessions were leaked to the press. A comprehensive report featuring the recommendations put forward by the participants was published soon after the event (DFAT, “2009 Report”). Shortly after the Forum, in February 2010, the Global Irish Network was launched officially. It operates on a much larger scale, both numerically and geographically, than the Ireland-America

3 Aikins, Sands & White point out the distinction “between the ‘Alumni models’ that involve mass mobilisation and the ‘overachievers model’ that focus on elite actors and target those who can influence corporate investment and decision-making processes” (46).

4 “When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed. This rule was invoked to encourage openness and the sharing of information” (Chatham House).

Economic Advisory Board.⁵ It is now composed of 350 diaspora members, including most of the Forum's participants, from 40 countries (DFAT, "Global Irish Network"). A move towards greater transparency and the use of publicity were probably the price to pay to enroll new members, especially those based in emerging countries where Irish diaspora business networks are scarce.

The Input by Irish Diaspora Elites

As already mentioned, the contribution of the diaspora elites to the economic development of the homeland is usually considered both desirable and beneficial. In Ireland, in the 1990s the Ireland-America Economic Advisory Board did assist the Irish government in its efforts to create a truly pro-business environment. The recommendations this board made were not groundbreaking but they were in line with the Irish authorities' liberal agenda and sought to drive Ireland to adopt the American style of running an economy. The Board, for example, supported the Irish government's move towards the liberalisation of certain economic sectors such as telecommunications and encouraged the authorities to set up public-private partnerships to carry out some infrastructure projects (DD 17 Nov 1998, cols. 1204-6). Whether this has been beneficial to the Irish economy is open to debate as this liberal agenda is not without its critics in Ireland. The privatisation of public service utilities has been criticised by Kieran Allen, who contends that it does not systematically bring lower prices, better services, and more efficiency (45-50). In the case of Telecom Éireann, the outcome of its privatisation was less than satisfactory (Quinn). And Eoin Reeves, who carried out an analysis of public-private partnerships in the context of Ireland's National Roads Program, is fairly sceptical about their positive effects.⁶

This board has also been instrumental in promoting Ireland's assets,⁷ presenting it as an attractive investment location in the right business circles, and has provided personalised access to key contacts in the US. It is worth noting that a number of this

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- 5 Fewer Irish people emigrated during the Celtic Tiger era, but the majority of those who did emigrate chose to go to Europe or the rest of the world. Consequently, the Irish diaspora is now geographically more widespread than it used to be, hence the outreach of this new network. Furthermore, the Irish authorities are now fully aware that relying on investment by American companies will not suffice in the years to come, as the world's economic centre of gravity is shifting eastward.
 - 6 Investment in infrastructure under PPP is supposed to be more time and cost-efficient than under traditional procurement. However, Eoin Reeves shows that the length of the procurement process and problems with the statutory approval process have caused delays in the PPP programme implementation. He also casts doubt on the potential of the PPP model to achieve value for money (Reeves 204; see also Allen 48-50).
 - 7 Among these assets were: a strong educated English-speaking workforce, low labour costs, European membership, a government intent on attracting foreign direct investment.

board's members⁸ invested in Ireland and were, thus, in a position to argue convincingly that Ireland was a very profitable location and that the Irish authorities were genuinely committed to facilitating business development as a priority. To that extent, the Ireland America Economic Advisory Board has strengthened Ireland's competitive edge and various Taoisigh have paid tribute to its contribution (DD 4 Apr 1995, col. 907; 28 Feb 2001, col. 961; 19 Nov 2002, cols. 837-43; 10 Nov 2004, cols. 312-8; 12 Oct 2005, cols. 995-7). It is worth noting that, given their expertise in product development and distribution, it was originally hoped that the group would also contribute to finding new outlets for products by Irish companies in America.⁹ In fact, there is no evidence that this board was particularly active in this regard. Interestingly, the gist of the message delivered by the Irish diaspora elites during the Forum was that Ireland had to be more self-reliant. The majority of the participants approved of the government's ongoing efforts to build Ireland's "knowledge economy" (DFAT, "2009 Report" 8), but they also dwelt on the importance of using and building up the country's existing strengths in some economic sectors as well as exploiting its assets to evolve towards this "smart economy."

In addition, in the participants' view, Ireland should differentiate itself and build a unique new "Brand." To this end, Ireland should capitalise on its "green image" not only to "rebrand" the country but also to find new openings worldwide for indigenous firms ("2009 Report" 27). The food and drink industry, which is the main indigenous industry, is a case in point.¹⁰ In 2009, by the Irish government's own admission (DFAT, "2009 Annex IV" 31), the Irish agri-food sector was facing unprecedented challenges,¹¹ but the participants insisted that it had potential for growth (32), especially in the Middle East and Asia. In their opinion, Ireland's green image was a clear advantage, but product traceability and sustainability had to be emphasised when advertising Irish food to clearly differentiate them on international markets. It was suggested that an international network of diaspora key players in the food and drink industry help promote Ireland as a "food nation" worldwide. Innovation, especially process innovation, must be applied to this industry in order to increase efficiency and margins. Some of the participants also proposed that research should focus, for

8 For example, Don Brennan, then Managing Director of the US merchant bank Morgan Stanley, became involved in the Waterford Wedgwood Group in 1990 and was, at one time, chairman of the company. Others have also invested in very profitable businesses. George Moore has invested in various sectors, in Ireland and Northern Ireland, from giftware (Belleek Pottery, Galway Chrystal) to ICT (see Murphy).

9 This Board was asked to explore "movements towards a more balanced pattern of economic relations than that which concentrates on attracting US multinational companies with the lure of low taxation and high profits." (Albert Reynolds; qtd. in O'Clery, "Reynolds" 2).

10 This sector accounted for 38.5% of the sales in Irish-owned industry in 2009 and 46% of all exports of Irish-owned firms (Forfás 9-10).

11 This sector experienced a 15% decline in export sales in 2009. This decrease was mainly due to the euro exchange rate with sterling (Forfás 10).

example, on pharmacological properties of food and medical benefits of biopharma. They also suggested that Ireland become a centre of excellence for the development of nutritional products.

In the Forum's view, another asset that should be exploited as a priority is the country's cultural legacy. Ireland's green image and its cultural heritage should be actively advertised to promote eco-tourism and cultural tourism, which were identified as potential growth sectors. Furthermore, Ireland's cultural and artistic strengths should be used to restore Ireland's image abroad, which, it is believed, would eventually benefit the business sector (DFAT, "One Year On" 7). During the Forum, it was highlighted that the cultural and creative sector is one of the most dynamic areas of the Irish economy both in terms of employment and output,¹² and financier Dermot Desmond envisaged the creation of a world-class university of the performing arts, which could not only become a centre of excellence for artistic and creative education, but also promote the convergence of innovation, technology, and the Arts. Overall, the participants in the Forum attempted to broaden the Irish authorities' conception of innovation, which they believed to be too narrowly focused on research and development of certain sectors such as information and communication technologies or life sciences (DFAT, "2009 Report" 27).

The report on the follow-up to the Global Irish Economic Forum (DFAT, "One Year On") as well as the National Recovery Plan 2011-2014 (DF, *National Recovery*) show that some recommendations made during the Forum have been taken into account. The need to maintain state expenditure in innovation was clearly stated (DF, *National Recovery* 61). In addition, tourism and the agri-food sector were acknowledged as potential growth sectors (DF, *National Recovery* 31). A very comprehensive study (DAFF, *Food Harvest 2020*) was carried out with a view to exploiting the "green image" of Irish agriculture for export purposes. Overall, budget cuts were not as drastic as those advocated in the McCarthy report,¹³ which clearly ran counter to the recommendations put forward by the Forum.

12 According to a study carried out by DKM Consultants on the economic impact of the cultural sector, in 2008, the "value added" dependent on this sector (taking economic multipliers into account) was €11.8 billion. that is, 7.6% of the total Gross National Product. It also accounted for 8.7% of total employment in the economy ("Cullen Hails Success"; Dublin Central Arts Workers).

13 The Report of the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes, better known as the McCarthy Report, advocated drastic cuts in the expenditure of a number of departments and even questioned the very existence of the Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism, as these areas were considered low-priority sectors. Basing its conclusions on the observation of the evolution of the Irish economy between 2000 and 2007, this report also queried the economic impact and returns of state investment in science, technology, and innovation on economic activity. Finally, doubling the number of PhDs was deemed useless in the absence of a clear business need (Govt. of Ireland, Dept. of Finance "Report" 1: 14, 33; 2: 13-19).

Engaging the Irish Diaspora in Ireland's Economic Development: A Double-Edged Sword

The outcome of the Irish Global Economic Forum is interesting on more than one account. The diaspora elites did not only come up with a spate of advice to prepare Ireland for the economic upturn, they also made some disparaging remarks about the ruling government. Some participants pointed to its responsibility in the crisis and implicitly called for corrective measures. According to the Forum Report, "it was noted that some elements of the crisis appeared to be home-grown due to an inadequate financial regulatory system and perceived 'self-indulgence' on some issues [...] A further negative noted was the perception in some quarters of inadequate ethical standards in public office and the banking sector" (DFAT, "2009 Report" 17).

Furthermore, the previous government's management of the economy also came under fire. Craig Barrett, retired CEO of Intel,¹⁴ was particularly vehement. According to Niall O'Dowd, his speech made quite an impression on the audience: "The day belonged to Craig Barrett [...] he made everybody sit up and pay attention" (O'Dowd; qtd. in O'Clery, "Can the Irish"). Barrett reportedly declared that out of the fourteen reasons why Intel invested in Ireland only one remained: the low corporate tax rate. In his opinion, the country's infrastructure is far from being up to standard. Ireland must also urgently improve its education system, foster creativity, and aim to increase the number of graduates in maths and sciences. Barrett also stressed the fact that Ireland was too dependent on foreign direct investment, whose era, he contended, was over. He stated that the Irish government must now concentrate on fostering local entrepreneurship, which, he believes, is the key to sustainable growth. This is probably not what the Irish government wanted to hear. For decades, the Irish authorities had consistently relied on foreign direct investment as the main growth engine of the Irish economy and at the time it was still seen as the way forward (Brian Cowen; qtd. in Joannon). In addition, even if it was not stated clearly in the Global Irish Economic Forum agenda, the Irish government counted on Irish-American elites to keep on contributing to the promotion of Ireland as an investment location. Finally, although Barrett commended the government for the steps it had taken to stimulate innovation, he stressed that they were not sufficient and that state investment in research and development should be increased substantially. Barrett's intervention emphasises¹⁵ that, although the diaspora elites expressed their willingness to help, they also stressed the importance of taking on board their criticism and of executing the ideas raised during the Forum (DFAT, "2009 Report" 27). In other words,

14 Intel has invested \$7 billion in Ireland since 1986 (O'Clery, "Can the Irish").

15 Interestingly, soon after, Craig Barrett was appointed chairman of the Irish Technology Leadership Group, a business network, located in Silicon Valley, which assists Irish entrepreneurs wishing to export to, or expand in, the United States. Ever since, he has kept on rehashing his message in the media and on various public occasions to make sure that it is getting through to the Irish government (Coyle 32; O'Sullivan 92; Siggins 16; Collins 19; Fallon 19).

the Irish diaspora elites are ready to contribute to Ireland's economic recovery but expect, in return, the Irish authorities' commitment to act.

At the time of the Forum, it was hoped that the Irish diaspora would help revamp the country's tarnished image. But, as the economic crisis worsened in the ensuing months, the previous government's management of the economy came under increasingly hostile criticism from the national and international press. As a result, some diaspora elites made it clear that they were not prepared to lend their support unconditionally. In November 2010, a meeting of the Global Irish Network gave some of its 60 North America-based members the opportunity to air their grievances to government officials (Hickey; Dara Kelly; Marlowe 11). This meeting took place shortly after the publication of two extremely critical articles on the front page of the *Wall Street Journal* (Forelle & Enrich) and in *The Irish Times* (Morgan Kelly 11). Those articles questioned the solvency of the Irish economy. Some of the Network's members blamed the government for underplaying the depth of the crisis, for losing all credibility, and for its lack of transparency. The words of an unnamed Wall Street financier, who was quoted in *The Irish Times* shortly after this meeting, clearly shows that some diaspora members were not fooled by the government's upbeat attitude: "You have a huge credibility problem. We don't believe you. When you predict rosy growth rates for three years, we know you are just picking those numbers out of the sky ... So front up with us" (Marlowe). Harsh criticism was further expressed following the EU bailout (Feran). It became clear that some diaspora members were not prepared to lend their support blindly to that government.

Largely discredited in public opinion, Fianna Fáil was defeated in the general election of February 2011. The new Fine Gael-Labour coalition government has pursued the diaspora strategy initiated by its predecessor and a second Global Irish Economic Forum took place in October 2011. Again, a large number of suggestions were made (see DFAT, "Report Second Forum 2011"), which led to concrete initiatives in the economic field (see DFAT, "Diaspora Partnerships"). By all appearances, the current Irish government and the members of the Global Irish Network seem to be working together in the spirit of partnership.

However, the controversy raised by Gabriel Byrne's criticism of the Gathering 2013 demonstrated yet again that collaborating with diaspora elites can backfire when the homeland authorities are perceived as reneging on commitments made. Byrne served as Ireland's first cultural ambassador to the US in 2010 and 2011. His appointment stemmed from the first Global Irish Economic Forum. The actor played a key role in *Imagine Ireland*, the 2011 initiative under the aegis of Culture Ireland,¹⁶ designed to promote contemporary Irish culture in America. But eighteen months into his three-year appointment he decided to step down. In November 2012, during a radio interview, he launched a blistering attack on a government-backed initiative

16 *Culture Ireland* is the body established to promote Irish arts and culture abroad.

aimed at attracting an extra 325,000 tourists (the main target being the Irish diaspora). In 2013, Irish people were expected to invite friends and relatives back to Ireland to attend a festival called "The Gathering," but which Byrne called "a scam." He bluntly declared: "And then you talk to older people, Irish-American people here, and they say 'we are sick to death of this, because the only time the diaspora, or the Irish-Americans, are ever mentioned is as tourists, and how we can shake them down for a few quid'" (Byrne; qtd. in Clifford). But, according to some sources (Cooper; Shortall), much of Byrne's outrage was provoked by the government's cultural policy, which has led to cuts to arts budgets and the curtailing of the power of Culture Ireland. During this interview, Byrne criticised in robust terms the government's lack of concern for the arts and spoke of his disillusionment about the absence of follow-up to the hard work he put in (for free) when he was Ireland's cultural ambassador to the US (Coleman).

As the members of the Global Irish Network have extensive business expertise, knowledge of international markets, and networks of key contacts, they have the capability to help Ireland overcome the current crisis. Thus, it is all the more important that the Irish authorities have realised that their strategy must be aimed at turning the model back to export-led growth, but also that this entails fostering indigenous entrepreneurship with a view to increasing exports. The time when Ireland relied almost entirely on exports by multinationals seems to be over. One must pay tribute to the diaspora elites, who tried to convince the Irish authorities to change the focus of their industrial policy, but also volunteered to help indigenous firms internationalise. This seems to indicate that diaspora elites, whose role in the 1990s was merely to help attract foreign direct investment, are now willing to help Ireland grow "from within." However, the implications of appealing to these elites are far-reaching. First, some of them could exercise freedom without responsibility, feel at liberty to criticise, rightly or wrongly, the government's management of the economy and its choices of economic priorities in the international media. Although this can serve as a wake-up call, it can also be rather embarrassing for the authorities. Second, it is not a one-way process. It entails, on the part of the government, a commitment to act, otherwise the diaspora's goodwill will wane. To appeal to the diaspora also involves a moral contract between the government and the diaspora elites. The previous Fianna Fáil-Green Party government seems to have taken for granted, at its expense, the fact that transparency and trust are vital elements of this contract.

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